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Renouncing Restrictive Narratives: The Southern Lady and Female Creativity in the Works of Lee Smith and Gail Godwin.

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Renouncing restrictive narratives: The Southern lady and female creativity in the works of Lee Smith and Gail Godwin

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The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1994
RENVONCING RESTRICTIVE NARRATIVES:
THE SOUTHERN LADY AND FEMALE CREATIVITY
IN THE WORKS OF LEE SMITH AND GAIL GODWIN

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how restrictive female narratives hinder women's creativity in the works of two contemporary Southern women novelists, Lee Smith and Gail Godwin. It focuses primarily on the narrative of the Southern lady, how it has changed over the past century and a half, but how it still represses many Southern women. By demanding that women conform to a predetermined definition of who or what they can become, the narrative of the Southern lady asks women to become static images and stifles their individual creativity. Moreover, the class-consciousness and emphasis on appearances that the narrative requires encourages women to isolate themselves from their communities and keeps them from developing healthy relationships with family and friends.

Not all of Smith and Godwin's heroines, however, are defeated by restrictive female narratives. Their most recent works celebrate female artists, women who are able to create original lives for themselves. They are not always artists in the traditional sense of creating a product, but they are artists in that they are authors of their lives. Godwin and Smith's female artists must balance their individual needs against their duties to others. Since traditional narratives for women have for so long required women to be self-denying and nurturing, to the neglect of their personal discovery and fulfillment, women do not find it easy to balance their needs against the needs of others. Godwin questions whether or not women can possibly find the time and energy needed to develop themselves and their art within the traditional roles of wife and motherhood, which demand so much time, energy, and denial. Smith
acknowledges this dilemma as well, but she is more concerned with validating a neglected form of female art that is private and nurturing in nature, and her artists are often more comfortable with their roles as wives and mothers. However, both Smith and Godwin acknowledge that their artists' struggle to create original lives is an ongoing process that requires the courage to use one's imagination and reject prescriptive narratives such as that of the Southern lady.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: THE LEGACY OF THE SOUTHERN LADY

I. In The Ethnic Southerners, historian George Brown Tindall claims that the ideas that make us view the South as a culturally distinct region of the United States are inextricably intertwined with mythology. Adopting Mark Schorer’s definition of myth as "a large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience" (qtd. in Tindall 23), Tindall admits that cultural myths are useful in that they help us to create meaning and organize our response to the world in which we live. But he also admits that in creating myths, there is "always a danger of illusion, a danger that in ordering one’s vision of reality, the myth may predetermine the categories of perception, rendering one blind to things that do not fit into the mental image" (Tindall 23).

When perception is thus skewed, creativity, imagination, and art are sacrificed to society’s need to justify its existence, as in much of the South’s antebellum literature. The work of many artists was crippled by their need to justify the South’s commitment to slavery, for the focus of their art became the glorification of static images of the beneficent plantation rather than the creation of new narratives. This danger of limited vision and thwarted creativity is also obvious in the myths that surround white Southern women, especially the myth of the Southern lady, whom Anne Goodwyn Jones characterizes as "compliant, deferential, sacrificial, nurturant, domestic, quietly and uncontroversially intelligent, chaste, beautiful, cultured, religious, and loyal to her region and its definition of herself" (Tomorrow 352).¹

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The concept of the lady in the nineteenth-century South is often referred to as a "myth," an "image," or an "ideal." These terms all suggest that the Southern lady is not a reality but rather a fiction, created and used by a society to inspire a certain kind of behavior in the women for whom it is designed. Yet while the image of the Southern lady is a static figure on a pedestal, the women who subscribe to the image must live in time and motion. In response to this contradiction, the creators of the image must also establish a narrative after which Southern women may pattern their behavior. The narrative informed by the image of the Southern lady tells a certain story to Southern women, one that promises them love, fulfillment, and security if they will mold themselves to fit the prescribed behavior of the Southern lady.

Narratives and fictions are not necessarily bad for women. We all use and need narratives as points of reference. They help us to organize our lives by suggesting possible behaviors that we imaginatively don when searching for our own responses to various new situations. The problem with the narrative of the Southern lady is twofold. First, the narrative of the Southern lady asks women to limit their individual expression and creativity by conforming to strict codes of behavior. Narratives become negative when they prescribe to us behaviors that limit our freedom rather than offering us a range of choices from which to build our own unique stories. Second, the narrative of the Southern lady does not offer women true freedom to move and create because it demands that they mold themselves into static images that represent their society's ideal of womanhood. As human beings, the Southern women must move in order to live; however, the movement of the Southern lady narrative can be likened to "running in
place." No true growth or change is permitted because the women always have before them the goal of becoming an image idealized by society.

At various stages in their lives, the women must freeze into poses that will guarantee them the approval of society; therefore, the movement offered by the narrative of the Southern lady does not lead to real change and self-development but simply to various stagnant and stereotypical images. The first movement permitted by the Southern lady narrative works quite consciously towards molding young Southern women into the static image of the innocent Southern girl. The innocent Southern girl is expected to be obedient, free of sexual desire and any knowledge of the world's vices, and well-schooled in the domestic arts. All of these qualities are considered indispensable to her future as wife, mother, and homemaker. As she approaches adolescence, the Southern girl is expected to become the beautiful, charming, and flirtatious Southern belle. The Southern belle is expected to cultivate a lovely and captivating outward appearance at the expense of developing her mind, for her first goal in life is to attract men, especially a suitable husband. She is allowed to be silly, coy, and even trivial and irresponsible, as long as she maintains her virginity and her impeccable manners.

The next stage in the Southern woman's life, however, is often a rude awakening to Southern women who have become accustomed to the relatively carefree existence of the Southern belle. When she becomes a wife and mother, all quite possibly within the space of a year or two, the Southern woman has now achieved her ultimate goal in life, and she will be expected to play the role of lady of the manor until
her death. No longer allowed to be trivial or irresponsible, the Southern lady is
expected to display not only beauty and charm but moral strength as well. She is
expected to provide an example of virtue, piety, and purity that will inspire her
children, husband, and servants. Upon a pedestal, the Southern lady is eternally
inspiring, but also eternally stifled, for her responsibilities as a model of perfection
permit her neither the freedom to express her individual needs and desires nor the
freedom of making and learning from her own mistakes. Thus any movement allowed
by the narrative of the Southern lady works to shape women into stagnant and stifling
poses rather that allowing them any real opportunities for change and growth.

In this dissertation I analyze the works of two contemporary white Southern
women authors, Lee Smith and Gail Godwin, whose works illustrate that the narrative
of the Southern lady, despite its nineteenth-century origins, retains a powerful and
negative influence on many twentieth-century women. By demanding that women
repress their self-expression and individuality in order to conform to a stifling image,
the narrative of the Southern lady thwarts their creative potential.

Yet the narrative of the Southern lady is just one of the prescriptive female
narratives that Smith and Godwin’s modern heroines must confront. They must also
learn to recognize and reject the restrictive female narratives offered by fairy tales,
modern romances, and gothic novels. Like the Southern lady, the fairy tale heroine
becomes a static image. She, too, is beautiful and silent, passively allowing the hero
to rescue her and define her life for her. And while the heroines of modern romances
and gothic novels are involved in narratives that require them to be more active, by
pursuing careers or solving mysteries, they, too, are essentially passive in their relations with men. The heroine of the romance abandons career and self-development when she meets the man of her dreams and subordinates any desires she might have to his. And the independence of the gothic heroine is similarly curtailed when she is "rescued" by the gothic hero. Both Smith and Godwin create heroines who are defeated by their adherence to the limiting narratives of the Southern lady, the fairy tale princess, the romance and gothic heroines. The fairy tale, romance, and gothic novel will be discussed in more detail in the chapters where they are relevant.

Yet both authors also create women who are able to free themselves from these confining narratives by creating unique stories for themselves that respond to their needs for fulfillment in the areas of work and relationships. These women are artists in the sense that they create original narratives for their lives rather than allowing restrictive narratives and images of womanhood to dictate who they can become or how they shall behave. They may borrow certain aspects from the restrictive female narratives, such as a respect for good manners or the importance of nurturing others, that they find useful in their own self-creation; however, they never allow society or a predetermined narrative to shape their lives for them. The original narratives of Smith and Godwin's "artists" offer true movement, for the women grant themselves the right to evolve, change, and learn from their mistakes. The creation of a life narrative is, therefore, an ongoing process rather than a struggle to conform to a predetermined image.
In this introductory chapter I briefly outline the contradictory expectations surrounding the narrative of the Southern lady, focus on how the creativity of nineteenth-century white Southern women who attempted to mold themselves to fit the image of the Southern lady was frustrated and stifled, and suggest reasons behind the image's powerful hold on the nineteenth-century South. Moving on to the twentieth-century, I find that despite the economic, political, and social changes of the past two hundred years, the narrative of the Southern lady lives on as a coercive force in the minds of twentieth-century Southern women, both writers and non-writers. I outline the ways that the narrative of the Southern lady has changed on the surface in response to the increasing economic, political, and social opportunities for women in the latter half of the twentieth-century. Despite these changes though, a New South version of ladyhood similarly restricts, stifles, and asks modern women to become stagnant images that are defined by their relationships to men and children. I provide biographical information on Lee Smith and Gail Godwin which is relevant to their use of the Southern lady's narrative, and then conclude this introductory chapter by outlining the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

II. Arising during the antebellum period under the plantation system, the narrative of the Southern lady made excessive and contradictory demands on the women who attempted to mold themselves to fit the image of the Southern lady. The Southern lady could charm and attract men with her dazzling beauty and grace, yet she was not to be concerned with her outward appearance to the point of showiness or vanity.
While considered physically frail and weak, the Southern lady was morally strong. In 1835, William and Mary scholar Thomas R. Dew wrote "On the Characteristic Differences between the Sexes, and on the Position and Influence of Woman in Society," in which he posited that woman must exert her moral will through the art of gentle persuasion rather than aggressive or forceful behavior:

Grace, modesty and loveliness are the charms which constitute her power. By these, she creates the magic spell that subdues to her will the more mighty physical powers by which she is surrounded. (qtd. in Taylor 170)

She might appear a fragile, social butterfly, but she was simultaneously entrusted with the heavy responsibility of guarding her family's moral health. And the Southern lady was ideally suited for the job, for she was considered innocent of worldly desires and concerns. According to the myth, pure women were not sexual beings; they were "incapable of erotic feeling," and "only men and depraved women were sexual creatures" (Scott 54). The Southern lady's piety and purity were unquestionable, and it was her duty to counsel her husband and children so that they might grow as morally strong as herself. She must work to curb the natural vices to which her husband, as a man, was more susceptible (Scott 5).

Thus, the Southern lady was expected to shape the moral values of her husband without being able to demand behavior changes from him with any kind of aggressive force. Without having any knowledge of the evils of the world, she was to protect the moral health of her children—a difficult and frustrating task. In other words, she was to combat the vices of the world without acknowledging their existence. The theory
insisted that she could accomplish this awesome task by being intuitively rather than analytically intelligent, and her natural piety and purity should allow her to set a good example and make the right decisions for her family. Yet when real women attempted to incorporate these contradictory demands into their lives, they were bound to feel confused, frustrated, and inadequate.

The journals of nineteenth-century Southern women who were in the position to attempt to live up to the ideal of the Southern lady show just how inadequate and frustrated these women felt in trying to become their society’s model of perfection. In 1862, when she was just nineteen, Sarah Morgan, the youngest daughter of a prominent Baton Rouge attorney, began a journal in which she expresses her feelings on the responsibilities placed upon young Southern women entering marriage. Although her statement is a criticism of young Southern women rather than their education, her words still indicate that she doubts the adequacy of young Southern women’s training for their social position as guardians of their families’ moral health:

Have I not noticed the thousands of young mothers around me, and wondered if they ever for a moment thought of the dreadful responsibility resting on them? Have I not seen women who were ignorant that they had souls to save, undertake the charge of innocent young spirits fresh from Heaven, without a thought of the consequences or a qualm of conscience? (81)

Moreover, she expresses fears that she could never live up to the ideal behavior demanded of her by society:

Dont I know that if I had half a dozen children to take care of, who depended on me for every thing, that I could no more do my duty than
I could become an angel, and that in less than a year I would be a nervous peevish ill tempered vixen? (82)

Ironically, becoming "an angel" is just what Sarah's society asks her to do, and it is no wonder that she feels overwhelmed by the demand: "I am humbled and cast down when I compare what I am, with what I should be. Ah! who is perfect on earth? Not I, certainly!" (84).

Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, the daughter of a wealthy Georgia planter and wife of a Confederate officer, expresses similar feelings of inadequacy in her journal, which she kept from 1848 to 1889. Like Sarah Morgan, she knows that she is not the angel on earth that her society asks her to be:

There are depths in every woman's nature which must not be sounded. I have had thoughts which I would not wish my children to know. I have learned that the heart is desperately wicked and wondered that knowing our own hearts as we learn to know them that we are so lacking in sympathy for those who have their trials too. (Thomas 305-306)

Ella Thomas refers to her "skeletons in the closet" (305), and, though she never clearly defines what hers are, she suggests that they are evil and must be hidden from sight, even her own. In her journal, she advises herself, "Shut the door upon them and keep it locked" (306). Perhaps she feels that if her less than pure thoughts can remain hidden, even from herself, she may be able to will them out of existence. With the ideal of the spotless Southern lady as their constant model, it is no wonder that many Southern women felt the need to hide their true feelings from the world and even from themselves. Thus, their need to express their individuality and work out their own
responses to life's dilemmas was curbed by the demand that they conform to the narrative of the Southern lady.

The expectation that Southern women were always to submit to the wills of their husbands or fathers further limited their self-expression and creative participation in their communities. As a wife, the Southern lady never opposed her husband's will or even showed her displeasure, no matter how bad her husband's behavior was. She always had complete confidence in her husband's judgment, and if she disagreed, she suffered in silence (Scott 6). According to Thomas Dew, woman should not give utterance to her passions and emotions like a man . . . . She is thus frequently required to suppress the most violent feelings; to put a curb on her most ardent desires, and at the same time to wear a face of contentment and ease which may impose upon an inquisitive and scrutinizing world. (qtd. in Taylor 171-72)

Dew was attempting to generalize upon the behavior of all women, but his views, coming out of William and Mary college in 1835, clearly helped to shape the ideal of the Southern lady.

In The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, Anne Firor Scott attempts to answer the question of why Southern women tolerated the narrative of the Southern lady, which kept them confined and subordinate. She concludes that they were indoctrinated at a very young age by churches, schools, parents, books, and so forth to believe that if they conformed to the narrative they would be loved and honored. And if they refused to conform to the narrative, they would be viewed as unladylike, and they would be rejected by society (Scott 20). Yet just as important is these
women's belief that they were fulfilling God's plan for humanity in assuming their "rightful" place in the hierarchy of mankind. Moreover, nineteenth-century Southern women would have absorbed their religion's doctrine that the denial of self actually leads to self-knowledge. In *The Enclosed Garden: Women and Community in the Evangelical South, 1830-1900*, Jean Friedman insists that nineteenth-century Southern women believed that "knowledge of self lay in the struggle to understand the other" (34). Moreover, "Victorian women believed that the powerless held a formidable weapon in the example of self-sacrifice," for "implicit in the female ideology was the hope that the man could be converted to a holy union, a relationship modeled on the spiritual union of Christ and the Church" (Friedman 34). Yet Friedman insists that husbands resisted their wives' efforts to build an equal partnership. The marital union was, like the myth of the Southern lady, an ideal rather than a reality.

Moreover, real Southern women had a difficult time following this code of self-sacrifice, silence, and submission. Ella Thomas, concerned that her husband was neglecting the farm, attempts to discuss the subject with him and finds it difficult to assert opinions and interest while still wearing the mask of the Southern lady:

> Tea over & the children in bed we commence upon the one theme of business. I listen and when I would urge some step being taken Mr Thomas complains that my manner is too decided. Like Byron I imagine he likes "a low sweet voice in a woman." I am here all day. I see how idle the servants on the farm are but what can I do? If I tell him it worries him and causes him to indulge in some expressions "both loud and deep." He begs me not to interfere and I try to obey him & be indifferent. If the corn crib is exposed, if the hands remain longer than they ought at 12 o'clock I try not to let it annoy me, but I can't help begrudging them the allowance which they so promptly claim and think that it lessens our chance to pay our accounts. (327)
Ella hesitates to voice her opinions, for she does not wish to be viewed as unladylike by her husband. Nevertheless, she clearly is frustrated by her inability to express herself on matters of the farm over which she has both knowledge and concern.

Perhaps the popularity of journal-writing in the lives of nineteenth-century, upper-class Southern women had much to do with the fact that the journal was a means of self-expression in which they could indulge without fear of recrimination. Ella Thomas often noted her journal's role as confidant, yet she also expressed a fear of revealing her most questionable thoughts even in her private journal:

How beautifully Richard Henry Wilde has expressed this idea

"There are some thoughts we utter not Deep treasured in our inmost soul—
Ne'er expressed—ne'er forgot."

And thus it is, there are some thoughts we utter not and not even to you my Journal faithful record of little events, which make up the sum of human ills, not even to you can every thought be confided—yet there are some moments when I must write—must speak or else the pent up emotions of an overcharged heart will burst or break. Here I can calm my tumultuous emotions—With a heart throbbing and an agitated form. (128)

Clearly, Thomas has a powerful need to express herself, yet even in her journal, she does not reveal her thoughts freely for fear of someone reading them.

Southern women may have felt frustrated by their limited opportunities for self-expression, yet the narrative of the Southern lady not only denies expression, it also denies the concept of "self." Anne Goodwyn Jones asserts:
The image wearing Dixie's diadem is not a human being; it is a marble statue, beautiful and silent, eternally inspiring and eternally still. Rather than a person, the Confederate woman is a personification, effective only as she works in others' imaginations. Efforts to join person and personification, to make self into symbol, must fail because the ideal of Southern womanhood specifically denies the self. (Tomorrow 4)

It is this denial of self that Sarah Morgan attempts to identify and protest in her journal. As she conveys her desire for something more out of life than what she sees in her destiny as a Southern lady, she also reveals her frustration at being unable to discover her personal identity or self:

Is this to be my life forever? I have such an insatiable craving for a better one! . . . . I know not what the desire is; but sometimes when it sweeps over me, half defined, though still too vague to express, I seize it with avidity, and I almost understand it, when at the instant it has passed away. What is it? . . . . Sometimes it comes on in awe, as of Eternity; then in I cant say what; for sometimes, standing before a mirror where I could perfectly see myself, the thought has suddenly occurred to me "What, or who am I?" and it is so abrupt, so unanswerable, that a feeling of dreadful awe creeps over me at the sight of this curious, mysterious figure, so familiar, yet so unknown, and while vainly endeavoring to reassure myself, and prove that it is only Myself, the dread, unspeakable mystery grows darker and darker, and though seeing myself, I loose [sic] all sense of my personal identity. (154-55)

Sarah is worried about questions of identity despite the fact that her culture is more concerned that she fit into the patterns of behavior prescribed for the Southern lady.

Moreover, Sarah recognizes the pretense involved in adopting the image of the Southern lady as one's own. After engaging in a social visit with some local girls, she writes in her journal,
I felt tempted to put my hand to the back of my head, or peep over their shoulders to see if we were not all hollow, and just painted masks, jabbering empty nothings. As soon as they left . . . , I turned myself round and round before the nearest mirror, to convince myself that I was whole, instead of being split in two like a young spring chicken, and deprived of heart and brains. (579)

Sarah’s imagery suggests that succeeding as a Southern lady involves creating a split personality, adopting a self for public view, one that fits the image of the Southern lady, and retaining a separate inner self, hidden from the eyes of the community.

Yet, no matter how limiting to Southern women and their individual growth, the Southern lady and her role as moral guardian of the Southern patriarchal system became so dominant in the antebellum South that the image of the lady came to represent the South itself. Scholars William R. Taylor and Richard H. King assert that the legends about plantation life popularized by writers such as John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms developed in response to social changes in the United States after 1830:

Writers in both sections of the country, particularly popular novelists, found much that troubled them in the restless, acquisitive society of those times. To these writers and their readers, the Revolutionary era seemed the age of heroes, one marked by public-spirited heroism and cultural achievement. By contrast, American society in the age of Jackson seemed hopelessly materialistic and a cultural wasteland. Decline had set in. (King 28)

The South was viewed as less "venal" than the materialistic Northeast and more stable than the "chaotic" West, and the plantation legend exaggerated and glorified this image of the South as a refuge of cultural achievement and genteel taste (King 28).
Moreover, fearing democratic changes that challenged their aristocratic social system, Southerners, in particular, "grasped for symbols of stability and order to stem their feelings of drift and uncertainty and to quiet their uneasiness about the inequities within Southern society" (Taylor 146).

In The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945, Dan Singal also acknowledges that although the Jacksonian era is often viewed as an optimistic period of progress and democratic reform, there also existed an "undercurrent of anxiety concerning the direction the country was headed coupled with a nostalgia for the supposed stability and decorum of the past" (14). Raised upon the Victorian ideals of "order, restraint, and moderation," nineteenth-century Americans feared the "excessive individualism" and the fact that "the race now went to the man with the most stamina, ambition, and competitive skill, and not necessarily to those well-born or most deserving" (14).

Since Southern men were "necessarily acquisitive" in order to compete economically with the rest of the nation, Southern women were "to provide society with the necessary moral restraints" (Taylor 147). Taylor notes, however, that very clear limits were placed upon the Southern lady's moral authority: "She was given the Home on the understanding that her benevolence was to stop at the bounds of the family" (148). For this reason, the Southern lady, though integral to the plantation legend, cannot be a hero of a narrative. In The Figure of the Hero in Southern Narrative, Michael Kreyling points out that in order to fulfill his narrative function, the hero must be both "warrior" and "wooer": in order to ensure the cultural survival of the South's
ideal civilization, the hero must "conquer the foe outside the close familial bounds of his group" and "he must also find and wed the ideal woman inside those bounds" (25). Confined as she is to the domestic, the Southern lady cannot battle the problems of the larger world. Despite her moral force, the Southern lady's passivity in relation to men renders her incapable of accomplishing change (without the aid of her hero) in a patriarchal world. The narrative of the Southern lady, therefore, offers the Southern woman no true opportunities for movement or change because she must always become an image that will submit to masculine authority.

Nevertheless, the Southern lady became a symbol for nineteenth-century Southerners of the South itself because they insisted that the Southern lady was a morally superior being just as they viewed the South as morally superior to the materialistic North. Peggy Prenshaw also points out that since the Southern lady was modeled upon the "medieval fair lady of England," she was "viewed not merely as genteel refinement but as integral to the aristocratic social structure" of the South ("Southern Ladies" 76). Thus, the Southern lady came to symbolize the moral superiority, cultural refinement, and aristocratic stability of an idealized South.

Both before and after the war, an attack upon the image of the Southern lady became an attack upon the entire South (Jones Tomorrow xii). In The Mind of the South, W. J. Cash asserts that to the Confederate South, the Southern lady became "the mystic symbol of [the South's] nationality in the face of the foe" (89). Rarely was a Southern sermon preached or battle call sounded without reference to the South's goal of glorifying and preserving the honor of the sacred Southern woman. Cash claims,
"At the last, I verily believe, the ranks of the Confederacy went rolling into battle in the misty conviction that it was wholly for her that they fought" (89). Although Cash may be indulging in hyperbole, the Southern lady was, nevertheless, a symbol that the South used in creating its identity.

This powerful identification of the Southern lady with her region is one way in which the image of the Southern lady differs from the British Victorian lady or the American true woman. Both Anne Firor Scott and Anne Goodwyn Jones admit that the image of the Southern lady has much in common with the British Victorian lady and the American true woman, yet they find that the image of the Southern lady is unique in two ways. First, the ideal of the Southern lady became integral to the South's conception of itself. Second, social roles of Southern women were even more confining than those of women elsewhere, and the ideal of the Southern lady seems to have lasted longer than the ideal of the lady that was present in nineteenth-century American and English culture as a whole.

The powerful position that the myth of the Southern lady has held in Southern culture has caused many scholars to ponder over its origins. They search for the roots of the myth by analyzing the needs of the nineteenth-century Southern patriarch and his concern for the survival of the plantation system. For instance, Anne Goodwyn Jones claims that the image of the Southern lady was "born in the imaginations of white, slaveholding men" and that it was tied to these white slave holders' questions concerning race, sex, and class (Tomorrow 8). Many, including W.J. Cash, Anne Scott, and Lillian Smith, have found the origin of the image of the Southern lady in the
Southern white aristocrat's need to assert racial supremacy. According to this theory, the Southern lady's purity keeps her from desiring sex, especially sex from a black man. And since the white man "protects her from the black man's presumably uncontrollable sexual desire, the Southern lady's genes are pure white" (Jones, *Tomorrow* 9). Thus in both the antebellum and postbellum South, the Southern lady was glorified as a symbol of the pure, white, legitimate line. However, the white man needed to release his sexual desires somewhere, and he chose to do so in the company of the black slave. To placate his guilty conscience, the white slaveholder raised the white Southern lady higher and higher on her pedestal as the black woman became a symbol of wanton sexuality (Jones, *Tomorrow* 10). Lillian Smith, in *Killers of the Dream*, puts it this way: "The more trails the white man made to the backyard cabins, the higher he raised his wife on the pedestal when he returned to the big house" (103).

Jones sees even deeper roots of the image in the patriarchal western traditions brought over from Europe. The separation of women into whore or angel, total depravity or complete purity, originated in the western myths that evolved from Christian doctrine. This dichotomy of angel and whore manifested itself in the South by having the white Southern lady represent purity and virtue while the black slave woman represented sexual promiscuity and evil (Jones, *Tomorrow* 12). These theories concerning the roots of the image of the Southern lady suggest why Sara Evans claims that the image of the Southern lady "revealed more about the needs of white planters than about the actual lives of women, white or black" ("Women" 1353).
Even during the nineteenth century, the image of the Southern lady was a myth rather than a reality, a luxury of Southern aristocrats. The poor white women and the slaves, who sweated in the fields and factories, had no time to worry about conforming to the lofty ideals of the Southern lady (Scott xi). In Within the Plantation Household (1988), Elizabeth Fox-Genovese agrees that the image of the Southern lady was a myth cultivated by the upper class, yet she also testifies to the power of this myth in shaping cultural ideas and conventions:

The figure of the lady, especially the plantation mistress, dominated southern ideals of womanhood. That slaveholding ladies were massively outnumbered by nonslaveholding or small-slaveholding women challenges any easy assumption about the relation between the ideal and reality but does not undermine the power of the ideal. (47)

Fox-Genovese has made an important contribution to the study of the ideal of the Southern lady in paying close attention to issues of race and class. She claims that despite the fact that nineteenth-century Southern women shared the "experience of life in rural households dominated by men" (43), most of these women did not feel themselves to be "sisters." According to Fox-Genovese, class relations between nineteenth-century Southern women remained "essentially hierarchical" (43). In most cases, white women who owned many slaves viewed white women who owned fewer slaves or no slaves at all as inferior, and all white women viewed black women as inferior. Fox-Genovese insists upon the importance of class distinction to the ideal of the lady in her comment, "Women, to be ladies, have to have servants" (197). Thus, the image of the Southern lady was not only integral to gender perceptions, but to class
and race perceptions as well. If a woman was considered to be a Southern lady, by implication, she also belonged to a certain race and class.

Despite its detachment from the real lives of most Southern women, the myth of the Southern lady nonetheless retained its hold upon the Southern imagination, perhaps because the myth had become a symbol of the South itself. And since the image of the Southern lady is so central to the nineteenth-century Southerner's regional identity, the image is a useful tool with which to measure Southerners' resistance to change, and for white Southerners, "change was the evil word," Lillian Smith insists (16).

After their defeat by the North, Southerners (and also Northerners) tended to look back nostalgically upon the Old South as a glorious way of life that had been destroyed by new and vulgar economic and social changes. In The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin Before the War (1901), James Battle Avirett reflects upon the "purer and happier days of the Republic, when citizenship at the South was happily exempt from those saddening forms of change and decay which, in these latter days, have come from bad and worse statesmanship growing out of a cheapened and debauched ballot" (8). Just as the plantation stories of writers such as Thomas Nelson Page idealize the Old South and helped popularize the myths of the Southern gentleman, the Southern lady, and the contented slaves, personal narratives such as Avirett's paint an idyllic portrait of the Old South as they call upon their readers to keep the old traditions alive through memory:
Like the last of the Mohicans, the old planter and his race are dead. Dead and yet to memory dear. Yes! Yes! They will live as long as Memory is true to her trust and Virtue stands crowned by a grateful posterity. This book "The Old Plantation" may be read by few or many. It matters not. But the heart in the old life—the social charm in the old life—the loving confidences between the two races in the old life—the high integrity in politics and devotion to the Constitution of the old life—the beautiful form of womanhood with the striking type of manhood in the old life—all growing out of their religious homes, faithfully guarded, under the conservative forces of the old life—these—these shall never fade away. (Avirett 200)

Clearly, Avirett cherishes a romantic view of the old South, and he believes it possible to keep the old values that he cherishes alive, even in the midst of the many changes the South was experiencing.

In resisting what they saw as dangerous and unhealthy changes taking place in the South, Southerners often called upon the Southern lady as an example of the purity, honor, and moral sanctity that they felt characterized the antebellum South. When describing his mother's visit to comfort grieving slaves, Avirett admits to describing an angel on earth:

Ah, a very Evangel she appears to me now—what a very angel of God does this mother appear to her own boy, gray-haired though he may be, as she seems to bear in her gentle hands the two mild-white doves, as it were, of Charity and Religion—going on her way to touch the hearts of these dusky, sorrowing ones, servants though they be, with the more than magic wand of woman's sympathy. (129-30)

By glorifying the Southern lady and promoting her as a symbol of the antebellum South, Southerners were able to ignore the gross social injustices and moral corruption that pervaded slavery and the plantation system.
III. Even into the twentieth century, Southerners clung to the myths of the Old South, especially the image of the Southern lady, as they resisted the disturbing changes that were taking place around them. In *The Making of a Southerner* (1947), Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin describes inheriting the "Lost Cause" as a child. Like Avirett, Lumpkin’s father believed that it was every Southerner’s duty to instill within his children the values of the Old South; therefore, he established the family’s "Saturday Night Debating Club" in which the children would argue topics of Southern problems and Southern history with their father acting as judge:

how the plaster walls of our parlor rang with tales of the South’s sufferings, exhortations to uphold her honor, recitals of her humanitarian slave regime, denunciation of those who dared to doubt the black man’s inferiority, and, ever and always, persuasive logic for her position of "States Rights," and how we must at all times stand solidly together if we would preserve all that the South "stood for." (125)

Steeped in the myths of the Old South, Lumpkin grew into a young Southern lady who knew the woman’s place in her society:

to sit silent when men were speaking; not to pit [her] opinions against the more knowing male’s; indeed, to look on woman as a figure on a pedestal—Southern woman, that is—to be treated accordingly; even to regard her as a creature of intuition who was meant to lean her feeble strength on the firm, solid frame of a male protector and guide. (185-86)

Once again, the narrative of the Southern lady works to curb female creativity and independence. Yet, Lumpkin was also taught by her family, if perhaps contradictorily, to develop her mind, and she was allowed the possibility that she might do something with her life in addition to taking her proper place in the home. With education came
a questioning mind that Lumpkin eventually turned to the myths surrounding her sacred South.

Virginia Foster describes a similar childhood upbringing in an article in *The New South*, "The Emancipation of Pure, White, Southern Womanhood" (1971). She, too, grew up during the early 1900s indoctrinated in the glories of the Old South:

The Confederacy was still sacred when I was young and when I was about twelve years old, I began being a page at the annual State Confederate Reunion. All the nice girls in town, and a few of the not-so-nice girls, between the ages of twelve and twenty were always asked to serve in some way when the veterans came to town. We dressed up and rode in the parade and listened to the speeches about the Lost Cause and Pure, White Southern Womanhood, of which we were the prime examples. I got the feeling that the Civil War had been fought just for me, entirely in my behalf and I wept for the Lost Cause and waved my Stars and Bars and left very proud, indeed. (51)

And like Lumpkin, Foster discovered at a young age what was expected of Southern women. A tall, big-boned, near-sighted girl who liked to read, Foster realized that she fell short of the feminine ideal prescribed by her society:

I am sure my mother used to despair of me and my father said I was bound to grow up to be an old maid school teacher. I even wore glasses which I knew was fatal. To be smart was also considered fatal, as it would scare the men away, and the best recipe for "southern charm" seemed to be beauty, lovely clothes, stupidity, and also enthusiasm, to have lots of pep and to be admiring and make the men feel good. (51)

The ideal of feminine perfection that Foster gleans from her family and friends denies female intellectuality and demands that women pattern their behavior to please men rather than themselves.
Perhaps because she did not fit the feminine ideal and would need an alternative to married life, or perhaps, as Foster suggests, because her mother wished her to bring home a rich, Northern husband to replenish the failing family fortunes, Foster was sent to Wellesley College where she gradually began to think for herself, and as she puts it, "I felt, in time, that I had become something other than a symbol" (54). Freeing herself from the narrative of the Southern lady meant that Foster could begin to think of herself as a unique individual developing the creative potential within her rather than a stereotypical role played out in response to the demands of others.

Education, so often the key to change, played an important role in exposing the myths of the Old South for these two Southern women and others like them. Yet, the narrative of the Southern lady has not died completely. Women who have come of age in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s may feel far removed from the standards imposed upon nineteenth and early twentieth-century women; however, despite the progress in women's rights that has been achieved in the latter half of the twentieth century, vestiges of the myth of the Southern lady are still with us.

The autobiographical writings of some contemporary Southern women support the contention that the ideal of the Southern lady is present in the minds of modern Southerners. Shirley Abbott, author of Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South, finds that Southern women are plagued by feelings of inadequacy when confronted with the ideal of the Southern lady. Discussing why modern Southern women flee the South, Abbott claims that, at least in part, they are running away from, "the ramshackle mythology of ladies and belles, virtuous Christian motherhood, and all the rest of it,
sometimes in loathing but as often as not with a touch of regret for their own failure to measure up" (192).

In *Fatal Flowers: On Sin, Sex, and Suicide in the Deep South*, Rosemary Daniell paints an even stronger portrait of the Southern woman’s plight. The central theme of her autobiography is the way Southern women are consumed by guilt and driven to self-destruction when they fail to live up to purity, beauty, and self-sacrifice of the ideal. From childhood, Daniell absorbed the idea that a woman only has value through her relationship with a man: "It was the ‘right’ of each good Southern woman to be supported by a man; the degree of his support was the measure of her goodness" (7). She grew up believing self-denial, subservience, and self-control to be the ruling guidelines of feminine behavior. Ambition, self-expression, and independence are not feminine attributes in her society; therefore, when she yearned for these qualities, she felt guilty and trapped:

I perceived my mother, grandmothers, sister, daughters—and all the women whose roots I shared—as netted in one mutual silken bondage. Together, we were trapped in a morass of Spanish moss, Bible Belt guilt, and the pressures of a patriarchy stronger than in any other part of the country. (18)

And, like Abbott, she claims that her feelings of entrapment, though not unique to Southern women, are nonetheless more severe because of her Southern heritage.

In their article, "Ladies: South by Northwest," Jaqueline Boles and Maxine P. Atkinson questioned a group of Southern women from these two different regions on the behavior and temperament of the lady. From researching historical documents,
diaries, novels, and memoirs, Boles and Atkinson came up with thirteen behavioral characteristics and twenty temperamental characteristics of the Southern lady. First, Boles and Atkinson wanted to know if the respondents agreed with the historical ideal behavior and temperament of the lady; then they wanted to know the extent to which women in both regions believed that they themselves lived up to the ideal image.

From their findings, Boles and Atkinson conclude that Southern women are more likely to agree with the historical ideal of the lady than the Western women; however, they are less likely to think that they themselves live up to the image. Yet Boles and Atkinson do not suggest that the Western women polled are actually more ladylike than the Southern women. Instead, they conclude,

Our findings suggest that today it is the Southern woman who feels ambivalent, torn between her desire to emulate the true Southern lady and her feelings of personal inadequacy for being unable to do so. . . . Our sample of Southern women feel they have fallen short of the mark despite their best intentions. (137)

This study of a small group of Southern women suggests that the narrative of the Southern lady still dominates the minds of modern Southern women.

Susan Middleton-Keirn discusses similar findings in her article, "Magnolias and Microchips: Regional Subcultural Constructions of Femininity." Middleton-Keirn interviewed blue/pink collar women in the Alabama (Magnolias) and in the Central Valley of California (Microchips). She finds that while the actual conditions of the women in the two different regions do not differ significantly, what does differ is their beliefs about their appropriate gender roles. For example, although the Southern
respondents worked outside of the home, they did so for financial reasons, many of them expressing the wish that if it were financially possible, they would rather remain in the home as housewives and/or mothers. Many more of the Western respondents mentioned that they would work outside the home whether they needed to or not. This difference does not suggest a laziness in Southern women, but rather a strongly held belief that their rightful place in society is in the home. When asked their definition of women's appropriate role in society, most of the Southern respondents offered marriage and children as the appropriate goal of women, while 64% of the Western respondents expressed an egalitarian ideal of women freely choosing their occupation and lifestyle.

Middleton-Keirn sums up the attitudes of the Southern respondents in the following manner:

husbands should be the head of their households; femininity is essential; it is important for men to show proper respect for women by opening doors for them and allowing them to go first; no woman's life is complete until she marries and has children; unless it is absolutely necessary, women with young children should restrict their interests and activities to the home; most women who participate in the women's movement are unhappy misfits; equal political and social rights are not needed or have already been achieved by women. (155)

When asked to define femininity, the Southern respondents replied with traits that sounded very much like those of the nineteenth-century Southern ideal: soft, gentle, quiet, pretty, dainty, passive, motherly, sweet, ladylike, and so forth. Middleton-Keirn concludes that though these same attitudes are found in other areas, the strength and consistency of these stereotypical images and ideas are greater in the South. Despite
the fact that more than half of Southern women have had to seek employment outside the home, "the imagery surrounding the antebellum Southern lady is alive and well" (Middleton-Keirm 157).

IV. The tenacity of the image of the Southern lady in the minds of modern Americans indicates that, despite the strides made, and still being made, by the women's movement to gain power for women in the traditionally masculine realms of education, business, and politics, equality has not been achieved nor have the gender divisions of the patriarchal world been destroyed. Most feminists agree that women are far from reaching the equality they have been seeking. In Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, Susan Faludi questions the popular assumption that American women have achieved equality:

If American women are so equal, why do they represent two-thirds of all poor adults? Why are more than 80 percent of full-time working women making less than $20,000 a year, nearly double the male rate? Why are they still far more likely than men to live in poor housing and receive no health insurance, and twice as likely to draw no pension? Why does the average working woman's salary still lag as far behind the average man's as it did twenty years ago? (xiii)

Faludi goes on to point out how few women hold top level jobs in law and business, and how few hold our highest elected offices. In the areas of business, politics, education, and home life, Faludi cites statistics that illustrate how far women still have to go to achieve the equality with men.
Similarly, in *Feminism Without Illusions: A Critique of Individualism*, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese admits that changes in American law have enabled "mainly middle-class women" to make "significant gains with respect to employment and financial independence" (29), yet she also insists that the "stripping away of legal disabilities has neither revolutionized social relations nor eradicated social and economic disabilities" (74). Modern American women do have many legal rights that previous generations of American women did not have; however, as Susan Faludi and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese point out, modern American women have still not achieved equality with men.

Moreover, relations between modern men and women are still influenced by patriarchal definitions of masculinity and femininity that have kept women subordinate to men. In *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture*, Dorothy Holland and Margaret Eisenhart study women attending two Southern colleges during the 1980s and discover that most of their time and energy is spent cultivating their physical appearances in order to attract men because their ability to attract men and maintain romantic relationships is still what gives them prestige within their peer groups. Unlike the college men, whose prestige within the peer group depends upon "the attention they receive from women and from success at sports, in school politics, and in other areas," women's prestige comes "only from the attention they receive from men" (Holland and Eisenhart 104). The modern Southern woman, who has supposedly been "liberated" by the women's movement of the 1960s and 70s, spends her time and energy on making herself physically appealing to men and putting herself in situations
where she can be seen by and meet men. Once involved in a steady relationship, this same woman "begins to arrange her life to be available to her boyfriend, to do things to help and support her boyfriend, and to participate in social activities chosen by her boyfriend" (Holland and Eisenhart 97-98). Thus, the modern Southern women is not so very far removed from the nineteenth-century Southern lady who also patterned her life to accommodate men and gained her sense of social worth through her relationship with a man.

John Lynxwiler and Michele Wilson, authors of "The Code of the New Southern Belle: Generating Typifications to Structure Social Interaction," similarly find in their study of young Southern women that the new Southern belle, "rather than opting for achievement on her own, achieves through affiliations with men" (117). Lynxwiler and Wilson make a distinction between the Southern lady and the Southern belle; I, however, find that the code of behavior that they associate with the new Southern belle can be directly traced to its nineteenth-century origins in the narrative of the Southern lady. The first rule of the new Southern belle, "never forget your status lest others forget theirs," relates to the Southern lady's concern with maintaining her proper position as a symbol of white aristocracy in the South. Rule number two, "honor the 'natural' distinctions between men and women," explains the new Southern belle's dependence on men for power and prestige and her coquetry. She recognizes that men possess the power in society and assumes that they are driven by their hormones; thus, she adjusts her behavior to please them and gain power through her affiliation with them. The nineteenth-century Southern lady similarly viewed men as more driven by
their sexual needs and recognized her dependence upon them for her position in the world. The third rule of the new Southern belle, "don't be a slut," is simply a slightly looser version of the Southern lady's claim to absolute sexual purity. While the Southern lady was expected to have no interest in sexuality at all, the new Southern belle is allowed to maintain her reputation through "chastity, that is, not being available to one and all, rather than virginity" (Lynxwiler and Wilson 118). Yet this accommodation to the sexually "liberating" 1960s and 70s actually works to further constrain and confuse young Southern women. While the new Southern belle is expected to flirt and "promise sexual accessibility," she is never to cross "that line of being loose or a slut although she may have to 'put out' for her fiance or steady partner" (118). Finally, Lynxwiler and Wilson assert that the new Southern belle "craves confirmation of her appearance from others, especially males" (119). Similarly, the nineteenth-century Southern lady's supposed possession of incomparable physical beauty subjected her to an obsessive concern with her appearance in the eyes of others.

Thus, Lynxwiler and Wilson's "new Southern belle" can be seen as an updated version of the nineteenth-century Southern lady, what I will call a New South version of ladyhood. In her youth, the lady of the New South is best exemplified by the high school cheerleader, whose short skirts and flirtatious ways promise sexual availability, but who must maintain her "chastity," if not her virginity, if she wants to keep her ladylike reputation. She must be cute, popular, and not too brainy in order to cheer boys on and attract their attention, thereby raising her prestige in the eyes of her
community. Jill McCorkle's novel *The Cheerleader* (1984) gives an excellent example of the behaviors expected of the youthful lady of the New South and the effects that these expectations have upon Jo Spencer, a young Southern girl who has trouble confining her free spirit to the prescribed image.

As the "cheerleader" matures, she is expected to take her place in the world as a wife and mother. The New South version of ladyhood may permit the Southern woman to attend college and even pursue a career, but neither her academic life nor her career can be her central concern because she, like the nineteenth-century Southern lady, derives prestige within her peer group from her ability to attract and maintain relationships with men. The lady of the New South must still put the needs of others, in particular husband and children, first. And since her status in the community is attributable to her position as a good wife and mother, her career carries little weight and is often sacrificed for the good of her family. Once married, her status depends not on her own capabilities but on keeping up appearances and presenting the picture of a perfect family to her community. Thus, despite the gains made by the women's movement, the New South version of ladyhood depends, like the narrative of the nineteenth-century Southern lady, upon patriarchal distinctions between men and women that give men the right to be powerful in the outside world and expect women to be dependent on men and assume their "rightful" place as maintainers of domestic harmony.

One need only study the advertising on television to confirm that this kind of persistent underlying sexism still exists not just in the South, though it is perhaps more
entrenched there, but in American society as a whole. In a 1988 study of the image of women in television advertising, Carol Ferrante, Andrew Haynes, and Sarah Kingsley, patterning their study after one done in 1972, had expected to find that since more women have entered the labor force, television advertising would reflect this change and a) women would be shown in more advertisements for products that were once only represented by men  b) women would be used as on-camera product spokesperson more frequently than in 1972, and c) differences in the settings and occupations of male and female characters would have decreased, and women would be portrayed in a wider range of occupations than in 1972. However, Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingley's findings did not support all of their hypotheses. They found that women were not more frequently used to represent products once only represented by men. They could find no significant differences in the gender of on-camera product spokespersons. And although they did find that women were shown less frequently in the home and more frequently in business and "limbo" settings, settings with no discernable location or time frame, they also found that advertisers appeared to "avoid associating women with traditionally male locations and roles" (236). The results of their study, therefore, suggest that advertisements on television have yet to break free of traditional stereotypes of masculinity and femininity.

Perhaps most interesting, Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingley had not expected to find a greater number of women's voices being used as off-camera product spokespersons, and their hypothesis was born out by their study. They explain the lack of change by "a belief that the male voice is more authoritative than the female voice
and hence a better seller" (235). What Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingley express to be a universally held American belief that a male voice is more authoritative than a female voice directly reflects our culture's belief that, despite the women's movement and women's increased participation in the world outside the home, men still have more authoritative power than women. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserts, "Women have gained a panoply of rights from which they were previously excluded, but their gains have not eradicated sexism or revolutionized the relations between women and men" (Feminism 56). Men are still expected to be aggressive, competitive, and ambitious. And while women are allowed to be aggressive and competitive also, they still run the risk of being considered "unfeminine" if they let their ambitions dominate their lives to the point that they neglect the traditional feminine goals of marriage and family.

We can even see some of this attitude that women should not be too ambitious, independent, or aggressive in contemporary news media coverage of our new (and Southern by marriage) "First Lady," Hillary Clinton. Just prior to Clinton's inauguration, Diane Sawyer and Joan London were on Goodmorning America discussing many Americans' fear that the new First Lady might be "too tough and intelligent." Whether Ms. Clinton feels uncomfortable with her new title is unclear, but when asked if she approved of the "First Lady" title, Hillary Clinton felt compelled to respond with enthusiasm that she has always loved the title. Asked if she planned to attend cabinet meetings, she appeased any concern that she might be too aggressive with the response, "Whatever my husband decides." Ms. Clinton, having made the mistake during the campaign of claiming she was no Tammy Wynette to "stand by [her]
man" indiscriminately, has begun to learn that she must make the "appropriate" responses if she wants to keep the favor of the American public. And many Americans appear to want Hillary to be, first and foremost, a lady. The American public cares little about Hillary's opinions or intelligence, what we really want to know is what Good morning America promised to tell us; what Hillary was planning to wear to the various inaugural festivities, in other words, the details of her ladylike image.

Trapped as they are in a patriarchal world that treats men and women as different species of humanity, Southern women may cling to the narrative of the Southern lady as a source of power. They might find it easier to gain access to the masculine spheres of business and politics when they use their prettiness, softness, and "femininity" to charm rather than challenge the men who are in power.

This is not to say that modern Southern women simply use the narrative as a manipulative tool. From the responses of women in the preceding surveys, it is clear that many modern Southern women still believe that their primary function in life is to support their families and keep the home together. Having gained some experience in the masculine world of competition and domination, perhaps modern Southern women have decided that the rewards of masculine striving and competing are not so rewarding after all. A current trend in feminist criticism that seeks to validate traditionally feminine values of caring and nurturing suggests that in a world that still polarizes the individual and the family into masculine and feminine realms, women have found the relational realm to have a value that cannot be ignored. Yet modern Southern women must beware of allowing their distaste for the traditionally masculine traits of aggression
and dominance to persuade them that they should return to the confinement of the
domestic sphere and the pedestal of the Southern lady.

V. Lee Smith and Gail Godwin are twentieth-century Southern women authors
who similarly feel that the narrative of the Southern lady can present a danger to
modern women, for it prevents them from creating original narratives for their own
lives. Despite the century and a half that has elapsed since the narrative of the
Southern lady reigned supreme throughout the South, I find that it remains a useful tool
with which to explore Smith and Godwin's works, for many of their heroines act in
response to vestiges of the narrative that remain in twentieth-century Southern society.

Smith and Godwin's position as Southern women shapes their portrayals of the
narrative of the Southern lady in their works. Lee Smith was born on November 1,
1944, and raised in the small Appalachian town of Grundy, Virginia. Her father was
a native of the area, but her mother's family, though residing on the island of
Chincoteague off the coast of Virginia, traced its roots to the Turlingtons of Richmond
and Baltimore. Thus, Lee Smith's mother, Virginia Marshall Smith, derived her
notions of Southern womanhood from the aristocratic notion of the Southern lady, and
when she moved with her husband to the obscure town of Grundy, she "brought with
her an ideal of class and gentility, a notion of how life should be lived gleaned from
Richmond and Baltimore, and a snobbishness toward her husband's native region that
never quite left her" (D. Hill, Smith 6). Smith was further exposed to aristocratic
notions of ladyhood when she spent her last two years of high school at St. Catherine's
in Richmond, "a private school providing a finishing-school atmosphere for privileged young women" (D. Hill, *Smith* 7). Lee Smith went on to attend Hollins, a small women's college in Virginia also known for its financially and socially elite students. Presently Lee Smith teaches and writes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she can still observe vestiges of Southern ladyhood.

Like Smith, Gail Godwin was born and raised in the South. Although she was born on June 18, 1937, in Birmingham, Alabama, she moved when she was just two-years-old to Asheville, North Carolina, as a result of her parents' separation. In Asheville, Godwin lived with her mother, who supported the family by writing. The character Godwin most patterns after her mother is Kitty Sparks of *The Odd Woman*. Both Kitty and Godwin's mother wrote romance stories that absorbed their heroines into traditional female narratives of wife and motherhood. When Godwin's mother remarried in 1948, she eventually gave up her writing career, burying herself "behind the mask of wifehood" (J. Hill 4). The other strong female role model in Godwin's life was her maternal grandmother, who lived with Godwin and her mother, performing the traditional female role of nurturer by cooking and caring for the family. Godwin's writings clearly show the influence that her grandmother and mother played in shaping her idea of Southern womanhood and pointing out the dangers that prescriptive female narratives present to female creativity. "At five, Godwin says, she chose the typewriter over the stove" (qtd. in J. Hill 3). After high school Godwin attended Peace Junior College in Raleigh, North Carolina, and then went on to obtain a degree in journalism, a decidedly unladylike form of writing, from the University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill. Since 1971, when she obtained her doctorate in the writing program at Iowa University, Godwin has earned her living as a writer, with only intermittent teaching or research assignments at the University of Illinois, Vassar, Iowa, and Columbia. Having fled the South and its restrictive female narratives, Godwin currently lives and writes in Woodstock, New York.\textsuperscript{12}

As women growing up in the South with ambitions to become writers, Smith and Godwin have a special interest in how the narrative of the Southern lady has worked and still works to mold women and stifle their creativity. In \textit{Tomorrow is Another Day: 1859-1936}, Anne Goodwyn Jones analyzes the works of seven Southern white women writers—Augusta Evans, Grace King, Kate Chopin, Mary Johnston, Ellen Glasgow, Frances Newman, and Margaret Mitchell—and she finds that all were "raised to be Southern ladies, physically pure, fragile, and beautiful, socially dignified, cultured, gracious, within the family sacrificial and submissive, yet, if the occasion required, intelligent and brave" (xi). Moreover, Jones insists that for these seven writers, "the tension between the demands of this cultural image and their own human needs lay close to the source of their creativity; that tension is expressed thematically in their fiction, often as the conflict between a public self and a private one or in the imagery of veils and masks" (xi). This conflict between an inner and outer self that owes its origins to the narrative of the Southern lady is similarly manifested in some of Smith and Godwin's characters.

Smith's and Godwin's interest in the how the ideal of the Southern lady affects women's self-concepts puts them into a well-established tradition in Southern literature.
In *Sacred Groves and Ravaged Gardens: the Fiction of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor*, Louise Westling analyzes the works of three Southern white women writers whose works fall primarily between 1940 and 1960 and claims that "despite obvious differences, all three of these writers share preoccupations with feminine identity which are shaped by the traditional Southern veneration of the lady" (5). Westling insists that although Eudora Welty’s Virgie of *The Golden Apples* and Laura Hand of *The Optimist’s Daughter* are able to create independent female identities, their choices exile them from their communities, which still subscribe to prescriptive female narratives such as that of the Southern lady (175). Westling also insists that "neither McCullers nor O’Connor could really manage to envision any positive, active life for women of her own generation" (176). And while Westling admits that the problems these writers’ heroines experience with creating independent female identities are not exclusive to the South, she also insists that "because of the Southern tradition of the lady, the difficulties of defining a positive female self can be felt more intensely there" (183). Similarly, in "Southern Ladies and the Southern Literary Renaissance," Peggy Prenshaw, citing twentieth-century heroines such as Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, Ellen Coldfield in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening*, and Blanche DuBois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, contends that there exists in twentieth-century Southern literature an "endless gallery of failed types who strive to emulate the ideal [of the Southern lady], usually succeeding in one respect or another but who finally either desert the role or fall victim to its impossible contradictions" (82).
Moreover, in *The Southern Belle in the American Novel*, Kathryn Seidel explores how writers of the Southern Renaissance used the image of the "fallen belle," whose narcissism and sexuality are inversions of the Southern lady’s beauty and virtue, to demythologize and criticize South: "Early on, writers saw the belle as their ideal South, pure and noble. More self-conscious and critical modern southern writers use the ‘darker’ side of the belle—the repressed narcissism, etc.—to indicted the Old South or to describe the New" (xiv). And Seidel sees the twentieth-century "fallen belle" to be the natural result of the ideal qualities thrust upon nineteenth-century Southern women:

An entire society that boasts of its women as the most splendid examples of feminine pulchritude, rivaled perhaps only by the fair Dianas of Greece, produces a woman whose appearance is emphasized from babyhood, to the detriment of her intellect, personality, and talents. The girl who is told, in effect, to become a lovely object can become a narcissist, self-admiring as well as admired for her lovely shell. (xv)13

Thus, in focusing on how the narrative of the Southern lady constricts Southern women and thwarts their ability to create original stories for themselves, Lee Smith and Gail Godwin are continuing a popular tradition in Southern literature.

Gail Godwin writes directly about the stagnation and confinement inherent in the narrative of the Southern lady in her article "The Southern Belle." She draws a verbal picture of the typical Southern lady, calling her "Mrs. Stephens." "Mrs. Stephens" is the epitome of polite social behavior and grace under pressure. And according to Godwin, "Mrs. Stephens" feels the need to maintain her "image as ‘gracious’ woman" in order to "protect the ideal of congeniality in a society based on the appearance of congeniality" (emphasis mine; SB 49). Thus, Godwin sees that the world of the
Southern lady is based upon ideals and appearances rather than realities and substance.

Her surface behavior is charming and readily describable:

- soft hands and soft voices; first concern for others, not self; refusal to dwell on subjects of ugliness, unpleasantness, violence, tension, strife;
- suave short-circuiting of all "embarrassing questions"; cultivation and veneration of traditional and beautiful things; impeccable manners;
- spotless "reputation." (SB 52)

However, her inner substance, her identity, exactly who she is, remains a mystery, even to herself. Godwin insists, "Many a Southern woman has died, and more will die, without ever having once strained toward what Jung called 'the task of personality'; without ever having once confronted her true reflection beyond the quicksilver image of what her heritage has prepared her to be" (SB 51).¹⁴

As she reaches adolescence, the point of self-probing and self-discovery for so many young women, the Southern girl is confronted with the narrative of the Southern lady, a ready-made personality that she is expected to adopt. However, since the image of the Southern lady is an ideal, these real Southern women cannot become what their society wants them to become, they can only appear to become it. No person can be always gracious, tactful, modest, elegant, hospitable, pure, or self-sacrificing. Yet, Southern women are given the role model of the Southern lady and are expected to be all of these things. It is this conflict, the split personality described by Sarah Morgan in 1862, that Godwin finds damaging to the psychological health of the Southern woman and detrimental to her struggle for self-discovery. To make matters worse, the very narrative that Southern women are expected to embrace denies the importance of
"self," for the narrative asks them always to put the needs of others before their own needs, to be, in essence, selfless.

It is not only the denial of self demanded by the narrative of the Southern lady that troubles the characters in both Smith and Godwin's fiction. The narrative's insistence on the Southern lady's composure and avoidance of ugliness keeps the Southern woman who adopts the narrative from truly communicating with family and friends, and therefore, she isolates herself. Smith and Godwin's female characters are further limited by the aristocratic notion of class upon which the ideal of the lady rests. By becoming the community's ideal, the Southern lady agrees to reside on a pedestal, further isolating herself from the community she seeks to please.

When asked how the narrative of the Southern lady appears in her novels and short stories, Lee Smith mentions the characters I discuss in Chapter 2 (PC). These female characters cling ferociously to the narrative of the Southern lady in reaction to the modernization and disintegration of order that they see around them. They are usually older, or heavily influenced by older women, and they fight the frightening changes taking place in their lives and in their communities by holding tightly to the untarnished ideal of the Southern lady. These self-styled Southern ladies, Miss Iona of *Fancy Strut* (1973), Miss Elizabeth of *Family Linen* (1985), Mama of "Tongues of Fire" (1990), Stella of "Cakewalk" (1981), and Jennifer of "Artists" (1981), come to see themselves as upholders of the ideals of the Southern past, and they cut themselves off from their modern communities as a result. They view themselves as "a class above" the majority of their neighbors, and, therefore, the narrative of the Southern
lady emerges as an isolating and narcissistic force in Lee Smith's novels. Only Jennifer, the youngest of Smith's willful Southern ladies is able to break free of the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady. Yet rather than creating her own narrative, she simply falls into modern but similarly restrictive narratives of womanhood.

In Chapter 3, I analyze Godwin's female characters who willingly adopt the narrative of the Southern lady or restrictive female narratives such as those of the romance or fairy tale heroines. Like Smith's self-styled Southern ladies, these women, frightened by the challenge of creating an individual identity, have invested in the image of the Southern lady their concept of self. Thus, female creativity is thwarted because these women channel their imaginations into pre-set molds rather than inventing their own narratives. They are also much like Lee Smith's ladies in that while they are, in a sense, controlled by the narrative of the Southern lady, they simultaneously use the narrative as a means of control over a frightening and confusing world. Like Smith's ladies, they resist change by clinging tightly to a familiar role. Moreover, by using the narrative to put themselves above or distance themselves from their neighbors or family members, these women feel that they are gaining power. Yet, this form of empowerment is also what leads them into narcissism and isolates them from their communities.

However, while Edith and Kitty of The Odd Woman (1974), Theodora of A Mother and Two Daughters (1982), and Lily of A Southern Family (1987) do adopt many of the behaviors of the Southern lady and cut themselves off from their families
and friends, they are not as self-destructive as Lee Smith’s self-imposed Southern ladies. They do not isolate themselves or lose touch with reality to the same extent that Smith’s Southern ladies do. Smith’s ladies look upon the image of the Southern lady as an innate aspect of their femaleness; they are much less aware than Godwin’s ladies that they are actually playing a role. The self-awareness of Godwin’s ladies does cause them more inner turmoil and visible anguish than Smith’s ladies experience, for they realize how they are contributing to their own isolation. However, the self-consciousness of Godwin’s ladies also enables them to relate to other women in her novels because all of the women understand the difficulty of escaping the restrictive narratives offered by society, and therefore, they are more willing to make allowances for one another.

Nevertheless, both Smith and Godwin’s Southern ladies isolate themselves to some degree from family as well as community, and their attempts to live up to the ideal of the Southern lady and pass on its legacy are especially damaging to their relationships with their daughters. In The Reproduction of Mothering, Nancy Chodorow points out how important the mother-daughter relationship is to the daughter’s self-development and how closely both mother and daughter identify with each other. The narrative of the Southern lady demands that women keep up appearances to the extent that they often are unable to communicate freely with their daughters, and the mother-daughter relationship is necessarily damaged. Moreover, mothers identify so closely with their daughters, that they want to see them become
Southern ladies like themselves. Therefore, they pass on a narrative that limits their daughters' creativity just as it has limited their own.

Smith and Godwin's female characters discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 use the narrative of the Southern lady as a means of controlling their lives and attempting to control the lives of their daughters. The characters discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 are portrayed by the authors as less manipulative and more victimized; they are the damaged daughters. Chapter 4 focuses on how the narrative of the Southern lady inhibits self-expression and individuality in four of Smith's characters, Sybill and Myrtle of Family Linen (1985), Brooke of Something in the Wind (1971), and Crystal of Black Mountain Breakdown (1980). These women mistakenly attempt to discover their own identities by trying on a role that society presents as suitable. They attempt to conform to either the nineteenth-century narrative of Southern lady or to modern, yet similarly confining, narratives of womanhood. These are Smith's transitions figures, yearning to free themselves, yet trapped among female narratives that confine rather than liberate. These women split their selves as they attempt to accommodate contradictory images or maintain an intact sense of self beneath their surface acquiescence to constrictive female narratives. Rather than using their imaginations to create their own narratives, Sybill, Myrtle, Brooke and Crystal follow prescribed scripts, and they lose their creative potential for self-creation. Allowing themselves to become entrapped by restrictive female narratives, they either destroy their opportunities to become a part of their community by isolating and distancing themselves from those around them, or they become passive victims unable to achieve
self-fulfillment. Only Brooke appears to fully recognize the restrictions imposed upon her by the narrative of the Southern lady, yet Smith reveals Brooke’s frustration without exploring how she might create her own narrative.

Smith’s writings suggest that when the community demands that the Southern woman conform to the narrative of the Southern lady, it is sacrificing the Southern woman as an individual to the ideal of the Southern lady as a cultural phenomenon. Icons are not only isolated; they are also refused the freedom to be individuals. When Southern women allow themselves to be defined by the narrative of the Southern lady, they limit their sense of self to a façade turned to the community.

Godwin, like Smith, also creates heroines who are victims of the narrative’s self-denying aspect. Chapter 5 focuses on these women, who can be grouped together in their confusion and tendency to search for themselves by searching without rather than within. Francesca of Glass People (1972), Dane of The Perfectionists (1970), Lydia of A Mother and Two Daughters (1982), and Justin of The Finishing School (1985) are hampered in their search for self by their willingness to meet the expectations of others rather than discovering their own needs. Like Smith’s confused heroines, Godwin’s frustrated daughters are defeated by their acceptance of either the narrative of the Southern lady or other narratives such as the gothic novel, the romance story, or the fairy tale, which similarly confine women to roles that demand self-repression and submission to male authority. Only Justin, who is removed from the South during her formative years, is able to escape restrictive female narratives and create an original life story.
Smith and Godwin do see improvement with the passing of time. Not surprisingly, their most adamant Southern ladies are usually the grandmothers or mothers of the heroines of the stories. Having matured before the women's movement of the 1960s reintroduced to mainstream American society the goals of female independence, equality in the work force, and freedom from limiting concepts of femininity, these women are most controlled by the narrative of the Southern lady. Yet they also use the narrative, constrictive and isolating though it may be, to gain a sense of power for themselves and give them a sense of identity. In contrast, heroines such as Smith's Brooke and Crystal, or Godwin's Francesca and Dane, sense that the narrative of the Southern lady or similarly constrictive female narratives are failing them, but they cannot seem to extricate themselves from their influence. Rather than having their imaginations liberated by the new opportunities available to women in the twentieth-century, these confused daughters ricochet between prescriptive female narratives rather than creating their own. In their early works, Smith's *Something in the Wind* and *Blackmountain Breakdown*, and Godwin's *Glass People* and *The Perfectionists*, both authors exhibit a lack of faith that their heroines can escape the negative affects of patriarchal narratives that define them only in relation to men.

However, Smith and Godwin's more recent novels do express their hope for today's Southern women, for in them, Smith and Godwin create heroines who are able to resist confining female narratives, assert their individuality, and exercise their creativity. Chapter 6 discusses Smith's Sally of *Oral History* (1983), Ivy of *Fair and Tender Ladies* (1988), Billy Jean of "Saint Paul" (1981), Florrie of "Cakewalk" (1981),
and Candy of Family Linen (1985), who do not seem to be trapped by the narrative of the Southern lady at all. Instead, these women are either unaware of the behavior expected of the Southern lady, or they consciously reject a stereotype that they realize limits their individuality and capacity for living. Most importantly, these women ignore the class distinctions and the need to keep up appearances upon which the myth of the Southern lady is founded, and, therefore, they are able to participate fully in their communities and effectively nurture their families. These women are mothers who are appealing in their refusal to allow their desire to nurture others to destroy their own efforts toward self-creation. It is within this group of women that Smith creates her most successful artists. Their self-esteem, self-expression and sense of community sets them apart from the women who become entrapped by the narrative of the Southern lady. Rather than becoming caught in the class pretensions and social distinctions that isolate Southern ladies from their communities, these women embrace their neighbors. Their honesty is refreshing when contrasted with the stiff, painted masks of the women who still hope to find meaning in the narrative of the Southern lady.

And through these women, Smith is attempting to expand our notion of art, for their artistic creations are not the traditional paintings, sculptures, novels, or operas, but rather nonpermanent products that are consumed by the community. Smith sees these women as artists in their creation of fulfilling and unique lives for themselves and in their participation in their communities. By recognizing the artistry of traditionally feminine crafts and nurturing rituals, Smith hopes to acknowledge female artists who have been devalued and neglected by patriarchal culture. In Smith’s task to validate a
neglected female artistry, she follows the advice of Gerda Lerner in "The Challenge of Women's History": "we must, for a time, focus on a woman-centered inquiry, considering the possibility of the existence of a female culture within the general culture shared by men and women" (178). Lerner is speaking directly to historians in hopes of discovering a women's history that has been neglected by patriarchal culture. However, her words relate to Smith's concern that a different kind of artistry that females have created, and are presently creating, should be recognized and re-valued by the patriarchal culture that has ignored and devalued it.

By giving us this third group of women, Lee Smith gives us hope for the South, for these women are no less Southern than the Southern ladies of the past. The South, fearful of change, has clung to the image of the Southern lady, for it would like to see itself as a pure and shining moral bastion. But Smith reveals the corruption, destruction, and stagnation beneath the image of the Southern lady. Nevertheless, we are not left to wander endlessly in moral decay and worn-out images. Smith's artists, who reject the debilitating restrictions of the Southern lady's narrative, give the South its future.

Godwin's artists, discussed in Chapter 7, also ultimately reject the narrative of the Southern lady and other restrictive female narratives; however, their struggle to give up the security of the narratives' ready answers is quite evident. Although Godwin's artists may reject the narrative of the Southern lady, they have a hard time resisting its appeal. They often envy their grandmothers the security of unquestioned values and guidelines without seriously considering the possibility of sacrificing their own self-
expression and individuality. Uncomfortable with the self-sacrifice demanded by traditional narratives of wife and motherhood, Godwin focuses on her artists as daughters rather than as mothers. Jane of *The Odd Woman* (1974), the title character of *Violet Clay* (1978), Cate of *A Mother and Two Daughters* (1982), and Clare of *A Southern Family* (1987) flee the South in order to escape definitions imposed upon them by others; however, they must come to terms with their pasts and their families before they can adequately deal with their futures. Nevertheless, as they search for a sense of self, they create their own fictions into which they incorporate what they value from the prescribed female narratives that they encounter. Thus, they are like Smith’s artists in that they do not always create traditional objects of art. Instead, they are artists in their attempts to create original stories for themselves.

The need to take what is useful from the past is shared by the main characters in both Smith and Godwin’s latest works. As Katie Cocker of *The Devil's Dream* (1992) and Margaret Gower of *Father Melancholy’s Daughter* (1991) struggle through their lives, trying to make sense of who they are and their purpose in life, they search both their individual and their families’ pasts in order to understand themselves and their places in their worlds. Katie Cocker is a struggling musical artist who learns to define herself, not by accepting others’ images of her, but rather by developing a personal philosophy of life that incorporates what she decides is valuable from her personal and familial history. Similarly, Margaret Gower must come to terms with her feelings about her parents and her relationship with them before she can develop her own unique way of dealing with the challenges of her life. In *Katie Cocker and*
Margaret Gower, discussed in Chapter 8, Smith and Godwin have created Southern women who can express themselves, pursue their ambitions, and yet maintain fulfilling relationships at the same time. The trick is in balancing a concern with self with a concern for others. Since both Smith and Godwin valorize relationships and community in their works, the communion with others and the concern for others is crucial. Yet, as artists whose heroines are also artists—if not in the traditional sense, at least in the sense that they are artistically shaping their own lives—Smith and Godwin must also valorize ambition and maintenance of a personal identity.

Maintaining the balance between self and other may be difficult in the modern world, but both Smith and Godwin see it as a possibility. Smith and Godwin appear to be striving toward an ideal of autonomy that includes rather than excludes the Other. In "The Oedipal Riddle: Authority, Autonomy, and the New Narcissism," Jessica Benjamin suggests a path to maturity and individuality that is an alternative to oedipal and pre-oedipal models that view authority and domination as the inevitable results of the individual’s struggle to differentiate:

True differentiation means accepting dependency not as dangerous regression but as enjoyable connection. It lies not in the splitting of autonomy and recognition but in accepting the tension of their paradoxical relationships. It means tolerating the ambivalence of being connected to and separate from another without the defense of imagining oneself becoming like some all-powerful other. Only by giving up the aspiration to complete control can both self and other be experienced as vibrantly distinct, as the in the feeling that "I am I and you are you." (207)
Benjamin insists that true autonomy can only be achieved by uniting independence with its supposed opposite, mutual recognition. Smith and Godwin appear to share this definition of autonomy, for their artists cannot achieve their independent ambitions without recognizing the needs of their families and communities.

Lee Smith and Gail Godwin share an interest in the Southern woman’s search for identity and self-expression in a world that represses rather than fosters these needs. Both Smith and Godwin assert that women who allow themselves to be shaped and molded by constrictive female narratives become isolated, stagnant, passive, and voiceless. For both writers, what gives a woman her voice is her ability to make peace with her personal, familial, and collective social past without allowing that past to dictate who or what she will become. In their latest works, Smith and Godwin create new cultural female ideals that encourage women to participate in their communities without being controlled by them.

In Writing a Woman’s Life, Carolyn Heilbrun complains of the lack of models, stories, or narratives for modern women to follow as they seek to create fulfilling, nontraditional lives for themselves, and she challenges women to create new narratives:

We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives. (37)

Rather than relying upon constricting narratives of womanhood, such as the myth of the Southern lady, Smith and Godwin’s strongest characters tell new stories that maintain
a balance between personal identity and communion with others. The artistry of these characters, and of the authors themselves, lies in their ability to imagine enabling narratives for themselves and whatever women may read them.
CHAPTER 2

SMITH: THE PEDESTAL AS A FOUNDATION
FOR NARCISSISM AND ISOLATION

I. Throughout her work, Lee Smith reveals the narrative of the Southern lady to be one that allows no true movement or self-development for the women who permit their lives to be guided by it. Instead, the actions called for by the narrative of the Southern lady lead Southern women to become stagnant images, cut off from their communities and obsessed with presenting an appropriate appearance for society. Lee Smith’s female characters who willfully adopt the narrative of the Southern lady do so because they fear change and value the security that the stagnant image of the Southern lady can provide them. Their creative potential is effectively stifled by the repressive narrative of the Southern lady; however, they remain oblivious to the detrimental effects the narrative has upon their lives.

Lee Smith often portrays her older women as more deeply entrenched in the myths of the Old South and their roles as Southern ladies. This is not surprising, for they matured during eras in which the available narratives for young women to follow were much narrower even than they are today. Women such as Miss Iona of Fancy Strut (1973) and Miss Elizabeth of Family Linen (1985) cling to the image of the Southern lady in an attempt to ward off change. Persistent in their efforts to embody the ideals of the Southern lady, Miss Iona and Miss Elizabeth look back nostalgically upon the Old South as a world of beauty and refinement, and they see themselves as
the last faithful guardians of truth, beauty, and elegance in a world that is rapidly becoming cheap, materialistic, and gaudy.

However, Southern women who wholeheartedly embrace their place on the pedestal are not always old women dreaming of the glories (perhaps imagined) of their youth. Both Stella of "Cakewalk" (1981) and Mama of "Tongues of Fire" (1990) are middle-aged women, and Jennifer of "Artists" (1981) is on the brink of adolescence. Middle-aged women and adolescents can also use the narrative of the Southern lady to give them a sense of security in a rapidly changing world. Like Miss Iona and Miss Elizabeth, Stella refuses to accept the social changes taking place around her by clinging to the image of herself as a lady who must set the standards for others to admire and emulate. Mama avoids dealing with her family's personal crises by concentrating all her efforts on presenting a stagnant image of her "perfect" family to her community. And Jennifer, at least initially, refuses to accept the sexual feelings that adolescence is bringing into her life by viewing herself as a pure and untouchable Southern lady.

Kathryn Seidel insists that the narrative of the Southern lady asks the Southern woman to become "a lovely object" (xv), a static image on a pedestal. Women who live in time and motion cannot possibly become motionless and voiceless, but they can try, and when they try, their creativity and imaginations are thwarted. The women in this chapter adopt guiding narratives for their lives that owe their origins to the nineteenth-century image of the Southern lady. Stella comes closest to making a statue of herself, for all of her creative energy is spent maintaining a mask that offers an
"admirable" image to her community but that essentially isolates her from others. Similarly, Miss Iona’s art is thwarted when she attempts to transform the living narratives that she encounters as a newspaper columnist and in her own life into static images that embody what she views as the purity of the Old South. Miss Elizabeth’s guiding narrative encourages her to present an unperturbed countenance to her community no matter what her inner pain might be. She denies corruption and ugliness, hiding her anger and disgust from the world and even herself. Similarly, Mama’s narrative denies the realities of family problems so that she may, like the unruffled Southern lady, present an image of the perfect family to her community. Authentic and creative lives cannot originate in women who deny reality and change. Finally, Jennifer, though appearing to escape the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady represented by her grandmother, is still confined by a New South narrative of womanhood that incorporates some modern "liberating" changes for women without abandoning the dependence on male approval upon which the nineteenth-century image of the Southern lady is based. By clinging to the restrictive narrative of the Southern lady, or accepting a similarly limiting New South narrative of womanhood, the characters discussed in this chapter stifle their creative potential as artists and authors of their own lives.

The image of the Southern lady that initially influences Jennifer so strongly and that acts as a basis for the guiding narratives of Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, Mama, and Stella is derived from the plantation literature of the 1800s. In an effort to combat the aggressive, materialistic, and democratic tendencies they feared in American society as
a whole, Southern writers such as John Pendleton Kennedy, William Gilmore Simms, and Thomas Nelson Page attempted to glorify the South as the repository of culture, morality, and aristocratic stability. In the plantation stories, the Southern lady was viewed as the moral center of the home. Moreover, in her role as the moral ideal of society, the Southern woman was denied any sexuality or erotic appeal. Richard King asserts that in the plantation legends the white Southern lady was "stripped of any emotional, nurturing attributes at all," these qualities of sexuality and nurturing warmth being displaced upon the black woman (35). Thus, the plantation legends' narrative of Southern womanhood after which Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, Mama, Stella, and Jennifer pattern their lives presents the Southern lady as asexual, cold, and the moral superior of those around her.

The frigidity, coldness, and arrogance of Smith's willful Southern ladies makes it difficult for Smith's readers to sympathize with them. Her most adamant Southern ladies have become caught in the image so that they worship their own artistic taste, moral purity, delicate health, beauty or whatever other characteristic of the Southern lady might set them apart from the "common" people. Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, Mama, Stella, and Jennifer view themselves as superior to the common masses because the ideal of the Southern lady offered to them by society tells them they are superior. It is no wonder that the narrative breeds isolation and narcissism in the women it shapes.

Yet Smith's works present these women who willingly take on their role as Southern ladies as at least partially responsible for their own isolation from society.
In one sense, of course, the narrative of the Southern lady has been imposed upon these women by the patriarchal society in which they live. In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Nancy Chodorow points out that the designation of women into the domestic sphere has rendered them subject to a male dominated culture:

Women’s mothering determines women’s primary location in the domestic sphere and creates a basis for the structural differentiation of domestic and public spheres. But these spheres operate hierarchically. Kinship rules organize claims of men on domestic units, and men dominate kinship. Culturally and politically, the public sphere dominates the domestic, and hence men dominate women. (10)

Thus, women have been relegated to the less powerful domestic sphere, and their roles as mothers keep them there.

Yet while their society has imposed certain roles upon them, Smith’s Southern ladies willingly collaborate with their society in order to combat their feelings of powerlessness. They search for power within the role that society has assigned them, and as Southern ladies, they gain a sense of power from their membership in the upper class, from their feelings of superiority in relation to the common people.

Moreover, as mothers, Smith’s Southern ladies have a certain degree of power over their children, especially their daughters, who, according to Chodorow, experience an ongoing struggle between their psychological need to identify with and separate from their mothers:

A girl alternates between total rejection of a mother who represents infantile dependence and attachment to her, between identification with anyone other than her mother and feeling herself her mother’s double and extension. Her mother often mirrors her preoccupations. (138)
Thus Smith’s mothers and grandmothers—Miss Elizabeth, Mama, and Jennifer’s grandmother—pass on the narrative of the Southern lady to their daughters, despite its limiting and self-negating aspects, for complex reasons. First, they see the image as a means of self-empowerment, for themselves and for their daughters, because they have accepted the class discrimination of their culture. Second, both mothers and daughters are intricately bound together by their need to identify with each other, and, therefore, the mothers will expect their daughters to behave like the ladies that they and their daughters have been raised to be. Even Stella and Miss Iona, who have no biological daughters to whom they might pass on the legacy of the Southern lady, battle with the rebellious behavior of symbolic daughters.

II. Through Stella of "Cakewalk," a contemporary working woman, Lee Smith illustrates that modern woman’s entrance into the work force does not necessarily prevent her from attempting to become an image on a pedestal. By allowing the narrative of the Southern lady to dictate her interactions within her family and her community, Stella denies herself the opportunity to create an original narrative for her life. She becomes, instead, a dead statue, and her only art is her painted face that acts as a mask to seal her off from frightening social and personal changes. As a working woman, Stella may have a difficult time maintaining the ideal of ladyhood, for economic necessity has forced her to accept one of those dreaded social changes and emerge from her "proper" place in the home. Yet despite her employment as a salesperson, Stella does her best to keep herself apart from people, for she depends
upon the class distinctions of the narrative of the Southern lady to maintain her self-esteem.

Stella's position in the cosmetics department at Belk's, where "everything is elegant," illustrates her image of herself as an aristocratic Southern lady (CW 227). Before the store opens, Stella serves herself tea, being sure to use a china cup and saucer. Stella sips her tea slowly and seats herself on "her high pink tufted stool," greeting the other employees when they come in as a queen might acknowledge her subjects: "she speaks to them pleasantly one by one and pities their makeup and the way they look so thrown together" (CW 228). Stella has imagined her part so well that she seems hardly to consider herself an employee at all. Truly interacting with her fellow workers would be beneath Stella's dignity. She even refuses to wait on any but "the very best people in town," and she sells only the most exclusive lines of makeup, for no one but the "crème de la crème" can afford these (CW 228). Stella is "calm, aloof, and refined," and she does not try to push for sales; "she doesn't seem to care if anybody buys anything or not" (CW 228; 229). Aggressive behavior or interest in filthy lucre would not be fitting to her image as a Southern lady.

Stella's tendency to quote and praise her mother indicates that she is simply maintaining and transmitting her mother's values. And since she has no daughters of her own to whom she might pass on the legacy of the Southern lady, Stella views her sister Flinnie as a symbolic, wayward daughter. She is particularly disturbed because she feels that Flinnie is not living up to the ladylike standards that their mother put before them. Stella feels that she and Flinnie "were not raised to be town characters
they were brought up in considerable refinement thanks entirely to their sweet mother" (CW 227). Stella's mother taught her girls that they had "obligations" to the town as the "crème de la crème" of society, so it is no wonder that Stella considers she and her sister to be "on the top rung of the social crust" and, by implication, on the Southern lady's pedestal (CW 227). However, Florrie, earthy and casual, is as different from Stella as she can be, and her eccentric behavior upsets Stella. Stella worries because her sister Florrie associates with "common" people, complaining that Florrie has "stepped off the upper crust straight into scum" (CW 242). Stella's concentration upon living up to her mother's standards of ladyhood prevents her from creating an original narrative for her life and from truly interacting with, rather than simply scolding, her sister.

Stella's only art is her made-up face that both gives her the comforting illusion that she can ward off the changes that age brings and acts as a protective barrier against the need to interact with her community. Smith acknowledges that Stella is a handsome woman but notes that "her face is proud and stand-offish, sealed up tight with Estee Lauder makeup" (CW 226). The makeup acts as a barrier to the rest of the world, a wall behind which Stella can hide her true feelings. Moreover, the makeup is a mask with which Stella prolongs her rapidly fading youth. Stella's energy and creativity are wastefully channeled into trying to maintain a youthful beauty and keeping her family at the top of the social rung. These two goals are linked, for Stella's adamancy about maintaining her mother's social standards has much to do with her attempts to ward off the inevitability of old age. Both goals indicate that Stella cannot accept the change,
either social or personal, that an original narrative might offer. She has doomed herself to a life that is no life at all in her insistence upon shaping herself into the static image of the Southern lady.

In *Fancy Strut*, Lee Smith creates the fascinating Miss Iona Flowers who, like Southerners of the 1830s and Stella of the 1980s, is nostalgic for the "good ol' days" and disgusted at the vulgar economic and social changes of the current period. *Fancy Strut* is set in the small town of Speed, Alabama, in the early 1970s, and Miss Iona is the society and ladies' editor of the weekly newspaper. She writes all the obituaries, reports births in her column "Hello There," and describes weddings, anniversaries, parties, and "all the other 'important' events that mark the passing of time in Speed" (*FS* 4). Her position as editor of the most intimate stories of her community's daily life gives her the opportunity to interact with her community in diligently recording the social changes that she observes. However, Miss Iona denies herself this opportunity because she sees herself as the "custodian of beauty and truth in Speed, the champion of the pure and good" (*FS* 4). Rather than recording life and change into narrative, she attempts to transform narrative into the static images of "beauty" and "truth" as defined by the Southern lady.

Miss Iona feels that it is her "mission" on earth, her "call" so to speak, to "translate Art into the world" (*FS* 158). In actuality, Miss Iona translates the world (changing narratives) into her view of Art (a static image). For Miss Iona, art, truth, and beauty become indistinguishable. Therefore, she takes her job as the ladies' editor of the local newspaper very seriously, conscientiously describing all local social events...
as she feels they "ought" to take place. The truth for Miss Iona is not the reality of a changing social scene. On the contrary, the truth is the facts embellished according to her impeccable taste: "Sometimes she draped everyone in mink, regardless of the season. She decorated tables to suit her fancy, and put peau-de-soie slippers on whom she chose" (FS 4). Rather than becoming discouraged by what she sees as an increasingly vulgar world, Miss Iona is challenged by it: "The sillier and more bourgeois the population grew, the greater became the surge and swell of inspiration in Miss Iona's breast" (FS 159). Thus, Miss Iona's work becomes an "art" plagued by artifice, pretensions, and bold-faced lies. Her imagination and creativity are wasted because she seeks to reclaim the past by refining and reforming into static images rather than creating a new narrative to challenge the future.

The only narrative Miss Iona does accept for herself is one based upon the constricting image of the Southern lady, for Miss Iona follows firmly in the tradition that it is the Southern lady's duty to purify society and civilize the lesser beings around her. She is disgusted by her editor's insistence that she interview the local prize-winning majorettes. When she receives the full-length photo of the girls in their skimpy costumes, Miss Iona is so outraged by the "unbelievably vulgar ten white thighs" that she sadistically decapitates and dismembers the figures of the girls in the pictures with her scissors before crumpling the pieces into a wad and tossing them into the waste can (FS 275). Miss Iona retaliates by symbolically murdering the young girls, as if this act might stop the modern vulgarities perpetrated by the majorettes' youthful sexuality. The violence of Miss Iona's action indicates the difficulty
she is having in keeping up her attempts to transform narrative into image, for she can think of no way to fictionalize the majorettes and their "vulgar ten white thighs" into a more ladylike image that would meet her standards of art and beauty. Miss Iona is childless, and the majorettes act as symbolic daughters whose rebellious ways, if not reformed, must be destroyed.

Miss Iona's background accounts, at least partially, for her acceptance of the Southern lady's distaste for the body and sexuality. Even though Miss Iona worshipped her father, viewing him as a "poet manqué," she would never allow him to touch her physically (FS 156). Miss Iona learns a disgust for the body and its functions from her mother. When Miss Iona is just a child, she asks her mother a question about menstruation, a term she picked up from an older cousin. Miss Iona's mother responds, "Why, you nasty child, there is a lot of blood, and it is horrible" (FS 155). It is no wonder that Miss Iona develops a distaste for the body and sexuality and that she represses these aspects of herself, sublimating any natural desires she might have into her "art." Miss Iona is just eight when her mother dies, but she has already learned from her the important components of a lady's behavior. In addition to physical and sexual purity, Mrs. Flowers teaches Miss Iona the importance of refined speech and manners to one's position in society; Miss Iona must not say "cut the grass" but rather "mow the lawn."

Yet Mrs. Flowers is not always able to maintain the ladylike image to which she subscribes, and her lapses profoundly affect her daughter's approach toward life. Mrs. Flowers is an alcoholic, and the scenes before her death, in which Miss Iona...
remembers her mother screaming and drunk, so trouble the eight-year-old Miss Iona that she wants to become a better lady than her mother was: "At the age of eight, little Iona had ceased to be a child. She had become a small lady. She was a small 'perfect' lady, and she had—perhaps unconsciously—rid herself of all the traits which would serve to make such a small lady less than perfect" (FS 156). Miss Iona shuns violence, loud voices, alcohol, and sexuality, and she escapes into her "art." When Mrs. Flowers is in one of her drunken rages, she is acting rather than attempting to maintain an image. Thus, Miss Iona learns to associate the action of narratives with ugliness and uncontrollable anger. The young Miss Iona climbs the pedestal of Southern ladyhood precisely so that she might become an image, securely protected from the threat of change and turbulent emotion.

Smith, though, reveals Miss Iona's life on the pedestal to be empty and her art to be false because it is cut off from the people who give art its vitality. Miss Iona fails as a creator of her own life narrative and as an artist because she willingly abandons any opportunity to participate in life, deciding instead to maintain her position on the pedestal as an image to be emulated. She willfully isolates herself from her community because she believes herself to be superior to her neighbors. When opportunities for a true social life come her way, she rejects them. The biology teacher who courts her in her youth is repeatedly rejected, for "Miss Iona doubted very much that she could have forced herself to sortir with a man who daily dissected small green frogs" (FS 158). Miss Iona's rejection of life is underscored in her rejection of a
biology teacher, one who studies life forms and deals with the common wonder of "small green frogs."

Miss Iona is like Stella in that her position on the pedestal not only cuts her off from the vitality of daily life and interaction with her community, but it also encourages her tendencies toward self-aggrandizement, for she accepts the premise that her position on the pedestal is a result of her moral and physical superiority to the common masses. And Miss Iona's narcissism is further encouraged by the experiences of her childhood. In "Gender and Narcissism," Ilene Philipson claims,

narcissists . . . possess a fundamental lack of self esteem and an inability to experience love (object love) or even to engage in mutually caring relationships with others (object relations). On a primitive, unconscious level, they experience terrifying loneliness and hunger for love, and defend against these feelings by displays of grandiosity and extreme self centeredness (214).

Miss Iona’s inability to develop close relationships with others suggests that she might fit the clinical definition of a narcissist. She even appears to possesses the childhood background that marks the narcissist’s development. Philipson claims that "unempathic or erratically empathic mothers are unable to consistently "mirror" their child's self assertiveness and thereby fail to confirm their child’s developing sense of self esteem" (217). The little information we have on Miss Iona’s mother, her drinking and her harsh responses to Miss Iona’s questions about bodily functions, suggest that Miss Iona may very well have been dealing with a mother who could not meet her child’s needs in creating a healthy self-esteem. Thus, Miss Iona’s psychological history reinforces the social force of the image of the Southern lady that leads Miss Iona into narcissism.
Miss Iona's vision of herself as a Southern lady prevents her from recognizing the low self-esteem and deep loneliness lurking beneath her assertions of superiority. She occasionally mourns the fact that, since her father's death, she has no one with whom she might associate on the same "artistic" level. She does not, however, seem to mind the solitude so much as she minds being forced to deal with the common people in order to fulfill her mission of translating Art into the world. She sees this inevitable contact with "real people" as a cross she must bear with "a martyr's grace" (FS 158). And she confronts the inconvenience of associating with the masses by "keep[ing] them abstract" (FS 158). She looks at them as so much clay to be molded and "awakened through Art into a higher form. Most people were nothing. Art was all" (FS 159). Miss Iona is intent upon transforming the vitality of people's everyday lives into static images that will resemble her own life on the pedestal. Lee Smith writes that Miss Iona "withdrew from the world of man" (FS 158). She lives in an illusory world of her own creation, and by isolating herself in an imaginary world that denies narrative, Miss Iona, like Stella, becomes a static image and fails to live at all.

One of Lee Smith's strongest charges against the Southern lady's image, then, is that it forces Southern women to reside on a pedestal that stifles or misdirects their creativity and prevents them from participating in the community. Life on the pedestal is lonely and, ironically, shallow. What appears to be a position of privilege is merely a position of isolation that breeds self-absorption and self-aggrandizement. The result is a woman such as Miss Iona, in love with herself and hating the rest of the world. No clearer illustration of the destructive effects of self-imposed isolation is needed than
the scene at the end of the novel in which Miss Iona neatly types up the obituaries of her editor, the five majorettes, and their mothers, seals them into a manilla envelope marked "To Be Opened in Case of Emergency," and giggles insidiously at her sick private joke (FS 277). Symbolically, Miss Iona has ended the narratives of the editor, the majorettes, and their mothers, effectively turning them into stagnant, and now silent, images in her mind. Miss Iona's arrogance has turned into a type of madness. She is intoxicated by her own hatred, a hatred that has its source in her isolated state on the pedestal of Southern womanhood. Here, the ideal of the Southern lady becomes a death-dealing force, for it feeds a hate that drives Miss Iona to commit imaginary murder.

Like Miss Iona, Elizabeth Bird Hess of Family Linen isolates herself from her community by clinging to the image of herself as a Southern lady. Elizabeth is on her deathbed at the opening of the novel, but the reader learns much about her through the accounts of her children and her own diary. All of Elizabeth's children affirm that whatever else she was, "Miss Elizabeth was a lady" (FL 123). The image that she presents to the world is so vital to her self-concept that she does not allow herself to relax for a minute. Childhood admonitions on the importance of a lady's appearance do not go unheeded, for Elizabeth "never appeared in public without being thoroughly turned out: the blue curls in place, the stockings, heels, and earrings and matching necklace" (FL 159).

The importance of the image of the Southern lady to Elizabeth's self-concept does not lead her, like Miss Iona, to attempt to transform narratives into static images,
but rather to construct a guiding narrative that evolves from the attributes and behaviors expected of the Southern lady. The journal that Elizabeth kept as a young woman indicates that the narrative she constructs to order her life is built upon the image of the Southern lady as a morally superior and sexually pure being who acts as a refining agent upon the male's less than perfect moral character. She describes her father riding up the hill on horseback, swinging his daughters in his arms, and embracing his adored wife: "For Oh, how Father loved his Ladies! Every roughness of manner every masculine Vice, was left at the foot of the hill" (FL 167). The "Ladies" are even physically situated in the home at the top of hill, or pedestal, to which the less pure man must elevate himself to meet with them. Her father was always "grinning devilishly behind his flamboyant Moustaches" while her mother was "shamefaced and beautifully blushing" (FL 166; emphasis mine). Elizabeth even admits that her father possessed the faults of a hasty temper and an inclination to drink intemperately. Yet by adopting the narrative that the Southern lady acts as a civilizing influence upon less civilized man, Elizabeth is reassured that despite her father's faults, the harmony of the home can be maintained by her mother's purifying presence. It is only after her mother's death that Elizabeth begins to fear for the peace and security of the household: "Without Mother's calming Influence, I suspect, Father's decisions were often hasty, rash, unwise" (FL 182).

After her mother's death, Elizabeth feels the pressure, in accordance with the narrative of the Southern lady, to become the purifying influence in the household. She sees herself as one of "Duty's handmaidens," responsible for taking care of her father.
and sisters and managing the household as her mother would have done (FL 181). Elizabeth emphasizes her own self-sacrifice in giving up her schooling to attend to the needs of her family. She describes the frustrations she had to endure in trying to control her sisters, silly Fay and hoydenish Nettie. Yet Elizabeth insists that she is pious and sustained by her faith: "my own Faith is ever strong, growing through all Adversity, and ever Strengthening me" (FL 176). Elizabeth seems to be trying to fulfill Thomas Nelson Page's description of the ideal Southern lady: "Her life was one long act of devotion,—devotion to God, devotion to her husband, devotion to her children, devotion to her servants, to the poor, to humanity" (qtd. in Scott 9). Thus, Elizabeth's role as purifying agent is closely connected to the Southern lady's duty to put the needs of her family before her own.

But though Elizabeth feels compelled to devote herself to the needs of others, she, like Stella and Miss Iona, disdains the "common" people. Her acceptance of herself as a morally superior being leads her into a narcissism that distances her from her community. Just as Miss Iona's feels that a biology teacher is unworthy of her attentions, Elizabeth's vision of herself as a Southern lady causes her to undervalue the local boys who seek her attentions. She confesses, "I had found none among the town lads to interest me. My Sensibilities were too refined, perhaps, or their Merits too few" (FL 186). Elizabeth's romantic notions of courtship cause her to choose a decidedly weak young man with whom she ecstatically reads poetry beneath the willows. But when he jilts her for a woman of greater means, she retreats back up to her house on the hill to live alone with her sisters until a true scoundrel, Jewell Rife,
charms her into marriage. Clearly, Elizabeth is attempting to pattern her relationships with men after the relationship she imagined existed between her mother and father, in which her mother acted as a refining influence upon her father's less than perfect moral character. Thus the narrative of the Southern lady not only maintains distinctions between the classes, but it implicitly reinforces the boundaries between men and women as well.

Elizabeth's guiding narrative of herself as a purifying influence upon the men in her life also includes the frustrating contradiction of the Southern lady's repression of emotion and submission to male authority. In her historical analysis of the image of the Southern lady, Anne Scott points out the irony in the belief that the "paragon of virtue," the Southern lady, was thought to be in need of the influence and direction of a man, who was "by the nature of his sex more susceptible to vice and immorality" (6). Yet Elizabeth fails to see this irony. She feels that however superior her mother was, her duty was always to put the needs of her husband first and ultimately to submit to his authority.

Elizabeth patterns her behavior after that of the antebellum women whom Catherine Clinton describes in The Plantation Mistress: "Southern custom expected a woman to stay with her husband in spite of maltreatment" (80). Once married, Elizabeth adopts a willful blindness to her husband's vices in hopes that her example of purity rather than stern words or scolding might alter his behavior. Thus Elizabeth refuses to see the obvious when Jewell makes frequent overnight business trips of an undefined nature, and she even refuses to acknowledge that Jewell is forcing her half-
witted sister Fay to have sexual relations with him. When Elizabeth's other sister Nettie confronts Elizabeth with her knowledge of what is happening, Elizabeth refuses to believe her. Although Jewell disappears soon afterwards, murdered either by Elizabeth or Fay, Nettie doubts that Elizabeth ever did fully admit to herself "exactly what all went on in those bad years" (FL 214). Elizabeth's self-willed blindness results, in part, from her wish to maintain an air of respectability. In the eyes of the Southern lady, no private suffering compares to the horror of a public shame, for the image of the Southern lady is, in fact, defined by its public nature. Like Miss Iona and her obituaries, the possibility that Elizabeth murdered Jewell suggests that the anger Southern women have been repressing in order to conform to the narrative of the Southern lady may erupt into destructive violence.15

In Miss Elizabeth, we can see just how horrifying the corruption is that lies behind the mask of the Southern lady. Rather than becoming the pure, moral bastion that the community wishes her to become, Miss Elizabeth becomes a liar, and even possibly a murderer. She becomes a parody of the ideal of the Southern lady. In The Southern Belle in the American Novel, Katherine Seidel asserts that many writers of the Southern Renaissance also delineated the corruption beneath the image of the Southern lady or belle by portraying what Seidel calls a "fallen" belle. The "fallen" belle directly contradicts the image of the ideal nineteenth-century belle: "where one is praised for her virtue and beauty; the other is narcissistic and vice-ridden" (xiv). However, Seidel finds that both belles are derived from that original ideal image: "The nineteenth-century belle has within her the seeds for her own literary metamorphosis,
since she has been taught by her society to repress instincts and displace emotions that linger in her unconscious, awaiting release" (xiv). Similarly, Elizabeth has been taught to repress her anger towards her husband and when she does express her emotions, she does not do so healthily or openly but rather by committing a secret act of violence, murder.

The reality of Miss Elizabeth's actions remind the reader of the roots from which the ideal of the Southern lady grows. Southerners used the myth of the pure Southern lady to avoid confronting the cruelty and injustice of the plantation system and slavery. By setting Southern women upon the public pedestal as the ideal, the Southern community could continue sinning in private. Smith's portrayal of Miss Elizabeth reveals the reality behind the myth and is her ultimate condemnation of the image of the Southern lady.

Elizabeth's steely refusal to come down from her pedestal and admit the imperfections in her life isolates her from her entire community and even her own family. The only time she has anything to do with her sister Nettie is when she needs Nettie to help her hide Fay's pregnancy and prevent a public scandal. Elizabeth's daughter Lacy insists that her mother could never "see beyond the iron pink palace of niceness and illusion, of should and sweet, which she had constructed around all of [them]" (FL 69). The palace may have been pretty and pink, but its walls are nonetheless iron and impenetrable. Lacy continues, "She never knew any of us, really" (FL 69), and when pondering her mother's house, she decides,
The house was symbolic of so many things: of the fact that [Elizabeth] alone, of the three sisters who had grown up there, carried on the traditions which their mother had tried to instill in them; of her own lofty ideas, ideals, and sensibilities; and of, finally, her profound isolation. (FL 73)

The house of Elizabeth's mother, the house Elizabeth proclaims to be "a home fit for a Lady," turns out to be Elizabeth's self-made prison, "an iron pink palace of niceness and illusion" in which she doggedly follows a stale female narrative that does not permit the creation of an authentic female self (FL 170; 69).

As a daughter, Elizabeth inherits the self-destructive legacy of the Southern lady from her mother, and as a mother, Elizabeth attempts to pass the image on to her own daughters. Ironically, by fulfilling her duty to pass on the legacy, Elizabeth ends up isolated from the adult daughters she has raised. As I will further explore in Chapter 4, Elizabeth's oldest daughters, Sybill and Myrtle, are unable to escape completely the dictates of the image of the Southern lady. Yet Elizabeth's youngest daughters, Lacy and Candy, are more successful in escaping their mother's destructive legacy. Lacy's education and her study of her mother's diaries provides her with a perspective and distance that allows her to see the stagnation and isolation beneath her mother's ladylike behavior and, thus, to separate herself from the ideal of the Southern lady. And Candy, Elizabeth's adopted daughter discussed in Chapter 6, is able to express herself and live her life completely indifferent to the ideal of the Southern lady. Although it is too late for Elizabeth herself, Lacy and Candy provide the reader with hope that the self-destructive cycle of the Southern lady's legacy can be broken.

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Like Miss Elizabeth, Mama of "Tongues of Fire" isolates herself from her community and her family by clinging to the constricting image of the Southern lady and developing her guiding narrative in accordance with that image. Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Mama considers moving to north Alabama, which she did upon marriage, to be "like moving to Siberia" (TF 72). Ever-conscious of her role as a Southern lady, Mama always dresses in heels and "linen dresses that buttoned up the front," and she is concerned, above all, with keeping up appearances. Like one aspect of Miss Elizabeth's narrative, Mama's narrative revolves around the Southern lady's avoidance of public shame, though Mama is not ignoring her husband's sexual promiscuity but rather his emotional breakdown.

Mama's guiding narrative of keeping up appearances prevents her from truly communicating with her family. When her husband has a nervous breakdown, Mama's main concern is that the community should not be aware of the family's "shameful" problem. Mama's daughter, Karen, the thirteen-year-old narrator of the story, claims that one of Mama's "rigid ideas" about nervous breakdowns is "The family must keep up appearances at all costs. Nobody should know" (TF 73). In fact, Karen is surprised that her mother even tells her about her father's condition, and she claims, "this was the only time she ever mentioned my father's nervous breakdown out loud, in her whole life" (TF 72). Mama adopts the same theory that keeps Miss Elizabeth from communicating with her family: "If you don't discuss something, it doesn't exist" (TF 72). Therefore when Karen asks her mother what her father thinks about all day, sitting alone in his study, Mama does not respond to this invitation to discuss Karen's
fears and concerns for her father. Instead, Mama replies in exasperation, "Oh honestly, Karen!", successfully strangling any honest communication before it can begin (TF 73). The fact that Mama tells Karen about her father’s breakdown but refuses to discuss her father’s condition in any detail suggests that Mama is beginning to expect Karen, who, at thirteen, is just becoming a woman, to participate in maintaining the fiction of domestic bliss that is one of the Southern lady’s chief duties.

Mama’s primary concern is her family’s status in the eyes of the community. Her guiding narrative insists that she maintain class distinctions and her family’s superior position on the social ladder. When Karen brings over a new friend, Mama’s first question concerns her father’s occupation. Karen knows enough to tell her that he is a doctor or a lawyer if she wants her friend to win her mother’s approval. After finding out that Karen has been baptized in the apostolic church of her friend, Mama exclaims, "Karen, I am shocked! We are not the kind of family that goes out in the county and immerses ourselves in water" (TF 102). Firmly moored in the aristocratic values at the root of the Southern lady’s image, Mama feels the need to keep her family separate from those who are not of the same class.

Mama’s community activities might give one the impression that she actively participates in her community; however, any honest interaction within the community is stifled by Mama’s need to present her family as an image of perfection in the eyes of the community. Mama belongs to all the right clubs: the Flower Guild of the Methodist church, the Ladies’ Auxiliary, the Garden Club, the Bluebird Book Club. Yet while belonging to these clubs, she, nonetheless, maintains her isolation from the
community, for her efforts are always to hide the true faces of herself and her family from the community. What Mama wants to know about Karen is whether she has been invited to join the Sub-Deb Club. What she wants to know about Karen's older sister Ashley after she stays out all night is whether or not Ashley has retained her "Most Precious Possession," her virginity (TF 88). Like Miss Iona, Mama is too ladylike to deal directly with matters of the flesh: "Mama referred to everything below the belt as 'down there,' an area she dealt with darkly, indirectly, and only when necessary" (TF 85).

Ashley's response to her mother's questioning is right on target: "All you care about is appearances. Who cares what I do, in this screwed-up family? Who really cares?" (TF 88). What Mama really cares about is presenting the picture of a flawless family to the community. When her mother is planning for the entire family to have dinner at the country club, Karen, as an adult looking back on the incident, recognizes what her mother was thinking: "See, here is our whole happy family out together at the country club; see, we are a perfectly normal family; see, there is nothing wrong with us at all" (TF 89). Mama wastes her imagination in trying to create the fiction of the perfect family, and she fails to realize that in fighting so hard to "keep up appearances" she is denying not only the very real problems of her family, but also its very real joys and rewards.

Mama undoubtedly worries about her husband's mental health, her daughter Ashley's emerging sexuality and assertions of independence, her son's drinking and driving, and even her daughter Karen's entrance into the confusing world of
adolescence. However, rather than openly discussing her concerns with her family, she retreats behind the façade of the Southern lady, spouting prescribed admonitions. Her neglect is most clearly seen in her attitude towards Karen, who describes her family life as "a life of invisibility" (TF 107). When Karen goes away to camp, she does not miss her family, for she can "scarcely recall what they look like" (TF 107). When Karen becomes ill at camp and asks to return home, her mother denies her request with the response, "We always finish what we start, Karen" (TF 110). Later, Mama bribes Karen to stay at camp until the end of the second session by promising her a kitten upon her return home. Clearly, Mama is ignoring the needs of her youngest daughter as she deals with her family’s public image. If she were actually involved in coping with the problems of her husband or other children, the reader might excuse her, but Mama’s time is spent putting up an appropriate front rather than tackling the complex problems of her family.

Thus, Mama neglects Karen, leaving her alone to agonize over her adolescent questions of identity. Karen seeks her identity in charismatic religion that gives her a feeling of being chosen by God when she is able to speak in tongues. But when her kitten, which she believes to be possessed by the holy spirit, gets hit by a car and dies, Karen abandons her own desires to be unique:

I remember how relieved I felt when I had smoothed the final shovelful of dirt over Sandy’s grave. Somehow, I knew, the last of my holiness, of my chosenness, went with him. Now I wouldn’t have to die. Now my daddy would get well and I would make cheerleader, and go to college. Now I could grow up, get breasts, and have babies. (TF 116)
Karen feels a certain amount of relief that she will be able to fit into her social world as a typical young Southern woman, one who spends her time cheering men on and having babies.

Mama's preaching on the proper behavior of a Southern lady eventually takes root, but grows in a twentieth-century form. Although Karen's adult life may involve college and other benefits unavailable to the nineteenth-century Southern lady, her remarks indicate that her guiding narrative will be constricted by her assumption that her self-definition lies in her traditional roles as wife and mother. In hoping to become a cheerleader, attend college, marry and have babies, Karen has accepted a New South narrative of ladyhood, which makes certain allowances to the sexual revolution and the women's movement but fails to address adequately women's need to define themselves independent of men. Like the nineteenth-century Southern lady, the lady of the New South puts the needs of others, particularly husband and children, before her own, and she defines herself by her ability to maintain domestic harmony, or at least the appearance of it. Like the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady, the New South version of ladyhood offers Southern women no true movement or opportunities for self-development because the Southern woman gains her status in the community by molding herself into the static image of the perfect wife and mother.

Like Miss Elizabeth, Mama attempts to pass the legacy of the Southern lady on to her daughters, and she achieves a certain degree of success, to the detriment of her daughters. Moreover, Mama sacrifices a close relationship with her daughters by preaching proper behaviors to them rather than truly communicating with them. While
she spends her time keeping up appearances, Mama loses opportunities to connect with her family. Finally, Mama is also like Stella, Miss Iona, and Miss Elizabeth in that she sacrifices real living for the ideal of the Southern lady, and thus fails as author of her own life.

Jennifer, the young narrator of "Artists," comes the closest of any characters in this chapter to escaping the narrative of the Southern lady. As the story opens, Jennifer appears to have choice between two narratives, the narrative of her grandmother or that of her grandfather's mistress. Although she initially leans heavily towards her grandmother's narrative, Jennifer is also influenced by the gothic novels that she reads. Yet ultimately Jennifer is limited, like Karen, by a newer version of Southern ladyhood that inhibits her self-creation.

Jennifer's grandmother is one of Smith's stereotypical Southern ladies who rejects the body and human contact in order to maintain her position on the pedestal. Ironically, Jennifer's grandmother is not a lady by birth, and perhaps this fact makes her particularly obsessive about maintaining the image. She is the daughter of common country people and "all of her ideas of refinement had come from books and from the self-improvement courses she took by mail" (AR 108). Her father is even a rough-riding individual of obscure origins reminiscent of Faulkner's Colonel Sutpen, indicating that Smith is also making the point that aristocrats are no different from the common people until they set themselves up in fancy houses and adopt pompous manners. Mrs. Morris' greatest frustration is that she cannot get her husband to "elevate himself" (AR 109), and her lack of authentic, aristocratic origins at least
partially explains why Jennifer's mother and Aunt Trixie are able to escape the power of the narrative, for they tease their mother behind her back, viewing her refinements as "putting on airs" (AR 107).

Jennifer's grandmother is contrasted throughout the story with Mollie Crews, the local beautician who is also the lover of her husband. While the guiding narrative of Jennifer's grandmother prevents her from becoming intimately connected to either her community or her husband, Mollie is a great lover of life whose spontaneous actions and emotions suggest that her narrative involves connection rather than isolation. While Grandmother refuses to visit her husband on his death bed because of her "delicate nature," Mollie Crews rushes to his side when she is permitted entrance to his bedroom. Mollie's cry, "Oh, Buddy," when she sees her ill lover differs notably from Grandmother's "Mr. Morris" that she always uses when speaking to her husband in public (AR 116; 109). The distance Grandmother creates with her refined address contrasts sharply with the closeness revealed by Mollie's endearments. And while her husband lies dying, Mrs. Morris is busily painting birds in her Florida room. Although Grandmother's feelings about her husband's death are not revealed, her actions, driven by her image of herself as a Southern lady, separate her from love and life's rituals.

Given the examples of her grandmother's narrative and Mollie Crews' narrative, Jennifer is careful to steer clear of Mollie's narrative because she recognizes that her family considers Mollie to be an outcast. The labels that Jennifer comes up with for Mollie are borrowed from a patriarchal Biblical narrative. She thinks that Mollie is a "fallen woman" and a "Jezebel" (AR 117), labels she has learned in church or from her
grandmother but which she clearly does not fully understand. Yet Jennifer does appear to recognize the connotations of sexuality linked to these labels, which gives her one more reason to avoid Mollie's narrative.

Jennifer, on the brink of adolescence, is terrified of her emerging sexuality and the choices involved in the process of growing up. For example, Jennifer procrastinates about buying new shoes: "my feet hurt a lot in my patent leather pumps with the straps--because I have nearly outgrown them, I guess, just like my mother says. She says it is time for me to buy some more grown-up shoes, but I have been resisting this, finding excuses not to shop" (AR 102). Buying "grown-up" shoes would signal to Jennifer that she is entering an adult world that is filled with sexual tensions she would prefer to avoid. Therefore, when Jennifer reads the story of Peter Pan, she does not want to think of herself as Wendy, who was forced to grow up and mother all the little lost boys. Instead, she prefers to imagine herself as the ever childlike and sexually innocent Peter Pan.

Jennifer sees in her grandmother's chaste image of ladyhood an opportunity to maintain her childhood and avoid sexual challenge of adolescence. Therefore, she learns the Southern lady's code of behavior through her grandmother's influence, and throughout most of the story, she is molded quite easily into a perfect little Southern lady. In fact, she even begins to see herself as an actress playing a role or a doll come to life. Jennifer's words often indicate that she is willing herself to conform to the romantic nineteenth-century image of the Southern lady. Her admiration for her grandmother's rose garden is not spontaneous, but cultivated: "I attain the roses and
halt before them, self-consciously. I am transfixed by beauty, I think" (AR 101). Just as Jennifer is "transfixed" by the beauty of the roses, she is allowing herself to become a frozen image rather than a participant in a moving narrative. Moreover, Jennifer’s language indicates that she has split herself between the mask of the Southern lady that she assumes and the inner self that is able to observe the donning of the mask: "I lean forward, conscious of myself leaning forward, to examine a Peace rose more closely" (AR 101).

Thus, Jennifer yields to the powerful influence of her grandmother as she takes on the characteristics of the Southern lady. The Southern lady was supposed to be physically weak with a delicate constitution, so Jennifer claims "I am ‘sensitive,’ ‘artistic,’ and ‘delicate,’ and everybody knows this is how I am, because my grandmother has laid down the law" (AR 102). As an example of her sensitivity, Jennifer tells how she took to her bed for three days after her aunt read her "The Little Match Girl." Jennifer’s striving for the purity and frailty of the Southern lady is further illustrated by her love for the white pique dress she wears in her grandmother’s garden that makes her look even thinner than she already is. In her white dress, with her long blond hair pulled back by a white velvet bow, Jennifer becomes the static image of frailty, purity, and innocence that she feels might halt her entrance into adulthood.

Jennifer pursues her "artistic talent" because her grandmother encourages her to do so, and like her grandmother and Miss Iona, Jennifer uses her "art," which represses her sexuality, to distance herself from others. She paints, writes poetry, and does "not forget to suffer, either, lying on [her] bed for a while each afternoon in order
to do so," for Jennifer's grandmother has insisted that "Great art requires great suffering (AR 115; 114). When Jennifer is taken from her grandmother's presence, she tries hard to maintain the ideals of the Southern lady and, like her grandmother, Miss Iona, and Miss Elizabeth, isolates herself. In Florida, she writes poems about the sea, avoids the children on the beach who want to play with her, goes on long solitary walks to collect seashells, and "think[s] about sin, art, heaven and hell" (AR 118).

Like a truly pure and virtuous Southern lady, Jennifer cultivates piety. When her mother curses, Jennifer simply "ignore[s] her vulgarity" (AR 102), and even when her family is on vacation, Jennifer attends church so as not to break her four year attendance record and insists that the pastor sign an affidavit acknowledging her presence. Jennifer insists, "I am all soul these days" (AR 102). By refusing to acknowledge her body, Jennifer hopes that she can actually arrest its changes.

That Jennifer is using the image of the lady and her concept of "art" to avoid her emerging sexuality is evident in the scenes with her young cousin. When examining the objets d'art in her grandmother's house, Jennifer's cousin Scott claims in an insinuating voice that he knows why Jennifer's favorite is Michelangelo's David: "I know why you like that one . . . that naked guy" (AR 112). Jennifer responds hotly, "That's not a naked guy, Scott. That is Michelangelo's famous statue David. It's a work of Art, if you know anything about Art, which you don't, of course" (AR 112). Scott responds by grabbing Jennifer and kissing her on the mouth, whereupon she immediately runs upstairs and brushes her teeth. She continues, "Then I go to the
bedroom, fling myself down on the bed, and wait to have a nervous breakdown. *In anguish she considers the violation of her person, I think*" (AR 113).

Jennifer's use of the qualifier, "I think," to follow her dramatic descriptions of her behavior indicate that she has some underlying doubts about the role she will be expected to play as a young Southern woman. She describes not so much what she feels as what she thinks she ought to feel as prescribed by various cultural narratives or scripts. Jennifer gathers her material for these inner dialogues from the worn-out narratives of gothic romances. Phrases such as "the violation of her person" are taken straight from gothic romances that glamorize the victimization of the heroine that precedes her rescue by the hero and the marriage that marks the story's happy ending. The heroine, by enduring suffering and behaving virtuously, gains social acceptance in the traditional female roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. Jennifer uses the gothic narratives as a way of combining the two narratives of female sexuality, the "bad" Mollie and the "good" grandmother, to which she has been exposed thus far, for the gothic heroine can have her adventures and still become the virtuous wife. Therefore, Jennifer patterns her behavior after that of the gothic heroine as a way of preparing for what she sees as her proper role in life. In "'But Why Do They Read Those Things?': The Female Audience and the Gothic novel," Kay Mussell suggests why some women might read gothic novels over and over again: "If a woman is unsure of her ability to perform adequately in traditional areas, could it not be a relief to spend some time identifying with a woman who not only performs well in those areas but who makes it all seem significant as well?" (66). Thus, Jennifer may be using an association between
herself and the gothic heroine to assuage her doubts that she will not be able to meet
the requirements demanded of the traditional adult woman.

By the end of "Artists," Jennifer has decided that she must allow herself to grow
up. Removed from her grandmother's presence while on vacation with her family, the
influence of the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady begins to lose its
strength. After realizing that her mother has caused her to break her perfect church
attendance record, Jennifer smashes a glass table in a flash of anger. She permits
herself a burst of passion that a true Southern lady would never allow, and subsequently
she feels free to relax more and more of the restrictions she has placed upon her own
behavior. She allows herself to wear a bathing suit, acquire a tan, and even have her
ears pierced. When Jennifer does see her grandmother again, the old woman is not the
regal presence who once dictated Jennifer's behavior. Her grandmother sits in front
of the television set all day and claims to be watching "Art." This scene so affects
Jennifer that she appears to experience a substantial, if unarticulated, realization.
Jennifer's actions after this scene indicate that she senses the illusory quality of the of
the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady: just as her grandmother's belief
that the car races on television are art is an illusion, the ideals of the nineteenth-century
Southern lady are nothing but an illusion that keeps Jennifer from truly living her life.
Upon leaving her grandmother, Jennifer races off, has her hair cut into a page boy, and
heads straight into the arms of her kissing cousin. Clearly, Jennifer, with the help of
her mother's influence, is able to shake off the restricting nineteenth-century narrative
of the Southern lady and accept the changes that adolescence is bringing into her life.
However, her preparations for womanhood—acquiring a tan, piercing her ears, cutting her hair, and kissing her cousin—all involve changing her appearance and her behavior so that she will appeal to young men. Although she may have abandoned the restrictive nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady, she has not rejected the dependence upon men for self-definition that is at the heart of that narrative. The action Jennifer takes at the end of "Artists" may be applauded as movement away from the denial of female desire associated with the Southern lady, but Jennifer has yet to discover that her future as artist of her own life lies in her determination to put herself at the center of a personally shaped narrative. Like Karen, Jennifer appears to have adopted a New South definition of ladyhood that will inhibit her self-creation by demanding that she plan her life around her relationships with men.

In examining Smith's willful Southern ladies, one sees a pattern emerge. The women who enthusiastically take on the role of the Southern lady do so in an attempt to hide from reality, either the reality of a changing world or the reality of a less than perfect life. In addition, Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, Mama, and Stella cling to the ideal because it makes them feel superior to their neighbors and because they cannot accept the social changes that 1960s, 70s, and 80s are bringing. Miss Iona is appalled by the increasing vulgarity of her community and views herself as the last true bastion of taste and refinement. Miss Elizabeth and Mama deny the harsh reality of their family problems by concentrating on the Southern lady's duty to "keep up appearances." And Stella rejects her own aging and the destratification of her social world by imagining herself as the leader of the "crème de la crème" of society. Jennifer’s grandmother
attempts to elevate position in her community and refuses to deal with her husband and the problems in her marriage by adopting the image of the cool, distant, and morally superior Southern lady.

Yet while Jennifer initially turns to the narrative of the Southern lady as a refuge from adolescent changes, she eventually discovers that the constrictions of this narrative outweigh its benefits. In Jennifer, Smith reveals a guarded hope for the future of Southern women. Jennifer's creative possibilities will not be destroyed by an adherence to the stifling nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady in the way that Stella's, Miss Iona's, Miss Elizabeth's, and Mama's imaginations are thwarted, but she does not yet appear to realize that in molding her behavior to please men, she will not escape the patriarchal control of female definition at the core of the narrative of the Southern lady. Nevertheless, Jennifer's return to the daily life of her community at the end of "Artists" suggests that she, by refusing to isolate herself on the pedestal of the Southern lady, may actually become an artist who has a new story to share if she can only avoid the trap of falling into a New South narrative of ladyhood that defines women by their relationships with men.
CHAPTER 3
GODWIN: THE SEARCH FOR CONTROL AND THE LOSS OF SELF-EXPRESSION

I. Although none of Gail Godwin's fictional characters are the stereotypical "Mrs. Stephens" that she describes in her Ms. article on the Southern lady, many of her female characters, like Smith's ladies, base the guiding narratives of their lives upon the restrictive narrative of the Southern lady and similarly restrictive female narratives such as the romance story or the fairy tale. Like Smith's Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, and Mama, Godwin's Edith, of The Odd Woman (1974), and Theodora, of A Mother and Two Daughters (1982), are from a generation and class in which Southern women automatically defined themselves as Southern ladies. In contrast Lily, of A Southern Family (1987), and Kitty, of The Odd Woman, begin their young adult lives as rebels seeking to create original narratives for their lives, but by middle age they have found themselves embracing the narrative of the Southern lady as a source of power. The guiding narratives that Godwin's ladies derive from the static image of the Southern lady involve keeping up appearances and hiding ugliness from others (and often themselves). In order to maintain the illusion, however, they often must sacrifice self-expression, self-exploration, and true communication and closeness with their friends and family. Moreover, like Smith's ladies, Godwin's ladies become self-obsessed and narcissistic when they accept the notion of their superior position on the pedestal.

In Godwin's works, as in those of Smith, we see that Southern women sacrifice self-discovery and interaction with their communities when they hide themselves within

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the isolating and self-distorting cloak of the Southern lady’s image. Thus, Godwin’s ladies, too, can be seen as failed artists. Theodora and Edith are strong, vital women whose powers of imagination are misguided by their conformity to the narrative of the Southern lady. Theodora’s guiding narrative of aristocratic privilege, drawn from the Southern lady’s position on the pedestal, keeps her from honest and healthy communication with family members and friends. Edith, too, isolates herself and wastes her creative powers by allowing the narrative of the Southern lady to govern her behavior and shape her into an image that is still and silent. Like Theodora, Edith has also absorbed a belief in the Southern lady’s superiority and aristocratic privilege. Moreover, like Smith’s Miss Elizabeth, Edith allows herself to become a silent image that refuses to acknowledge and deal with life’s ugliness.

And although Kitty and Lily initially envision creating original narratives for themselves as writers and independent women, they eventually abandon their work when they take on the traditional roles of the Southern lady—that of wife, mother, and homemaker—and allow their creativity to be stifled by their acceptance of narrative of the Southern lady. Moreover, like Smith’s younger Southern ladies who must also deal with restrictive narratives such as the gothic novel or the New South version of ladyhood, Kitty and Lily are also negatively influenced by restrictive female narratives other than that of the Southern lady. By writing romance stories, Kitty inadvertently absorbs a narrative which asks her to abandon personal ambition when she marries and has children. And when Lily marries, has children, and abandons her attempts at self-creation, she withdraws, quite self-consciously and bitterly, into the narratives of the
Southern lady and the fairy tale princess, where she isolates herself as if in retaliation against the man and the social roles that have confined her. Thus, all of Godwin's Southern ladies fail as authors of their own lives because they ultimately depend upon restrictive female narratives to define who they are.

Another result of these Southern ladies' adherence to static images and isolating narratives is that they fail as mothers to protect and connect with their daughters, and they pass on restrictive female narratives to their daughters that might harm them. Although Edith is dearly loved by her daughter and granddaughters, she allows them to be abused rather than risk public shame. Theodora has no biological daughters, but her efforts to mold her goddaughter and "adopted" daughter into Southern ladies fails and almost destroys her relationships with them. Kitty's insistence on cultivating the Southern lady's air of mystery keeps her from fully revealing herself to her daughter as her daughter would like. And Lily not only is unable to connect with her daughter, but she also works to destroy her daughter-in-law because she has adopted a narrative that causes her to envy their freedom and curtails her capacity to nurture.

Although similar to Smith's ladies, Godwin's Southern ladies differ from those of Smith in the degree of their isolation. While the haughty self-aggrandizement of Smith's ladies almost completely cuts them off from their families and communities, Godwin allows her ladies to hold deep, though imperfect, relationships. Godwin's ladies appear to desire honest and healthy relationships, but they try to use the image of the Southern lady as a means of power: the distance the façade maintains gives them a feeling of control. However, Godwin's ladies are frequently aware of the artifice
behind their actions, as are their friends and family, so they are able to maintain relationships, imperfect though they may be. The women in Godwin’s novels are particularly aware of the fact that the roles they play in society are just that, roles and not the innate result of their sex. Therefore, they seem to understand each other’s behavior and are willingly to work around some of the isolating aspects of the narrative of the Southern lady. Smith’s ladies are less aware that the narratives upon which they rely are artificial constructs rather than natural states of being, and therefore, they are more easily fossilized into statues on pedestals. Yet as petrified statues, Smith’s ladies appear to hurt less than Godwin’s ladies. The awareness of Godwin’s ladies renders them more capable of feeling the pain and frustration of thwarted creativity and isolation, for they more readily recognize their own complicity in their lost dreams and isolation.

II. Theodora Blount of A Mother and Two Daughters is, perhaps, Godwin’s Southern lady who is most like one of Smith’s Southern ladies in her lack of awareness that the narrative of the Southern lady isolates and harms herself and others. Therefore, as with Smith’s Stella, Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, or Mama, the audience does not sense that Theodora experiences very much inner turmoil about the role she has decided to play in society. Nevertheless, since Theodora’s friends and family are more aware of Theodora’s role-playing, they make allowances for her and make the extra effort to include her in their community despite the barriers she erects.
Using the image of the Southern lady as a symbol of white aristocracy as a starting point, Theodora adopts a guiding narrative of aristocratic privilege that causes her to attempt to control the lives of others. This obsession with control and aristocratic privilege damages her relationships with friends and family. Theodora is introduced as the "Maiden Queen" in a chapter entitled "The Old Guard" because she has never been married, and she acts as the ruling aristocrat in the Southern community of the novel. Nell Strickland, the wife of Theodora's childhood friend Leonard, describes Theodora for the reader in the opening pages of the novel as "the undisputed leader of their social set" (*MTD* 3). Nell fully realizes that Theodora seeks to maintain and increase her power by controlling her emotions and maintaining the Southern lady's appearance of decorum.

Like the cool and distant Southern lady on the pedestal, Theodora is more concerned with appearances than realities, with keeping up surface formalities rather than delving into the messiness of real relationships. She calls Nell after her husband Leonard's death and keeps up a polite banter about the future Book Club meeting that Nell has promised to host, touching upon Leonard's death only briefly, as if wishing to avoid the subject altogether: "If you don't feel up to it yet, I'm sure one of the other girls will be happy to change with you. On the other hand, it might do you good to get back in the swing of things" (*MTD* 156). Theodora is skillful in the Southern lady's art of indirection. Nell senses through Theodora's tone that she thinks it is time for Nell to get back to keeping up appearances. A few weeks later at the meeting, when Theodora greets Nell with a warm declaration of how good it is to have Nell back with
the group again, Nell is surprised that "Theodora's eyes were actually wet" (MTD 182). The perceptive Nell is not fooled into thinking Theodora's emotions are sincere; rather she seems newly astounded at Theodora's ability to play-act the "appropriate" feelings. Just moments after her words to Nell, Theodora links arms with another friend and strides into the house "hoot[ing] with laughter" (MTD 182). The pretense and snobbery of the women's interaction at the Book Club meeting is further emphasized by the subtle power plays between members, and the undercurrents of tension. Yet Theodora is not abandoned by Nell even when Nell can see through her, or, perhaps, because Nell can see through her. Nell has experienced her own struggles with the narrative of the Southern lady, and therefore, she understands and, to a certain extent, forgives Theodora's role-playing and insincerity.

Theodora's guiding narrative is based upon her notion that as a Southern lady, she possesses aristocratic privilege, and others should respect and acknowledge her authority. Like Smith's strong-willed ladies, Theodora does not exhibit the frailty and submissive behavior often associated with nineteenth-century Southern lady. She does not "suppress her dissatisfactions and win alleviations by means of her sympathetic powers rather than through stridency" (Taylor 171). Leonard admits that even as a young girl "there was no saying no to her" (MTD 5). The verbs used to describe Theodora's actions are associated with power and aggressiveness: she "sailed toward them" (3), "crowned herself" (4), and "summoned" (5). Theodora's physical and emotional strength are also emphasized in the story of her battle of wills with one of her horses, a mean stallion which Theodora pulled back on top of herself, breaking her
own hip, and causing the horse's leg to be broken. This story indicates a pattern in
Theodora's relationships: she hurts herself and others in order to maintain control.

Several factors contribute to Theodora's ability to be openly assertive and
dominant without sacrificing her status as a Southern lady. First, Theodora has the
family name. She is a lady by birth. Second, as an only daughter, Theodora has
inherited the family wealth, and there is some truth to Theodora's claim that "As long
as a woman had a base, she could afford to be a little eccentric" (MTD 548). Finally,
Theodora has never been married, and her spinster state, in addition to the fact that she
has no living male relatives, frees her in the sense that she has no husband whose
demands must be met, nor any children whose concerns she must put before her own.

Yet, her single status has its drawbacks. Like Smith's Stella or Miss Iona,
Theodora has no daughters to whom she might pass on the ideals of Southern ladyhood,
and her position as godmother to her friends' children does not satisfy her desire to
refresh her "Old Guard" with new blood. The epigraph that Godwin chooses for the
chapter "The Old Guard" indicates her view of Theodora and her outlook: "Our epoch
is over, a cycle of evolution is finished, our activity has lost its meaning, we are
ghosts, we are seed . . . --D.H. Lawrence, 'Dies Irae'." Theodora continues with her
activities, but the old forms have lost their meaning in the contemporary South. For
example, Leonard notes Theodora's patriarchal relationship with her faithful black
servant Azalea. He sees Theodora's hand-me-downs in Azalea's closet, knows that
Theodora paid Azalea's medical bills until she became eligible for Medicare, and
comments that "Theodora would give Azalea the last egg in her refrigerator . . . would

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give her beloved Azalea everything in the world but the minimum wage" (MTD 18). Theodora will give Azalea anything but the means to be independent of Theodora’s benevolent control. A South in which the aristocratic white family takes care of its black servants by providing for their physical needs while simultaneously denying them their rights has disappeared, or at the very least, is in the process of disappearing. Yet like a ghost from another era, Theodora is faithful to her narrative of aristocratic privilege and maintains the old forms in an attempt to preserve the past.

However, Theodora appears to have little success in molding future generations into the narrative of Southern womanhood that she finds appropriate. For example, Theodora’s goddaughter Cate rejects her godmother’s view of proper feminine behavior. Theodora scolds Cate for leading her class of twelve-year-olds in a protest against the invasion of Cambodia, and the fiery Cate responds by telling her godmother that "over sixty years of having to be right had atrophied the part of her mind that could respond to the truth" (MTD 5). This confrontation puts a rift in the relationship that never completely heals. Years later when Cate attempts to get herself and her godmother on speaking terms again, Theodora, preferring to maintain her proud isolation, rejects Cate’s efforts. Just as Theodora’s battle of wills with her horse damaged them both, Theodora’s need to control others in her relationships harms both Theodora and Cate.

Theodora’s "adoption" of Wickie Lee, a pregnant runaway, is another example of her failed attempts to shape young Southern women into the image of the Southern lady. Theodora takes in Wickie Lee from the mountains of Sharpe County as if to
infuse her dying aristocracy with the girl's energy and youth. With the same concern about social superiority that dominates Smith's ladies, Theodora is quick to point out to friends and neighbors that the mountain people from whom Wickie Lee comes are actually a form of nobility. While Nell Strickland describes Sharpe County as violent place "where there was much inbreeding and strangers still got shot at," Theodora describes Wickie Lee and her origins in the following manner:

There's pure blood in that child's face, you can tell it a mile off. A lot of families up in those coves can trace themselves all the way back to the first English settlers. They haven't intermingled with outsiders and you can tell it because their faces don't have that homogeneous American quality. (MTD 7-8)

Theodora romanticizes Wickie Lee's background, viewing her as possessing a kind of nobility au naturel, and she links this nobility to her own more recognized and established aristocratic family with the comment, "My father's people first settled in Sharpe County, you know, and tougher, more stubborn individuals you won't find anywhere" (MTD 8). Later in the novel, the audience discovers what Theodora has known all along, that Wickie Lee is her second cousin, and it becomes clear that Theodora does not admire Wickie Lee in her own right, but rather in her connection as a member of the Blount family. As always, Theodora's narrative of aristocratic privilege guides her interactions with others.

When Theodora brings Wickie Lee into her home, sets her up in Theodora's own childhood bedroom, and introduces her at the town's most prestigious social gatherings, Theodora is enjoying her chance to mold Wickie Lee into the aristocratic
Southern lady who will perhaps act as her replacement in Mountain City. She encourages Wickie Lee participate in the clubs to which only the most "elite" women of the community may belong. For example, she has Wickie Lee create dolls to sell at the Republican Women's Christmas Bazaar and declares them "the hottest item" present (MTD 8). And she brings Wickie Lee with her to all important social events, including the meetings of the Book Club, which boasts only the most respected ladies of the community as its members.

However, Theodora's narrative of aristocratic privilege, which causes her to expect unqualified obedience from her "subjects," once again damages her relationship. Wickie Lee, like Cate, cannot stand Theodora's proprietary air. She flees when she feels that Theodora has gone too far in her attempts to run Wickie Lee's life: "She thinks she can own you. She thinks, just because she helps you out, that you're her property. Well, nobody's anybody else's property" (MTD 330). In an attempt to assert her individuality and independence, Wickie Lee moves out of Theodora's house to live with her friend Rita in a shabby part of town. Theodora's anger leads to her stroke. And Wickie Lee ends up being exploited by her friend, who uses Wickie Lee as an unpaid baby sitter and only gives her a tiny percentage of the money they are making from Wickie Lee's doll creations. Once again, Theodora's battle for control in a relationship results in damage to both members of the relationship.

While one of Smith's stories would end here, with the willful lady isolated and bitter, Godwin's story does not. Despite her flaws and mistakes, Theodora is incorporated into the family gathering at the end of the novel. Cate, recognizing the
Seductive power that the narrative of the Southern lady has played even her own life, with all her advantages of education and distance from the South, excuses Theodora's behavior and continues to make the effort to reestablish relations with her. Thus, Theodora is invited to Cate's family reunion at the close of the novel. And although Wickie Lee resists Theodora's controlling efforts and shapes her own life by taking a job at a child care center, marrying, and continuing to create her original dolls, she does not reject Theodora altogether. Recognizing that Theodora helped her when she was in need, Wickie Lee forgives her. At the close of the novel, Theodora is being helped up the hill to Cate's family gathering by Wickie Lee and her family. Godwin wants to emphasize that although Theodora is a "ghost" of a former era, following forms that have lost their meaning in the modern world, she is, nonetheless, also the "seed" for the future. Modern Southern women must acknowledge Theodora and learn from her life if they are to avoid falling into the kind of restrictive narratives that Theodora has allowed to isolate and confine her.

Theodora has not changed, and like Smith's oblivious Southern ladies, she does not appear aware that her reliance upon a narrative of aristocratic privilege has isolated her and prevented healthy interaction with her community. She can only accept the changes of the modern South by inwardly revising the new narratives taking place around her into the old scripts with which she feels comfortable. The audience sees the futility of Theodora's attempts to halt change in the last chapter of the novel when Lydia's son Leo marries a black girl. What is most interesting is Theodora's reaction to the marriage. Rather than condemning the union outright, she interprets the event
to meet her own psychological needs. Azalea is clearly disapproving of the union, and Theodora tries to convince her of its value by pointing out the girl's superior breeding and background despite her race: "The girl's from a very old family. Why, the Peverells of Halifax County go back even further, on this side of the water, than Blount of Beaufort" (MTD 547). When Azalea points out that no good ever comes from "mixing," Theodora responds, "Indiscriminate mixing, yes. Like everything else, Azalea, there's a right way and a wrong way to do things. But in this case they're both good-looking, educated, well-bred young people, and they're going to represent our country abroad; think what a marvelous advertisement they'll be" (MTD 547). Theodora revises the story to fit the aristocratic narrative of the Southern lady. In order to accept the marriage, she must view the black girl as a kind of aristocrat herself: "She was a little lady. Her features weren't--" (MTD 547). The audience realizes how Theodora would finish this sentence, though even in her private musings, Theodora is too much the lady to use the word "negroid." When Theodora insists upon the nobility of Leo's future wife, she is remaining true to her guiding narrative of aristocratic privilege but refusing to deal with the reality of her changing world.

Theodora fails to shape her own life creatively because she is ultimately unable to imagine a different world, one that might provide alternative narratives for Southern women: "What she could imagine, increasingly well, was the rest of her own life, which she intended to have as much control over as possible" (MTD 548). And Theodora intends to exercise this control by using her position as a Southern lady and her wealth to buy power and respect. Having donated a large sum of money to the
Episcopal Retirement Home, she has reserved a place there for Azalea and herself and expects to be treated with all the respect that money can provide. Although Theodora proclaims, "The old order changes, Azalea. Why, look at us. Who would ever have thought you and I'd be coughing each other to sleep on the opposite sides of our wall?", she makes the comment "just to have the last word about Leo's marriage" (MTD 548). As a self-proclaimed Southern lady, she cannot truly conceptualize a world in which race and class would not matter. Azalea's response and "level look" suggest that she sees through Theodora's proclamations of change: "You perfectly capable of winning any argument all by yourself, Miss Thea, but you know and I know there's still that wall" (MTD 548-49). What Azalea does not realize is that the "wall" surrounding Theodora separates her from family and friends of her own race as well as her black servant, companion, and friend. Although Cate and Wickie Lee have included Theodora into the family gathering by the end of the novel, Theodora never completely lets down her barriers. Like Smith's willful Southern ladies, Theodora is isolated, though to a lesser degree, by her adherence to a narrative that encourages her to become an image set above and apart from her community.

Like Theodora, Edith Dewar, the grandmother of The Odd Woman's protagonist Jane Clifford, is limited by the narrative of the Southern lady. By accepting the narrative's demand that the Southern woman become a static and exemplary image of perfect beauty, Edith allows herself to become overly concerned with her physical appearance, to the neglect of her interior self. Moreover, her reliance upon the notion of the Southern lady's aristocratic and moral superiority isolates her from her
community and family. And her preoccupation with the Southern lady’s avoidance of public shame causes her to allow her granddaughters to be abused. Like Theodora, Edith also attempts to manipulate and control family members, however, she is much more subtle and indirect, more ladylike, in her approach. Yet Edith is more aware than Theodora of the harm that her reliance upon the narrative of the Southern lady has caused to others and herself. Although she cannot see a way out of the prescriptive narrative she has adopted for herself, Edith does at least have moments when she appears to recognize that the narrative of Southern lady has harmed her.

One way that the narrative of the Southern lady harms Edith is that it keeps her from developing her individual capacities and discovering her inner self. In accepting the premise that the Southern lady’s physical appearance is central to her being, Edith becomes vain and preoccupied with external appearances.¹⁸ Jane describes her grandmother as the most stylish person she knows, and Edith takes great pride in adorning herself, despite her lack of funds. Even when extremely ill and in pain, Edith refuses to allow her daughter and granddaughter to see her without her makeup, jewelry, and fine clothes. Like Smith’s Stella, Edith’s creativity is absorbed by efforts to make herself beautiful; her creation becomes, in fact, her physical self, a set of empty appearances.

Moreover, like Miss Iona, Edith accepts the narrative’s insistence on the Southern lady’s aristocracy and moral superiority, and therefore, she isolates herself from her community. Despite her poverty, Edith’s pride in her "pure blood that never mixed with anything common" (OW 123) causes her to believe herself superior to many
of her neighbors. When describing Edith for a friend, Jane claims that she was "the perfect Southern lady . . . elegant, snobbish, beautiful to the very end" (OW 56). An essential part of Edith's belief in her superiority stems from her adherence to surface formalities and what she considers to be good manners. For example, when Edith's landlady, Mrs. Wurtburg, appears at her door, Edith politely invites her in, but the tone of her voice suggests that Mrs. Wurtburg and her tacky daughters are not fit to socialize with Edith and her granddaughter. Like Godwin's stereotypical "Mrs. Stephens," Edith is skillful in the art of indirection, of saying one thing and meaning something entirely different, of maintaining her distance without ever having to resort to openly rude behavior. But while Edith might fool herself into believing that her actions are simply a polite defense against the assaults of the common masses, her superficial politeness is actually an aggressive weapon that she uses to put others in "their place." Thus, Edith uses the image of the Southern lady as a superior being as a source of power, as a means of distancing herself from people with whom she would rather not associate.

Edith also uses the narrative of the Southern lady to control her family members. Ironically, Edith draws upon the Southern lady's fragility as a means of power. Whenever her family begins to upset her she complains of faintness and dramatically demands her smelling salts. Jane muses, "That little green bottle: Jane could not remember a time before its existence. It was one of her first memories. When it came out, everybody had to quiet down" (OW 103). Edith's cry for her smelling salts is an indirect play for power, for she uses her faintness to control the
behavior of those around her. Edith's other favorite controlling devices are her family stories that serve as warnings to the young and inexperienced. Taking the Southern lady's role as moral guardian of her daughter and granddaughters seriously, Edith frequently tells the story of her sister Cleva's folly in running away with an actor who leaves her pregnant and eventually dead, for Cleva dies in childbirth.

Yet the narratives that Edith uses to try to control her daughter and granddaughters have already limited Edith's own participation in life. As a young girl growing up, Edith has two narratives from which to choose. She may be like the "bad" girl who rebels against her family's authority, follows her sexual desires, runs off with a man of uncertain reputation, and ends up dead (Cleva's story). Or she may be a "good" girl who maintains her virginity, keeps herself apart of the common masses, and is rewarded for her behavior with marriage to a dependable, steady man who will take care of her. Edith chooses the latter story. Jane describes everything from the street on which Edith lives to Edith's perfume as "chaste." In her few indirect discussions of sex with Jane, Edith will simply admit that the wife has a duty to "go through with" certain acts "because the man needs them" (OW 138). Moreover, she informs Jane that love is not essential to marriage. She most often describes her own late husband Hans as a good man who did his patriarchal duty by protecting her. And from what does he protect Edith? Hans shields Edith from the very messiness of life itself. According to the well-worn family story, a young Edith is coming down with typhoid while watching a fireworks celebration in the midst of "the common crowds" that "disgusted her." As she faints at the feet of the young German immigrant who will eventually become her
husband, Edith exclaims, "Life is a disease." Hans' response is "Let me protect you from it" (OW 23). When Edith chooses the story of the "good" girl, which so closely parallels the narrative of the virtuous Southern lady, as her guiding narrative, she adopts the notion that "life" is dangerous, threatening, and ugly. She chooses to be protected from life rather than participate in it.

Yet Edith's view of herself as a Southern lady actually keeps her from protecting her granddaughters from the very real ugliness and harm of physical abuse. Her acceptance of the narrative of the Southern lady causes her to neglect her duties as a mother, for it is the Southern lady's preoccupation with manners and fear of public shame that causes Edith to ignore true violence and the physical and emotional health of her family. Edith's most frequent complaint against her daughter Kitty's second husband Ray is that he is "common." According to Edith, "Some people know how to act and others don't," and Ray is one of those people who simply does not know how to behave properly (OW 104). When Ray punches his daughter Emily for accusing him of cheating during a family croquet match, Edith's distress is caused by Ray's "bad manners" and his creation of a public scene (Emily's boyfriend witnesses the occurrence) rather than any sympathetic concern for Emily. Just after Emily is knocked to the ground and her boyfriend John runs to his car, Edith declares, "Oh, now look. John is leaving. Oh, what a shame!" (OW 101). Edith's concern for appearances similarly dictated her behavior when Ray slapped a teenage Jane, bursting her eardrum: "I regretted for years that I didn't take him to court for that. But how could I? My own daughter was married to him. She would have been so disgraced"
(emphasis mine; OW 103). The narrative of the Southern lady encourages Edith to become a static and silent image, intent upon maintaining an appearance of domestic harmony rather than acting to protect her granddaughters from very real physical violence.

Edith’s behavior during the battle between Ray and Emily also reveals a self-indulgence and lack of concern for others that seems to contradict directly the Southern lady’s duty of self-sacrifice. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, narcissism is often the result of the Southern lady’s preoccupation with maintaining her elevated status in the community, for as she concentrates on maintaining her superiority, she focuses on herself, grooms herself, and often ends up idolizing herself. As soon as the conflict arises on the croquet lawn, Edith calls for Jane to find her smelling salts, and as she sits on the grass, closing her eyes and waving the small green bottle in front of her nose, Jane gets a "whiff of old-fashioned self-indulgence" (OW 103). Centering on herself, Edith exclaims, "I really can’t take this sort of thing. With my high blood pressure. Oh, what a shame, what a shame" (OW 103). Then opening her eyes, Edith "surveyed her long, beautiful legs in their nylon stockings, stretched gracefully down the length of the lawn chair" (OW 103-4). Only a woman long accustomed to scrutinizing her appearance would take this moment to admire the length of her legs. Moreover, in focusing on herself, Edith distances herself from her family members by ignoring their emotional needs. As a mother, Edith appears even more narcissistic than Smith’s Southern ladies, indicating that the image does not protect women, as it is supposed to, but rather keeps them available for abuse.
Like Miss Iona, Edith exhibits some of the characteristics of the clinically defined narcissist. Philipson claims that narcissists are "extraordinarily dependent upon the tribute and attention of others to give them feelings of selfhood. Other people are valuable insofar as they supply the narcissistic individual with the esteem and approval that he or she lacks within. Therefore, the relationships entered into by narcissistic people are usually exploitative and/or parasitic" (214). Although Edith's relationships may not fit this definition entirely, her behavior at the croquet match certainly exploits and ignores the emotional needs of others.

Yet even in her worst moments, when she is clearly putting the dictates of the narrative of the Southern lady before the needs of her family, Edith can be pitied for the anguish she feels when torn between her loyalty to a restrictive narrative and her love for her family. As we have seen, Edith admits that she "regretted for years" not taking Ray to court for slapping Jane and bursting her eardrum, and the reason she is able to feel this regret is because she realizes that her failure to act results from her need to keep up appearances. Edith appears to suffer more than Smith's Southern ladies because she is more aware of the fact that in adopting the narrative of the Southern lady, she is taking on a role that does not always benefit her or her family.

Another example that Edith is aware of the narrative's limiting effects can be seen in her dreams after her husband's death. When Edith marries Hans, she expects him to place her on a pedestal and protect her from the life, and he does it so successfully that she does not even need to share her life with her husband. Edith's daughter Kitty claims that Edith did not fall in love with her husband until after his
death. When the real Hans no longer exists to belie Edith's fantasy of him, Hans becomes for Edith the perfect husband. Edith's imagination is strong, yet she uses it as an escape from reality rather than as a means of developing or enhancing her relationships. Edith's recurring dream of trying and failing to flag down and board a train that Hans is riding suggests that after Hans's death, Edith senses the loss of her opportunity to share a real life with him. Thus, although Edith's life is certainly not void of meaningful relationships (both Kitty and Jane feel close to Edith, even after her death), her faithful adherence to the narrative of the Southern lady limits her participation in the lives of those around her and steals from her opportunities that cannot be regained.

Finally, Edith's death results from her awareness that she can no longer envision herself as the beautiful Southern lady. Edith's triple mirror symbolizes her physical beauty that she attempts to preserve at all costs. When she can no longer preserve the image of physical perfection demanded by the narrative of the Southern lady, she gives herself up to death. As Judith Kegan Gardiner points out, "Women are encouraged to judge their inner selves through they external physical appearance and to equate the two" (190). When Edith decides that her physical appearance is no longer of value, she gives up on her inner person as well. Jane relates the story of how Edith was viewing herself in the triple mirror with a subdued and "chastened" look. When Jane asks Edith what she has seen that has affected her so, Edith replies, "I saw this tired little old lady, that's what I saw" (OW 57). Jane concludes, "Edith had made up her mind that morning she was going to die. She had died to herself, to her image of herself. It was
now only a matter of finding an excuse to justify her death to us" (OW 57). Edith’s appearance as a beautiful lady is central to her definition of herself because it is central to the definition of the Southern lady. Therefore, Edith despairs when she can no longer hide her advancing age from herself or the world, for she lives according to a narrative which implies that the exterior of a woman is of more value than the interior. Edith is ultimately defeated by the narrative of the Southern lady and its insistence that she become a static image rather than a human being subject to the inevitable changes of aging.

Just as the action of Smith’s *Family Linen* centers around Miss Elizabeth’s death and funeral, it is Edith’s funeral which precipitates Jane’s journey home to the South. The audience views Edith primarily through Jane’s fond memories of her grandmother, yet despite Jane’s adoration of and respect for Edith, the descriptions and stories about Edith reveal to the reader the dangers inherent in the ideal of the Southern lady. And perhaps because Edith is at times aware of how the narrative of the Southern lady can harm her family and herself, her granddaughter Jane learns that she cannot rely upon the narrative of the Southern lady to define herself.

Nevertheless, the esteem which Jane feels for Edith illustrates the humanity of Godwin’s ladies and that they do interact within close and meaningful, if imperfect, relationships. Upon learning of Edith’s death, Jane calls her college buddy Gerda for comfort. When Gerda asserts that Edith was a symbol to Jane and that her death would quite naturally be disturbing, Jane does not openly argue, but she will not accept Gerda’s analysis of her relationship with her grandmother: "Edith just a symbol? But
no, she would not challenge Gerda today. Gerda was an important symbol to her just now, she thought wryly" (OW 37). Godwin suggests that though her ladies may adopt a narrative that confines them, they are women and not the symbols of female perfection that the myth of the Southern lady would have one believe.

The next two characters under discussion, Kitty of The Odd Woman and Lily of A Southern Family, differ from Theodora, Edith, and Smith’s willful Southern ladies in that they appear to begin their young adult lives as rebels who reject the constricting narrative of the Southern lady. Both women are single mothers raising a daughter until they marry younger, virile, yet less refined men. They are also both writers until they marry and put aside their goals of creating fiction in favor of the more traditional goals of creating children and a home for their families. Through the memories of Kitty, Lily, and their daughters, husbands, and friends, the reader glimpses how these two women have changed over the years, how they have fallen into patterns of behavior which owe their origins to the restrictive narratives of the Southern lady, the romance story, or the fairy tale. And once again, their adherence to these narratives isolates them and stifles their creativity and self-expression. Finally, Kitty and Lily are more aware of their role playing than Theodora and Edith, and they suffer more because they feel more deeply the loss of their initial freedom from restrictive female narratives.

After the death of her husband in the war, Kitty, who writes romance novels during the 1940s to support her mother Edith and daughter Jane, appears to reject the conventional script of the Southern lady by supporting her family with her writing. Yet the stories Kitty feels compelled to write encourage women to abandon their
independence and be drawn into an image of womanhood that claims marriage and motherhood as women's ultimate goals in life. The stories Kitty writes for magazines sound very much like the popular Harlequin romances that update the nineteenth-century female narratives such as that of the Southern lady to accommodate political, economic, and social changes for women in twentieth century. The heroines are allowed to be smart and have adventures throughout the course of the narrative, but they are still expected to be chaste, perhaps even virginal, until they marry the hero, their reward at the novel's conclusion. Moreover, although they have jobs when they are single, the jobs are usually not very important to them, something they can easily give up when the right man comes along to rescue them. Kitty recognizes, and appears troubled by the fact, that in order for her stories to sell, their heroines' occupations must be kept "suitable":

You had to be careful about what they did, she said. Her girls were stuck behind desks and counters in banks, behind typewriters (in offices only), or they were models (with impeccable morals) or—rarely, very rarely—aspiring actresses who were always rescued just this side of the wings by a man who had a full-time part in mind for them. (OW 26)

When Jane, a curious preschooler at the time, asks her mother why she does not write a book about a woman like herself, one who teaches at a college, writes love stories on the weekends, and has a little girl, Kitty pragmatically replies that such a book would not sell:

It would be interesting to people like you and me, but I can assure you, Love Short Stories wouldn't buy it. My girls have to have respectable, slightly glamorous jobs, but nothing too important. There must be
nothing too permanent or heavy in their lives, because they have to throw it all out the window when the man comes along. (OW 26-27)

Kitty recognizes the unrealistic quality of her stories, and she is frustrated by the fact that in order to sell her writing, she must write stories that are not true to her goals for her life as a modern woman.

Yet Kitty does not realize that the romance story she sells will become the guiding narrative for her own life. In Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature, Janice Radway asserts that the attention paid to realistic details in romances has the tendency to persuade both reader and writer of the story that the tale is not a fantasy at all. Radway concludes,

The romance's consequent equivocation about its status as myth or realism could conceivably be the mark of its author's and readers' deep-seated unwillingness to admit that the perfect union concluding the story is unattainable in life. (193)

The romance stories that Kitty writes, therefore, may influence her beliefs and assumptions about her role as a woman despite the fact that she knows very well she is writing unrealistic stories. Kitty may not suspect that she will fall into the script of one of her pulp novels, abandoning her ambitions to accommodate the needs of a husband and more children, yet it is not very surprising that this is exactly what happens, for the novels she writes insists that women define themselves as lovers, wives, or mothers. As Radway asserts, the romance story denies "women the possibility of refusing [a] purely relational destiny and thus rejects their right to a single, self-contained existence" (207).
When Kitty marries Ray Sparks, whose name suggests a fiery sexuality that would disgust and frighten her mother Edith, she is not only rebelling against her mother's strict moral code, she is also falling into the narrative of the stories she writes, in which the woman gives up her personal ambitions to become a wife and mother. Yet even after marrying Ray Sparks, Kitty does not dismiss her writing immediately. In fact, Jane asserts that it was during this period, "early in their marriage, the babies had not yet come, and Kitty still believed she could be a wife and mother and a successful writer," that Kitty attempted to write "a more serious kind of fiction" (OW 148). Though the audience never learns exactly when or why Kitty gives up her ambitions of writing, Jane's words suggest that her duties as wife and mother eventually become so demanding that writing, for Kitty, becomes an impossibility. Moreover, the Southern lady's scruples, which Kitty inherits from Edith almost despite herself, play a role in Kitty's abandonment of writing. Jane claims that during the late forties and early fifties, serious writers were tackling the "love scene" in their works, and Kitty, despite studying the most adept portrayals of the sexual act that she can find, discovers that she is too much the lady to write about sex:

She continued to study paperbacks in the drugstore, Spillane and the young Mailer, whatever she could get (Lady Chatterley's Lover would not be available above the counter until Kitty had given up writing), and tried and failed to imitate them and remain a lady as well. (OW 148-49)

Jane's comments imply that both Kitty's responsibilities as wife and mother and her ladylike reluctance to express sexual desire keep her from pursuing a kind of fiction that would liberate rather than confine her imagination.
After Kitty gives up her writing, her last ditch effort to escape from Ray’s control is thwarted, and she appears to abandon her efforts to create an original narrative of independence for herself. During her marriage to Ray, she maintains a secret friendship with an old lover and almost abandons her marriage by running away to New Orleans to be with this man, only to be stopped by Ray’s sudden whim to accompany her, allegedly to visit her daughter at school. Ironically, Kitty’s effort to escape from Ray is not truly a move toward independence because it involves the flight into another man’s arms. Nonetheless, it is at this point in her life that Kitty appears to make a choice: she will stay with the safe and familiar; she will allow herself to be protected and adored by Ray, rather than risk her security by heedlessly following her passions.

Since the romance story ends with the marriage of the heroine, Kitty then turns to the narrative of the Southern lady to guide her actions in her relationships. When the reader is first introduced to Kitty of The Odd Woman, she has been married to Jane’s stepfather for twenty-five years, and she is far from the rebellious, impulsive girl of her youth. She has become, instead, a Southern lady who avoids conflict and works subtly but efficiently to maintain the peace, at least on the surface, in the home. After raising three more children, another daughter and two sons, with her volatile husband, Ray Sparks, Kitty has become quite skillful at placating her husband and acting as negotiator among the various personalities in her household. For example, Kitty often calls upon her diplomatic skills when attempting to maintain the peace between Jane and Ray. Jane curses Ray’s dogs that are allowed to burst into the bedrooms in the
mornings, abruptly waking Jane and crudely lapping from her toilet. The morning’s peace is further disturbed when Ray chastises Jane for opening a new can of coffee before the old one has been finished. Kitty sets out to restore at least the illusion of harmony in the household. As she pacifies Ray and calms Jane with a cup of tea and a pastry, Jane cannot help but notice what Kitty is able to accomplish with a few subtle words and actions: "Awesome diplomacy! It had taken Kitty many years of trial and error to accomplish this art; perhaps it had cost her the loss of other arts, but in two sentences look what she had accomplished" (OW 120). Yet while Jane admires her mother’s skill, she does not envy her mother’s situation and appears to consider the loss of those "other arts" too great a sacrifice to the altar of diplomacy: "I would rather die an old maid in my own private space, opening as many new cans of good coffee as I please, being as undiplomatic as I like to the morning shadows in my house, than live a ‘protected’ life under such domination, such chaos" (OW 120). As Ray’s physical abuse of his stepdaughter and daughter reveals, the protection of the patriarch is only guaranteed when the ladies do not resist his will. And even with the ladies’ compliance, the chaos of unmannerly dogs racing through the house rather than the promised order of peace and security is what Jane finds to be the results of patriarchal domination.

From her mother, Kitty appears to have inherited, despite herself, the Southern lady’s desire to avoid conflict at any cost. And as a mother, Kitty passes on the doctrines to her daughter Jane. She insists that honesty is not always the best policy, especially when dealing with men. When Jane was a teenager, Kitty had coached her
in the arts of the Southern belle: "Never let a man be too sure of you. Always let there be a little doubt in his mind, it keeps them coming back" (OW 93). Kitty gives her daughter further demonstration of her skills in manipulating men when she bursts into tears in response to her husband's reproaches. Jane and her mother had been cleaning out Edith's apartment and drinking a few too many glasses of sherry in the process. Kitty's husband Ray comes to pick them up and he treats them like naughty children, but when Kitty dissolves into tears, Ray becomes completely solicitous, to Jane's amazement: "Jane watched the transformation, awed at Kitty's skill. Large tears actually fell from her mother's flushed cheeks. . . . Ray was by her side in a flash" (OW 182).

Yet Kitty puts diplomacy over honesty when handling the women as well as the men in her life, and by doing so, she sacrifices true connection with her daughters. Jane realizes that Kitty has not only kept the men in her life guessing, but everyone else as well: "Nobody was sure of Kitty. She had made elusiveness, soft gentle evasiveness--of persons and of facts which threatened to come too close--her style" (OW 93). Thus, according to Jane, Kitty's cultivated mystery is a form of protective isolation. Is she perhaps afraid that her true feelings would anger those around her, cause conflict rather than the harmony that the Southern lady has been taught to seek? Kitty's guiding narrative during her marriage to Ray, then, has its roots in the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady. She represses her true emotions, concealing them within in daily swims and religious rituals just as Ella Clanton concealed her thoughts.
in the privacy of her diary. Kitty puts herself on the pedestal by withdrawing from family members and maintaining an air of mystery.

Kitty’s present self controls her emotions, whether hiding them altogether or bringing them to the surface to create a desired effect, and Jane regrets that her mother will not share her feelings. As a child, Jane saw her mother revealing genuine emotions, and she is not sure when Kitty began to change. But she now describes her mother as a "serene, distant" woman who takes long, leisurely swims at the club pool, studies medieval history in bed at night, reads about the lives of saints, and goes to church every day (OW 95). Although she writes letters to both daughters regularly, Kitty’s conversations with Jane and Emily tend to be guarded rather than intimate. Jane claims, "Kitty has managed to evade both Emily and me, evade all her children; and she has managed to evade Ray, too; in a sense, she has ‘jilted’ Ray for God, for the higher things of the spirit that he cannot ever amass enough money to purchase for her" (OW 93). Like Theodora, Edith, and Smith’s willful Southern ladies, Kitty distances herself from those around her. Moreover, her increasing interest in religion and matters of the spirit, reminiscent of the Southern lady’s role as moral bastion of the family, are a kind of retreat from the physical world, personified by Ray Sparks.

In adopting a narrative of concealment, isolation, and cultivated mystery, Kitty not only damages her relationships with her family, but she also thwarts her earlier desire to create an original life for herself. In her conversation with Jane while sorting Edith’s belongings, Kitty finds her old diary and remembers the girl she used to be, a girl who dreamed of writing books, being passionately in love, having it all. Yet she
renounces that girl and her dreams as a creature of the past, and she flushes her old
diary down the toilet as if symbolically destroying that young girl and her
rebelliousness. Kitty tries to explain to Jane,

There were certain times I saw, almost like a vision, the virtue of
selfishness, but, you see, I was brought up to believe woman’s best
virtue was that of renouncing herself. So I had little orgies of
selfishness, followed by depressing hangovers of shame. There were
years when I thought I was going to tear myself in half. Now I look
back on those years with—well, some pity for the mess I was . . . but,
most of all, with a sort of sociological distance. (OW 170)

When Jane discovers that her mother has destroyed her diary, she is deeply
disappointed, for she longed to read it in hopes of uncovering some of Kitty’s secrets.
But Kitty maintains her silence and renounces her past self: “That was another person,
that girl. She’s dead as a doornail. Deader than old Cleva” (OW 181). Although she
had never met her, Kitty had always felt a special sympathy for Cleva, the rebellious
aunt who ran off with an actor and died in childbirth. However, she proclaims that her
former self, the one that valued selfishness and would follow “unbridled impulses,” is
as dead as the poor aunt who followed her passions to an untimely death.

Although Kitty appears pleased with the life she has constructed for herself, the
reader senses the disappointment and anguish that are manifested in Kitty’s dramatic
destruction of her diary. Kitty claims that there is a certain relief in being past the
desires of youth: “Honestly, Jane! Hearing you talk like this makes me thankful all that
is finished for me. All that yearning. All the choosing” (OW 169). Kitty’s assertions
that she is through with "yearning" and "choosing" suggest that she has allowed herself
to slip into complacency, that in her search for peace and security, she is allowing the passion of life to slip away from her. In taking her place upon the pedestal, Kitty is allowing herself to become a statue, a dead and silent image, rather than a living, expressive human being. Kitty has certainly come a great distance from the rebellious days of her youth. Manipulating her emotions for their desired effect, repressing her personal desires in favor of harmony and security, and distancing herself from her loved ones, Kitty has become more like her mother, "the perfect Southern lady," than she would probably like to admit. She has renounced originality for a stereotyped role.

Like Kitty, Lily Quick of A Southern Family does not immediately accept the restrictive narratives of the Southern lady or, in Lily’s case, the fairy tale. Rather, she is gradually overwhelmed by the strength of these prescriptive narratives. As a young, widowed mother, Lily initially tries to create an original narrative for her life by earning her own way in the world as a writer. Julia, the best friend of Lily’s daughter Clare, notes that when she was growing up, she admired Lily because of the stark contrast she presented to her own mother, a stereotypical Southern lady who "suffered from ‘nerves’ and lived for the approval of a society that had been in flower a hundred years before" (SF 28). As a teenager, Julia viewed Lily as a role model because she did not act like a typical Southern lady:

I didn’t think of her as the typical Southern woman, at all, when I was growing up. She was the most vibrant, sensual woman I knew. She said daring, unconventional things; she mocked the status quo. She was writing a novel that she said was going to blow the lid off this town, only she never finished it. I still dream of reading that novel. (SF 328).
The novel that Julia mentions is about a wise old woman who lives on a hill overlooking the town and interprets the secrets of the town at night as she watches its bright lights. Lily, herself, lives upon such a hill, but as she ages, she feels less and less visionary, and her awareness of the part she plays in destroying her dreams and stifling her creativity pains and frustrates her.

Rather than a visionary wise woman on a hill, Lily allows herself to become a Southern lady on a pedestal or a fairy tale princess ensconced in her hero’s castle. After putting her novel aside for several years as she, like Kitty, strived to meet the demands of marriage and motherhood, Lily picks the novel up again, reads some of it, and destroys it in disgust. Just as Kitty destroys her diary because it seems to no longer represent her present self, Lily destroys her novel because she finds it pretentious, self-conscious, and totally untrue to life as she has experienced it. Although the specific details of Lily’s novel are never mentioned, the reader senses that Lily’s disgust is aimed at how her own life is turning out as much as the flaws of her novel. Like Kitty, Lily marries a younger, virile man, has several children, and allows her personal ambitions to be put aside as she deals with the daily routine of wife and motherhood. Lily’s destruction of her novel is the culmination of what she sees as a "molting period in her life," which began when she gave in to her husband Ralph’s offer of marriage and ended when her daughter Clare left the house to live with her father (SF 167). Clare leaves not only because she cannot get along with her stepfather but because she hates to watch her mother turning into a repressed and bitter woman. Clare’s friend Julia similarly recognizes Lily’s negative transformation:
Now, whenever I meet her, I feel I'm talking to someone under a spell. It's as if she'd been trapped and transformed into the kind of woman she used to scorn. But she takes some deep, perverse pleasure in acting the part to the hilt. Sometimes I want to shake her; other times she makes me want to go off somewhere and cry. (SF 328)

Like a woman caught in the plot of a fairy tale, Lily is transformed from a woman who makes her own decisions and writes her own stories into the classic fairy tale heroine who is rescued by the prince and taken as a bride to his castle on the hill, never to be heard from again.

Lily's knowledge that she aids in this destructive transformation galls her and causes her to further isolate herself, turning her energies toward subtly harming anyone else whom she might blame for her predicament. Lily is fully aware that she has become something less than she dreamed for herself years ago, and she ponders the transformation that has rendered her bitter and ultimately powerless:

She had watched herself metamorphose from a woman used to earning a living and making decisions for herself and others into a female "dependent" in thrall to an increasing number of small, debasing tyrannies that had succeeded at last in sapping all her ambition to overcome them. (SF 167-68)

Since Lily feels that she has lost whatever power she once had in her life, she tries to maintain control by donning the mask of the Southern lady, an image she once ridiculed, and by hurting others as she feels she has been hurt.

Lily develops a guiding narrative that echoes the Southern lady's exaggerated composure and control of her emotions that result in self-repression and isolation. And like Kitty, Lily shuts people out and controls them by cultivating a personal mystery.
that both puts off and manipulates her family and friends. Julia's father claims that Lily is the "quintessential Southern woman" because she is "mystifying" (SF 328). And Ralph notices a change in Lily that has occurred since her first met and fell in love with her. While at one time he would have been forced to deal with her anger, she now refuses to reveal any emotions at all: "She wouldn't tell anybody anything. Formerly, with him, she had been more outgoing with her tears and rages, but now she wouldn't admit to so much as a headache, not even if he caught her swallowing aspirin" (SF 127). By controlling and concealing her emotions, Lily is actually manipulating the Southern lady's code of behavior to gain for herself the only kind of power she can now imagine possessing--the power to harm others through her withdrawal from them.

Lily uses this power of withdrawal most obviously in her relations with her husband Ralph. After having an extramarital affair, Ralph wants to talk to Lily about his "sins." He wants to communicate with her, for he feels that by getting their emotions out into the open, they might improve their marriage. But Lily cuts him off completely. She realizes what Ralph is trying to tell her, for without actually admitting the sordid facts to herself, she has recognized the signs of an affair for quite some time. Just as Smith's Miss Elizabeth turns a blind eye to her husband's sexual misconduct, Lily thinks that if she simply refuses to acknowledge the affair, she can will it out of existence and go on with her life without having to face her husband's infidelity. Lily's reaction to her husband's confession is not anger at his unfaithfulness, but rather anger at his inability to suffer his sin in the dignity of silence: "Oh, men and their 'honesty,' their 'clean breasts,' and telling all and spilling the beans and opening their cans of
worms and expecting you to thank them for letting you view the writhing, slimy mess inside" (SF 209). Lily does not want to see the ugliness into which real people in real situations get themselves. Moreover, by refusing to allow Ralph to confess, ask for forgiveness, and, perhaps, attempt to work on their relationship, Lily is subtly striking out at Ralph, punishing him and controlling him in the only way she knows how. Having abandoned her efforts at self-determination when she married Ralph, Lily's only remnants of pride come from her ability to keep a tight reign upon her emotions, keep up appearances, and control Ralph by distancing herself from him.

It is Lily's daughter-in-law Snow who points out another example of Lily's insistence on keeping up appearances. She is horrified by Lily's reaction when her favorite dog is hit by a car and dies. Rather than admitting her grief in the presence of friends and family, Lily reassures the friends who accidentally killed the dog and continues with the party as planned. Snow, a working class, mountain girl who is unconvinced by the Southern lady's dictum to never get "ruffled by things beyond one's control," exclaims against Lily's ability to "pretend" (SF 90; 23). But only after everyone has left does Lily allow herself to grieve in the privacy of her own room. Similarly, after her son's death, Lily is seen by Julia at the grocery store looking better than ever: "Her makeup was perfect . . . . It was bizarre, how well she looked, there was a sort of porcelain sheen laid over her grief like a mask" (SF 328). Like the stereotypical "Mrs. Stephens," Lily's pride depends upon her ability to keep up appearances.
Yet this ability to keep her emotions hidden gives Lily a power that yields no true satisfaction; Lily’s unwillingness to share her feelings with others isolates her to the point that, to others, she appears to become, not the fairy tale princess, but rather the fairy tale Snow Queen whose heart is made of a chunk of ice. Lily herself insists that her heart has become "stone" and wonders when she began to stop "trusting people" (SF 448). After one of her battles with Ralph, she notes that she feels like "both the frozen queen and the isolated, naughty child who had caused the trouble in the first place" (SF 447). Lily plays the part of the naughty child covertly, subtly sabotaging Ralph’s attempts at reconciliation, while on the surface she maintains her Snow Queen image. Fairy tales end when the prince delivers his princess to the castle to live happily ever after. Lily’s life reveals the story that follows: the princess, isolated in her tower, becomes so bored and frustrated that she lashes out at her captor, the prince, with cold remarks and icy stares. The description of the fairy tale Snow Queen aptly describes Lily: "She was beautiful and she was graceful, but she was ice—shining, glittering ice. She was alive, for all that, and her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, but in them there was neither rest nor peace" (Anderson 199). Lily, feeling that she must repress the "naughty child" within herself, becomes as cold and impenetrable as a queen made of snow and ice.

Lily’s dream at Clare’s beach cottage further illustrates the disjunction between Lily’s inner and outer selves: she dreams that she is lying on a bed in a convent cell with a group of nuns crowded around her who believe she is dead. One nun comments
that her sainthood is obvious because she is so beautiful in death. Lily’s thoughts and behavior in the dream are intriguing:

All this time I was thinking, But I’m not dead, yet all the same I continued to lie perfectly still and let them think so. I couldn’t bear losing the opportunity of being a saint. (SF 476)

It is as if Lily is hiding the "naughty child" in herself as she lives her life. She suppresses her true self as the narrative of the Southern lady dictates, and by suppressing the self, she sees herself as a candidate for sainthood. But in order to achieve this sainthood, she must play dead; she must sacrifice real living and become instead a lifeless image, like the Southern lady on her pedestal.

Lily’s growing reliance upon the narrative of the Southern lady not only damages her relationship with her husband, but it also harms her relationships with her daughter Clare and her daughter-in-law Snow. Clare, who lives in New York and has accomplished her mother’s aborted dream of becoming a writer, loves her mother and pities the way Lily’s life has disappointed her. And it is clear from their interaction that Clare would like Lily to be more open and honest with her than Lily’s narrative of cultivated mystery will allow her to be. The one intimate exchange between Lily and Clare that occurs during the novel is prompted by Clare’s unexpected entrance into Lily’s bedroom before Lily has "rearranged her face" to conceal unguarded emotions (SF 475). After admitting that she is recording a dream, Lily consents, to Clare’s surprise, to tell her daughter about it. Yet throughout their conversation, the adverbs used to describe Lily’s part in the exchange—"evasively", "vaguely" (SF 476; 477)—
suggest that Lily is not comfortable with this rare, intimate conversation with her daughter. But while Lily’s narrative of cultivated mystery has kept her from being as close to her daughter as she might be, the relationship is certainly warm and loving because Clare understands both the limitations that Lily’s environment and era have placed on her ability to make choices and her use of the narrative of the Southern lady as a manipulative tool to gain power in a world where she feels powerless.

In contrast, Lily’s relationship with her daughter-in-law Snow is destructive rather than simply incomplete. When she cannot mold Snow into an acceptable Southern lady, Lily sets out to cut Snow off from Lily’s son Theo and Snow’s and Theo’s son Jason. Lily resents Snow’s marriage to Theo because Snow comes from a poor mountain family whom Lily considers to be unacceptably tacky. Although in her younger days Lily was willing to marry Ralph, also from a poor, uneducated family, the Lily of the novel’s present is crippled by the same feelings of class superiority that isolate Theodora, Edith, and Smith’s willful Southern ladies from their families and communities. Thus, Lily cannot accept Snow for who she is, and Snow complains, as Wickie Lee complains of Theodora, that Lily tried to control her life and change her into her vision of what a Southern lady should be. Snow insists that after she married Theo, she had two choices: "I could go on being the ignorant hillbilly girl Theo had raised from the dirt, or I could let the Queen Mother make me over into her idea of what I ought to be" (SF 236). According to Snow, this make over included correcting her speech, encouraging her to read good books instead of watching soap operas, and suggesting that she take up interests such as embroidery. Snow insists that the Quick
family wanted her to "reflect them" (SF 236), just as the nineteenth-century Southern lady was expected to offer a positive reflection of her community.

When Snow refuses to be molded into Lily’s notion of what a Southern woman should be, Lily retaliates by trying to keep her son and grandson away from Snow. After Theo’s and Snow’s divorce, Lily discourages Snow’s visits to the house, and after Theo’s death, Lily tries to gain custody of Jason. Interestingly, Julia notices a similarity between the arch rivals, Snow and Lily:

Lily Quick and Snow were alike; they shared the same Remote Princess quality. Even in the midst of the family life that had molded them, contained them, ensnared them, they preserved a secretive separateness: they bestowed themselves. . . . Both used their enchanted-evening eyes to communicate their wishes or shut you out. Snow in her borrowed trailer in Granny Squirrel, and Lily, incarcerated by choice (or default) on her husband’s hard-won hilltop, possessed the same patrician aloofness that made you worry about pleasing them and kept you guessing about who they really were. (SF 356)

Lily and Snow, linked also by the whiteness and coldness associated with their names, are similar in their ability to control their emotions and thus distance themselves from family and friends. It is almost has if Lily, recognizing parts of herself in Snow, views Snow as a potential daughter and envies Snow her youth and vitality. Yet rather than nurturing Snow’s individual strengths, Lily attempts to confine her within the same limited narrative she has accepted for herself. When Snow resists, Lily becomes like the wicked step-mother in the tale of Snow White who tries to kill Snow White because she envies her youth and beauty. Lily, envying Snow’s youth and potential to write her own narrative, similarly seeks to destroy Snow.
As Lily becomes progressively entrapped in the bitterness of her self-imposed isolation, she, like Kitty, turns to religion. In Lily's life, religion becomes a source of comfort and a way of connecting herself to others. The one time when we see Lily at her happiest is at the end of the novel when she is visiting with Sister Patrick. And although Lily does not reveal herself completely to the fun-loving nun, she does let herself go enough to laugh out loud. In conversation with Sister Patrick, Lily recognizes the importance of individuality as she discusses her visits to elderly women: "Everybody crumbles to dust eventually, but no two personalities—no two—are ever alike" (SF 525). And Lily's future appears hopeful when she asserts that she is interested in the present and action: "I care what's here for me to do now" (SF 532). Sister Patrick agrees and further claims, "we should fight any person or institution or system that tries to take away that dignity of uniqueness" (SF 525).

Yet the reader cannot help but wonder if Lily will act upon her assertions on the importance of individuality and present action, for Lily fails to recognize that in her withdrawal into the mask of the Southern lady, she is denying the validity of her own personality. And by refusing to deal with her relationship with Ralph, she is isolating herself in an unhealthy way. When Lily prays for her children, she says a prayer for Ralph too because "If she stopped praying for Ralph, she would be calling thirty-four years of her life into question, and she was not brave enough to do that yet" (SF 538-39). Lily is afraid to explore her past or analyze her relationships too closely. As the novel closes, Lily is determined to return home and continue the surface formalities of her marriage with Ralph, ultimately setting both Ralph and herself up for more pain.
She decides what she can and cannot discuss with him that night over their popcorn, and she resolves, as is her custom, to be "gracious and receptive; despite the hostility that lurk[s] inside her constantly, like a dog about to snap" (SF 519). Lily's resolutions to preserve the status quo in her relationship with Ralph contradict her remarks about valuing individuality and action. Her inability to reject the narrative of the Southern lady damages her chances at pursuing the "task of personality" that Godwin values.

Nevertheless, Godwin, like Smith, reveals a guarded hope for the future of Southern women in Lily and Sister's Patrick's conversation about the importance of personality, uniqueness, and action. Moreover, the "yet" that ends Lily's admission that she is not brave enough to call thirty-four years of her life into question suggests that what she cannot do now, she may yet accomplish some time in her future.

Godwin's self-styled Southern ladies are like Smith's in their withdrawal from society and from intimacy with family and friends. Their dependance on class as a barrier between themselves and the common masses isolates them and limits their interaction with others. And Godwin, perhaps more than Smith, focuses heavily on the personal lives of her ladies, clearly showing how their adherence to the narrative of the Southern lady, or to similarly restrictive narratives such as the romance story and the fairy tale, harms their relationships, hinders their ability to mother their daughters, and prevents them from discovering and expressing their true selves. When they attempt to use prescriptive female narratives as a means of empowering themselves or controlling their relationships, they paradoxically weaken their relationships. Clearly, Godwin, like Smith, views the narrative of the Southern lady as one that thwarts
Southern women's minds and imaginations. Edith, Theodora, Kitty, and Lily allow the narrative of the Southern lady to stifle their self-expression and creativity, for by accepting the role as their script in life, they are denying themselves the opportunity to write their own narratives. And the greater awareness of Godwin's Southern ladies, particularly Kitty and Lily, of the part they play in isolating themselves and stifling their creative dreams causes them to suffer more. Godwin's readers see that suffering and, therefore, feel a sympathy towards Godwin's ladies that Smith's readers cannot feel for her more self-righteous Southern ladies, who are less aware of the artifice demanded by the narrative of the Southern lady and more arrogant in their assumption of the Southern lady's role.
SMITH: SEARCHING FOR A UNIFIED SELF

I. Although Smith would undoubtedly admit that new options are opening for modern Southern women, her writings suggest that the narrative of the Southern lady still exerts a powerful influence on the women who came of age in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. In *Family Linen* (1985), Elizabeth Bird Hess's daughters and granddaughters are daily confronted by the changes that Miss Elizabeth refused to acknowledge by clinging desperately to the image of herself as a Southern lady. Elizabeth's son, Arthur Hess, thinks to himself, "Everything's changing... Boy George wears makeup and Mother is dead" (FL 159). Arthur's thoughts reflect his view that the traditional masculine and feminine stereotypes can no longer be relied upon in the modern world. He is confused and distressed by the thought that modern men might be able to dress and, therefore, act like women, and by the fact that modern women are no longer subject to the stringent and restrictive policies that guided the behavior of women like his mother.

To a certain extent, of course, Arthur is right. American women have gained substantial rights in the last one hundred years. They have gained, if not complete, certainly considerable access to politics, education, and the workplace. They have even gained control of their own property and their own bodies (though they must continue to fight for the latter).

Modern American women, however, are still influenced by the false representations of womanhood that confront them in the media. In their 1988 study of the image of women in television advertising, Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingsley conclude
that their results "reinforce the fact that women and men are not treated equally in advertising," for although their results "show that some changes have been made [since the early 70s], women are still predominantly portrayed in the home while men are more frequently shown in the business world" (236). Even more unsettling are Susan Faludi's assertions, in Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, that images of women in the movies and on television have actually regressed since the 1970s. Citing films such as Overboard, The Good Mother, and Fatal Attraction, Faludi insists that in the late 1980s, film makers became preoccupied with "toning down independent women and drowning out their voices" (115). According to Faludi, the only true heroines portrayed in movies of the late 80s assumed their traditional roles as wives and/or mothers:

The few strong-minded, admirable women are rural farm mothers defending their broods from natural adversity (Places in the Heart, The River, and Country) and housewives guarding their families from predatory single women (Tender Mercies, Moonstruck, Someone to Watch Over Me, and Terms of Endearment). (116)

Similarly, in her analysis of 1980s television programing, Faludi asserts that in their focus on "nesting," the networks were "bringing back regressive fantasies about motherhood and marriage" (153) while "depopulating TV of its healthy independent women" (148).19 Obviously American society has not yet broken free of stereotypical roles for men and women that permit men power and prestige through their accomplishments in business and politics but demand that women's success depends upon their acceptance of their "natural" roles as wives and mothers.
Moreover, one need only scan the articles of one of the many women’s magazines in publication to discover that a woman’s inner worth is still inextricably linked to her exterior appearance. In "On Female Identity and Writing About Women," Judith Kegan Gardiner asserts, "Women are encouraged to judge their inner selves through their external physical appearance and to equate the two. At the same time they are taught to create socially approved images of themselves by manipulating their dress, speech, and behavior" (190). Popular culture encourages today’s "liberated" woman to shape herself to fit society’s image of what a woman should be, a beautiful package that will attract men. For example, the readers of a magazine such as Self, which would presumably cater to modern women who want to put their traditionally neglected "selves" on top of their list of priorities, are barraged by articles on how they might shape up, slim down, and stay young: "The Sexy-Shoulder Workout," "3 Easy Ways to a Strong and Sexy Stomach," "The 10 Commandments of Diet Success," "The Diet to Stop Aging," "Exercise: the Key to Staying Young," "Great Legs! Who’s Got Them--How to Get Them." Admittedly, a focus on physical fitness will promote women’s health, but the titles of the articles, which focus on body parts rather than whole women and frequently contain the word "sexy," suggest that a woman can be divided into her physical parts (particularly those that appeal to men) and attracting men is the real agenda behind a woman’s need to shape up and stay young.

In The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women, Naomi Wolf, like Susan Faludi, asserts that women of the 1980s and 90s are "in the midst of
a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against female advancement: the beauty myth" (10). Wolf claims,

The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called beauty objectively and universally exists. Women want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. (12)

Wolf goes on to illustrate the falseness of the beauty myth's story and to explain how the myth works to make women unhappy with themselves because they cannot live up to the ideal of beauty presented to them by the media: "More women have more money and power and scope and legal recognition than we have ever had before; but in terms of how we feel about ourselves physically, we may actually be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers" (10). As Wolf asserts, the beauty myth tells a story; it is another restrictive female narrative that keeps women from creating their own narratives and defining themselves independently of men: "women's identity must be premised upon our 'beauty' so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval" (14).

A woman's sexuality, over which she supposedly has complete control in the 1980s and 90s due to birth control innovations and more liberal attitudes toward sex, is also held in chains by the beauty myth, for in order to be sexy and attract men, a woman must strive to achieve an unattainable standard of beauty. The modern woman may be free to want and have sex, even without the sanction of marriage. However, this "liberation" can also be seen as simply making her a more readily available sex object for men's use. And, of course, if she is too free with her sexual favors, she suffers the consequences of being labeled a whore or a slut. The women's movement
and the sexual revolution have not been able to erase the sexual double standard any more than they have defeated the beauty myth.

The modern female narratives that still confine women and thwart their ability to create original and independent narratives for themselves can be directly related to the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady. Like the modern woman whose appearance is still central to her self-definition, the Southern lady was supposed to be the epitome of female beauty, a marvelous statue to be seen but not necessarily heard. And just as media representations of women assure contemporary American women that they are most happy and fulfilled when assuming their traditional roles of wife and mother, the Southern lady’s chief duty was to recognize and meet the needs of her family. Thus, the essence of the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady lives on.

The New South version of ladyhood, like the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady, refuses women true freedom of movement and self-development. The actions demanded of the Southern women force them into stereotyped roles or images through which others—society, men, or children—essentially define who they are. The nineteenth-century Southern belle differs very little from her modern sister, the popular, flirtatious, and not too smart cheerleader. The cheerleader may show more leg and allow more sexual advances, but her reputation still depends upon her chastity, if not her virginity. And her goals are still to attract boys who will grant her status in the eyes of her peer group. The modern Southern lady’s bellehood may be extended into her twenties, and she may be encouraged to attend college, where she is told that she

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must get a good education so that she can pursue a career. However, as Holland and Eisenhart point out in Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and College Culture, the modern Southern college woman spends most of her time talking about men—how to attract them, where to meet them, how to hold on to them, etc.—because she gains the acceptance and approval of her peer group, not by maintaining a high grade point average or excelling at sports, but rather by dating a good-looking and popular man. Once again, the New South version of ladyhood insists that the Southern woman become an attractive package that appeals to men, for the modern Southern lady’s ultimate goal in life is still to marry, raise a family and maintain a beautiful home.

According to the modern narrative, if the modern Southern woman does enter the work force, she does so only because her family needs the extra income, not because she is unsatisfied with her confinement to the domestic sphere. Her career may be readily sacrificed for the good of her husband and family, and she gains the approval of society by maintaining at least the illusion, if not the reality, of domestic order and happiness. The New South version of ladyhood may accept certain changes in women’s lives: opportunities for higher education; their continually increasing entrance into the work force; the increase in the divorce rate; the more open attitude toward sexuality in modern America. However, like the nineteenth-century Southern lady, the lady of the New South is still restricted by a narrative of femininity that demands that she concentrate upon her exterior appearance in order to attract men because her status in
her community relies upon her connection to a man, and her happiness in life depends upon her acceptance of the traditional roles of wife and mother.

Clearly Lee Smith does not find that the narrative of the Southern lady has died with Arthur's mother Elizabeth. Arthur need only look at his sisters, Sybill and Myrtle, to see that the narrative, in its modern form, still exerts its power over Southern women. The reader can see the negative effects of Miss Elizabeth's successful attempts to pass on the legacy of the Southern lady to Sybill and Myrtle, who are the reverse of Godwin's Kitty and Lily. Raised by Miss Elizabeth during the 1950s and 60s, Sybill and Myrtle listen to their mother and attempt to adopt the narrative of the Southern lady as their own. It is only as they enter middle age that they begin to question the values of the narrative and its ability to repress their individuality and mold them into static images. Brooke of *Something in the Wind* (1971) and Crystal of *Black Mountain Breakdown* (1980) are similarly stifled by the narrative of the Southern lady, yet as women coming of age in the 1960s and 70s, they are more affected by diverse social influences in their formative years, and they question the narrative at a younger age. They want more for themselves than stereotypical narratives appear to offer, but they find that denying Southern ladyhood is still too costly. They are not Smith's adamant Southern ladies but rather transition figures who can feel comfortable in neither the world of the "liberated" modern woman nor the world of the Southern lady.

Like Godwin's Lily, Sybill, Myrtle, Brooke and Crystal suffer a debilitating disjunction between their inner and outer selves. While they attempt to conform outwardly to the ideal of the Southern lady, they never feel comfortable within
themselves. Like Smith’s more willful Southern ladies, Sybill, Myrtle, Crystal, and Brooke are effectively stifled by their adherence to prescribed narratives that impose limitations upon them. However, since they are less sure of themselves and their place in the world than Smith’s ladies, they appear more confused and their situations more tragic. Since they can depend less on the narrative of the Southern lady to define their lives in a way that they can accept, these heroines are even more detrimentally affected by the narrative than Smith’s most willful Southern ladies. Moreover, since all, except Brooke, are less conscious than Godwin’s ladies of their manipulations in self-division, they are more powerless and self-destructive. Smith presents these women, self-obsessed and confused, as damaged daughters rather than misguided mothers. Sybill, Myrtle, Brooke, and Crystal are searching for a sense of personal and social identity; the narrative of the Southern lady misdirects them, yet they are ultimately unable to escape its influence.

II. The tenacious influence of the narrative of the Southern lady is best illustrated by Miss Elizabeth’s daughter Sybill. Her self is split between her desire to imagine herself as a modern, independent woman and her acceptance of the narrative of the Southern lady and the romance story that still define women in relation to men. Sybill finishes college and teaches English at a technical school in Roanoke, Virginia. She is unmarried and is good at her job. She does not, however, seem to derive any value from her accomplishments as a teacher. Instead, she views herself in a less than positive light because she has never been able to "catch" a man. Like the young
Southern college women Holland and Eisenhart surveyed in *Educated in Romance*, Sybill's social world does not allow her to gain prestige through her own abilities and accomplishments but only through her relationships with men. Sybill, who went through school a generation before these young women, is even able to admit that she "had always expected to marry" (FL 29) and that she was simply finishing school while she waited for "Mr. Right." The split Sybill creates within herself as she attempts to meet the demands of conflicting narratives, that of the modern, "liberated" woman and that of the Southern lady, causes her pain because she refuses to become consciously aware of the split and therefore cannot heal her fragmented self.

Subconsciously, Sybill's body deals with her self-fragmentation by attacking itself with intensely painful headaches. After years of waiting for the right man to come along and define her, Sybill realizes that she is too set in her own ways ever to adapt to the demands of a "Mr. Right." She is, however, sexually attracted to a neighbor and would like to have an affair with him. Yet she cannot follow the "liberated" woman's script because she still views herself as a chaste Southern lady. In fact, Sybill cannot even fully admit the desire she feels for her neighbor. Her repressed desire and the tension created between the conflicting narratives that control her are manifested in the painful headaches that plague Sybill whenever she thinks of calling her neighbor and inviting him to dinner.

According to Dorothy Combs Hill, Sybill has "blocked passion--and finally human contact and feeling--from her life" (Smith 93). The narrative of the Southern lady that prevents her from pursuing her sexual desires also keeps Sybill from enjoying
deep relationships with her siblings and their children. Smith claims that Sybill has always had a "distaste for the messier, unrestrained elements of family life" (FL 30), so she is not a favorite with her nieces and nephews. Yet Sybill’s love of order, restraint, and form causes her family to always consult her in matters of etiquette and decorum: "Myrtle and Don say Sybill’s been a real big help with the wedding. She always did know how things ought to be, exactly like Miss Elizabeth" (FL 260). Like her mother, Sybill values the importance of surface appearance over inner emotional connection. She has always admired her mother’s ladylike behavior and establishes her sense of privileged identity by imitating her: "Sybill is proud to be her mother’s only responsible child—to be, in some ways, her mother’s only child" (FL 38).

Sybill’s intense admiration for her mother causes her to block out her childhood memory in which she witnesses her mother murdering her father with a hatchet and stuffing him into a well. Her image of her mother as a restrained Southern lady will not allow her to acknowledge a dark and uncontrollable fury in her mother’s nature. With her unbearable headaches and her repressed memories, Sybill symbolizes the final costs of the ideal of the Southern lady. Like the Southern ladies of old, she cannot bear witness to the atrocities of reality as they exist, so she represses them into imagined nonexistence. In doing so, she attempts to follow in Miss Elizabeth’s footsteps. Yet while Miss Elizabeth was confined by the narrative of the Southern lady, Sybill must not only deal with the contradictions and conflicts inherent within the narrative of the Southern lady, but she must deal with the narrative of the modern, "liberated" woman.
as well. She, therefore, experiences more inner turmoil and suffers more than Smith's ladies who clearly accept their positions on the pedestal as natural.

Like Karen of "Tongues of Fire," Sybil's sister Myrtle resolves her dilemma over the conflicting narratives of the modern, "liberated" woman and the Southern lady by molding herself into a New South version of ladyhood. Myrtle has always been a social success. She is the prom queen in high school, she marries her childhood sweetheart and puts him through medical school, and by the time she is forty, Myrtle has a beautiful house, a stable position in the best of her community's social set, a kind and respectful husband, and two slightly rebellious children. The New South version of ladyhood may differ from the nineteenth-century narrative of the Southern lady in minor details: the New South lady can be chaste rather than virginal, she may pursue her education, and she may even work outside the home. However, both narratives make essentially the same demands of Southern women: they must maintain their physical beauty in order to attract men, define themselves in relation to the men in their lives, put the needs of others before their own, maintain their elevated status in the community, and keep up the appearance of domestic harmony. Like her mother before her, Myrtle is concerned about her image in the community and worries more about what her neighbors will think when her pregnant daughter comes home to marry her lover than about whether her daughter is going to be happy in this marriage.

Yet Lee Smith uses Myrtle to illustrate the failure of the New South's version of ladyhood to satisfy the modern Southern woman's individual needs. At forty, Myrtle is nagged by a dissatisfaction with her life that she cannot seem to pin down. She
admits that she "has days when she feels like her whole life is a function of other people's" (FL 48), and she takes a younger man as a lover, an action "she can't explain at all" (FL 49), for she claims that she still loves and respects her husband. Although Myrtle is no more willing to object consciously to the demands of the narrative of the Southern lady than is her sister Sybill, she is plagued by the feeling that something is not quite right in her life, that the narrative is somehow failing to fulfill her. She is beginning to realize a disjunction between her inner and outer self. Myrtle lives the New South's version of ladyhood, and yet she is clearly so unhappy with her life and herself that she breaks the lady's most sacred code by committing adultery.

Neither Sybill nor Myrtle is able to imagine her way out of the narrative of the Southern lady that Miss Elizabeth set before them. Sybill loves order, form, and decorum, but she cannot bring herself to participate in life by truly connecting with the people around her. Although Myrtle's affair may appear on the surface to be an act of rebellion against the narrative of the Southern lady, Myrtle has no intention of abandoning the security of her marriage for a sexual fling with an exterminator. As Dorothy Combs Hill asserts, Myrtle's affair is "an experiment in the physical dimension of sexuality alone, a safe attempt to sample the other side of life without breaking through" (Smith 96). In the end, though repressed by the narrative of the Southern lady, neither Sybill nor Myrtle can escape its appeal of order and security. Since they are not fully aware that their acceptance of the narrative manipulates and controls them, they remain trapped by it.
In contrast, Brooke Kincaid, the young heroine of Something in the Wind, is much more openly troubled by her community's expectation that she play the part of the Southern lady. One might expect Brooke, born and raised in North Carolina, to readily understand the demands of the Southern lady's narrative. But as Brooke approaches young womanhood, she appears unsure of what is expected of her, and she certainly does not naturally fit the Southern lady's image.

Brooke's questioning and confusion are brought on by the death of her childhood friend Charles, who appears to lead Brooke away from conventional stereotypes but still ultimately directs her rather than allowing her to create her own narrative. Charles' control of Brooke can be likened to the media's control of women: the television ads about sexy, "liberated" women are really portraying women as objects to be used by men. Brooke claims that she and Charles were so close that Charles "had made [her] mind," and when he dies, Brooke wishes that he were still there to "tell [her] what to do next" (SW 5; 29). After Charles's funeral, Brooke does not understand the reasoning of the preacher, that they should be rejoicing in Charles's triumphant entrance into heaven, or the behavior of the relatives and friends who are supposed to be mourning: "The other people in the kitchen talked about everything under the sun: the governor, crops, their children, the new Episcopal priest, a divorce. How can they do this with Charles in the next room? I thought" (SW 11). Bothered by the hypocrisy that she sees around her and confused about how she should be behaving now that her friend and mentor is gone, Brooke returns to school after the funeral and feels set apart
from the other girls in a way she has never felt before. She feels lost because Charles is no longer there to direct her.

With Charles gone, Brooke attempts to accommodate herself to the role that society expects of her, so she makes a list of the characteristic traits of her friends at school. She is describing what she thinks are the surface qualifications of the young Southern lady of her day:

They had straight hair and noses. They did not have acne. They had McMullen blouses, A-skirts, Pappagallos, and brown leather belts with little brass horse emblems on them. They charged at Montaldo’s. They had a brother at the University of Virginia or Washington and Lee. (SW 24)

And although Brooke realizes that she also meets all of these requirements, she still feels set apart from this group of girls:

if you went by criteria there was not any difference between them and me. We were all alike, everyone, but I was with them and not of them and I had not known it before. Obviously my criteria were wrong. Charles had said one time, ‘The thing that is the matter with you is you are not a lady.’ But I didn’t know what lady meant. (SW 25)

Unlike Smith’s Southern ladies, Brooke is aware of the image of the Southern lady as a role, and she does not see the role as a natural fit. While Charles was still alive, Brooke did not really care what being a lady meant, for she had Charles to really upon and define her life. Yet with Charles dead, Brooke feels desperately lonely, and she wants to be able to fit in.
Since she has not yet learned to think for herself, Brooke decides to model herself on the ladies she sees around her. She creates a life plan for herself that consists of imitation: "I would imitate everybody until everything became second nature as the song says and I wouldn't have to bother to imitate any more, I would simply be" (SW 25). Unlike Godwin's Lily and Kitty, who adopt the mask of the Southern lady as a defensive weapon for covert aggression, Brooke's motivation for adopting the narrative is an intense desire to conform. She does not wish simply to slip on the image as a useful mask but rather to shape her developing self into the Southern lady that her community wants her to be.

Brooke's primary model of ladylike behavior is her mother. She knows that her mother Carolyn is a "lady," but she still has not clearly defined what being a "lady" means: "Carolyn was not finicky or quiet or even clean, but she was a lady. I couldn't figure it out" (SW 35). Nevertheless, from her mother's behavior, Brooke draws lessons on the proper behavior of a Southern lady. Brooke claims that "there was nothing Carolyn liked better than a crowd," for this gives Carolyn the opportunity to perform as "the Amazing Perpetual Hostess of the World" (SW 6). Carolyn controls her emotions, bringing them out or keeping a reign on them in order to create the desired effect:

Carolyn sniffled into a Kleenex, then opened her bag to get a fresh one, and I saw that her whole bag was filled with Kleenex, which meant that Carolyn had decided to go ahead and cry. Crying makes her look awful: her face is too puffy already, and she wears lots of eye makeup and crying makes it run. It's not an easy decision when Carolyn decides to cry. (SW 13)

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Thus, Brooke learns that a Southern lady manipulates her emotions as a means of controlling her world.

Brooke also learns how a modern Southern lady should behave when her mother gives her specific advice before Brooke sets out to college. Carolyn’s advice essentially asks Brooke to deny her own personality and adopt the actions of every other girl on campus who will be trying to catch a man. Her suggestions—not to go out two nights in a row with the same boy, and not to appear too smart—are demands that Brooke should deny her true desires and her true intellectual potential. In *Killers of the Dream*, Lillian Smith complains that Southern society encourages "simple-mindedness in females" (123), and Lee Smith appears to agree. According to Carolyn, Brooke does not need brains to acquire a man who will admire and marry her, and the ultimate goal of every Southern lady is to achieve her full potential as a wife and mother. Clearly, from the description given of Carolyn and Carolyn’s advice to Brooke, the reader discovers that one aspect of being a lady is her willingness to obscure or deny her true self in order to obtain the approval of others and the admiration of men. Brooke concludes that being a lady is being able to, like a magician, create illusions.

So Brooke, much more consciously than Sybill or Myrtle, separates herself into two selves, the apparent Brooke and the real Brooke:

I split my mind into two equal halves. One half belonged to Brooke Kincaid, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. Royce Kincaid of River Bend, a recent graduate of St. Dominique’s School. The other half belonged to me. I was real, and the other half was only apparent. I could monitor myself, and I could be amused or tolerant or strict upon occasion. (SW 31)
Thus, Brooke creates artificial selves to accommodate the demands of those around her, and it is Brooke’s mask of the Southern lady that is most in demand. For example, when she is kissing John Howard, Brooke realizes that she must keep her true sexual desires in check because John Howard expects her to be a pure and virginal Southern lady:

John Howard began to kiss me, slowly and very gently. Like I was a virgin. And then I realized that as far as John Howard was concerned, of course I was a virgin. That had been the whole premise of the life plan, after all: you are what you seem. I turned shy and coy and kissed him back, virginal and chaste. It was what he wanted and expected and he would not have liked anything else. He hadn’t liked the way I had kissed him at the German club. *(SW 117)*

Thus Brooke’s life plan denies her the right to be herself and express her desires. Brooke is desperately trying to conform to society’s demands at a time when she should be just beginning to explore her true self. Yet, what Brooke finds is that she cannot "become" the Southern lady, for she can never lose the sense of her own unique identity beneath the mask she dons, and this is a good sign. As long as Brooke can maintain a sense of herself as separate from the image, there is hope that she can eventually break free of it.

Therefore, despite all her efforts to mask herself as a Southern lady, Brooke rebels at times and acts in a most unladylike way. Houston, Brooke’s home town neighbor and first steady boyfriend in college, initiates sex with Brooke, but he is shocked when she acts nonchalantly about their sexual relations or actually takes the lead and shows her sexual desires. Houston apologizes for having sex with Brooke in
a car, and he is baffled when her only concern is that they use a car without an uncomfortable gear stick the next time. And when Brooke lies down in the snow, pulls Houston down on top of her, unzips his pants, and rotates her hips invitingly, Houston angrily pulls Brooke to her feet in disgust. Soon after, Houston breaks up with Brooke, for he cannot accept her unladylike behavior. Houston expects Brooke to conform to New South version of ladyhood; therefore, her assumes she will be a chaste, "good girl," one who does not really like sex but gives in to please her boyfriend.

When Brooke meets Bentley, one reason she is attracted to him is that she feels he does not expect her to conform to any images or perceptions he might have of her. She thinks that she might abandon her "life plan" and have a true relationship with a unique individual: "I leaned back, took off my shoes, and put my feet upon the coffee table. I didn't have to be a lady. Bentley was Southern, but he wasn't Southern either. He wasn't any more Southern than I was" (SW 146). Brooke's definition of what it means to be Southern is derived from her observation of both ladies like her mother and girls she meets at college who don't seem to fit the image of the Southern lady. When Brooke analyzes the behavior of her roommate Elizabeth, definitely no Southern lady, and Elizabeth's friends, she comes to the conclusion that these girls are not Southern because they display unique personalities. Brooke notes, "All of them were different. Their looks and their life styles were different from each other. Even if they happened to come from the South, none of them were Southern" (SW 126). In Brooke's eyes, to be Southern means that one must conform to a standard image set by the community; self-expression and creativity are necessarily stifled.
When Brooke meets the "unsouthern" Southerner, Bentley, she attempts to put aside her life plan of conformity to the narrative of the Southern lady and just be herself. When she moves into a basement apartment with Bentley, she does not feel guilty, but she knows that her actions violate the Southern code: "I never thought for a second that it was wrong, although I knew it wasn't Southern" (SW 175). Brooke feels that with Bentley, she can be her true self: "From the time that we packed all my gear in the Volkswagen and started off for the pit, I felt real. Everything that happened was really happening" (SW 175).

Yet Bentley does not offer Brooke a true opportunity to create her own story. The narrative he offers her may not be strictly Southern, but in it, Brooke is a sex object to be used as he sees fit. And Bentley's narrative for Brooke derives its standards for Brooke's behavior from the same concept of "good girl" and "bad girl" that informs the narrative of the Southern lady. Bentley assumes that Brooke is a virgin when they first make love, and Brooke never chooses to enlighten him. He describes the girl who lives above them as a whore, and when Brooke protests that he admits to having experimented with group sex before they met, Bentley explains, "Girls are different. Guys can do what they want to" (SW 196). Moreover, Bentley's tendency to fit those around him into categories is exposed by his behavior when a girl at a party looks at Brooke as if she were a whore because she lives with Bentley. Bentley verbally reassures Brooke that she is also a "nice girl," but then he treats her as if she were some strange lady of the night he has just picked up. He asks Brooke lewdly if she wants sex: "'You want it, don't you?' he said into my ear, not sounding like
himself at all. He sounded like the voice in threatening phone calls in the movies" (SW 225). Thus although Brooke sees Bentley as a free spirit, the reader realizes that Bentley still expects Brooke to conform to a restrictive narrative of womanhood. He may not expect Brooke to be a Southern lady, but his narrative still asks her to be a sex object available for his use.

Eventually, Brooke comes to discover that she cannot rely on Bentley as a substitute for her abandoned "life plan." Brooke notes the accusing glance from a girl who is still playing the part of the Southern lady, and she insists,

I looked at her and remembered when my life plan was based on her life, more or less, and I couldn’t believe it. Now I didn’t have a life plan any more, or anything to go by. All I had was Bentley and it was growing on me more and more (especially when I was drunk or tired or feeling weird) that Bentley might not be responsible. Not for himself and not for me. But I couldn’t imagine having wanted to be like that girl. Now I wanted to be like me but I wasn’t yet sure how that was. (SW 224-25)

Brooke has discovered that masking herself as a Southern lady will not make her happy, and she is just beginning to discover that immersing herself in Bentley, who offers Brooke a narrative that is also constrictive, will keep her from discovering her true self.

Like Sybill and Myrtle, Brooke is still a transition figure, dissatisfied with the narrative of the Southern lady, yet unable to create in any detail her own liberating narrative. Nevertheless, Brooke witnesses her brother’s marriage and insists,

I could have this too, I thought. I could marry John Howard and step into my place like Carter and have all this for the rest of my life. But I didn’t think I would. I had come full circle myself, and now there were new directions. (SW 43)
The reader is left with a sense of hope that after all Brooke's confused struggling with social demands and restrictive narratives, she has emerged strong enough to begin writing her own story. Yet Smith never explores the "new directions" that she hints Brooke might take. And her fourth novel, *Black Mountain Breakdown*, suggests that Smith did not convince herself of Brooke's ability to resist the narrative of the Southern lady. Instead, Smith appears to be rejecting the positive ending of *Something in the Wind* and rewriting Brooke's character in *Black Mountain Breakdown*’s Crystal Spangler.

Lee Smith begins *Black Mountain Breakdown* with a specific goal in mind: to show the disastrous result that occurs when a woman attempts to alter herself in order to meet the expectations of others, especially the men in her life (PC). At twelve years old, Crystal is searching for a personal identity, and she mistakenly tries to conform to the expectations of her mother, or her school friends, or, as she grows up, men. Crystal's name suggests the mirror-like nature of her personality. Like a crystal looking glass, she reflects the images around her rather than emanating an inner light or personality of her own. In *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*, Jenijoy La Belle asserts that for women in western culture, the mirror has traditionally stood in place of "men, society, [and] the world," and therefore, "the medium of reflection does have enormous power, the power of the world to determine self" (40). Crystal's self is split or fragmented into the various images that those around her would like her to reflect. She fails at creating her own narrative because as she matures, she allows herself to become a reflection of the needs of her community.
Crystal’s name also suggests her fragility, which suits the image of the Southern lady so well, and implies that she might not have the strength to resist being shattered by the demands of the prescriptive narratives and images that bombard her. The opening scene of *Black Mountain Breakdown* presents the twelve-year-old heroine Crystal watching fireflies on a warm summer night. Fascinated, Crystal does not move to capture the insects, but instead, "only her eyes move to follow the flight, erratic at first as if blown by wind although there is no wind in the hot still damp of early June on the river bank, then up into the dark branches, away and gone" (BB 11). The lightning bugs possess a "small pale flickering light, sickly unearthly yellowish green, fairy light," and as the story progresses, the reader will come to identify these fragile, fairy-like, and "erratic" insects with Crystal herself (BB 11). Crystal’s fragility is further emphasized by her physical appearance: "blond and fair, with features so fine they don’t look real sometimes; she looks like an old-fashioned painting of a girl" (BB 15). And like the flickering lights of the fireflies, the "color comes and goes in [Crystal’s] cheeks" (BB 15). Crystal’s name and the accident of her beautiful, but fragile, features cause others to impose the image of the fragile Southern lady upon her.

Crystal will have infrequent bursts of protest against the restrictive narrative of the Southern lady, but her outbursts of rebellion are ultimately ineffectual because she can never completely resist her passive tendency to let others define her. Her adolescent search for identity is symbolized by her questioning the identity of her image in the mirror—"Who is it there in the mirror? She sees long bright hair and no face, no eyes, no nose, no mouth. . . . Who? she wonders, shaping the word with the mouth
she doesn't have. Who?" (BB 41). Crystal's inability to see herself in the mirror leads her to use other people or objects as mirrors in an attempt to discover a suitable identity. Like Brooke, she splits her self in order to accommodate others.

Crystal's mother Lorene is the first to demand that Crystal conform to a New South version of ladyhood, which encourages her to use her beauty to attract boys and, therefore, gain status in her community. Lorene wants Crystal to gain entrance in to the best social set of the community through an advantageous marriage. She expects Crystal to go to "a fine school," not so that she might receive a fine education, but so that she might meet and "marry a doctor" (BB 21). The New South version of ladyhood that Lorene promotes sets very clear goals for its ladies. The sexual purity demanded of nineteenth-century Southern ladies is still demanded of her modern counterpart. For Crystal's eighth-grade graduation, the girls wear "white dresses and wrist corsages" (BB 48). The seemingly innocent wrist corsages act as manacles, fettering these young girls to an image that denies their emerging sexuality. Yet while these young girls are expected to be sexually pure, they are also expected to be sexy and alluring to boys. Lorene is thrilled when Crystal is the only ninth-grader chosen to be a cheerleader despite, or perhaps because, of rumors that "Crystal got it for her looks" (BB 50). The "short, black skirt with the gold pleats" (BB 50) that is part of Crystal's cheerleading costume suggests the sexuality that the New Southern lady is supposed to exude beneath her innocent demeanor. Lorene's advice to Crystal about maintaining her virginity until she meets the man she plans to marry clearly illustrates
the boundaries which are to define Crystal's sexuality: "Nobody will respect you . . . You've got to save yourself for Mr. Right" (BB 53).

In *The Southern Belle in the American Novel*, Kathryn Seidel asserts,

A society that prefers its lovely women to be charming and flirtatious coquettes who never yield their purity can create a situation of impossible tension for the belle; she is asked to exhibit herself as sexually desirable to the appropriate males, yet she must not herself respond sexually. (xvi)

Crystal's behavior in high school indicates that she experiences the "impossible tension" created by the contradictory demands placed upon the Southern lady. Her battle with her emerging sexuality and her desire to conform to the images that others prescribe for her is revealed in her relations with Roger Lee Combs and Mack Stiltner. As their names suggest, Roger Lee is the "Southern gentleman" while Mack is considered by the town to be "white trash." With Roger Lee, Crystal feels unable to express her emerging sexual feelings, but with Mack, Crystal explores her passions. She alternately becomes what each boy wants her to be. In "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey points out, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (62). Roger Lee and Mack have very different images of Crystal, and Crystal adapts her personality to meet the varying demands of these images.

Roger Lee acts the part of the Southern gentleman with Crystal, for he views her as too pure to touch. He even admits to a classmate that although he has had
sexual intercourse with many women, he cannot "bring himself to touch [Crystal’s] breasts" (BB 92). Crystal responds to Roger Lee’s image of her, for when she is with Roger Lee, she feels compelled to hide her sexual desires. In fact, Crystal thinks more about the social approval she will gain by becoming Roger Lee’s girlfriend than about her feelings for Roger Lee himself. When Roger Lee embraces Crystal, she is not thinking of a newly awakened passion within herself: she is "thinking about what her mother will say, about showing the ring off to Agnes and everybody else, about wearing it to school on a chain around her neck" (BB 58). Therefore, Crystal accepts Roger Lee’s ring and decides that she will love him, not realizing the "chain around her neck" will become another form of bondage rather than an emblem of pride. As she makes the decision to love Roger, she imagines herself in "a long lace dress, running through flowered fields" (BB 58). Thus, Crystal attempts to imagine herself as the chaste goddess Roger Lee, her mother, and her friends would like her to be. Crystal tries to fulfill the needs of her community before her own needs just as the nineteenth-century Southern woman attempted to maintain a precarious balance on the pedestal in order to meet her community’s need for a representation of their ideal.

By becoming the community’s ideal, Crystal gains social rewards, her mother’s approval, and her friends’ admiration. Yet, Crystal never feels completely comfortable with the image her community seems to admire. For example, when she participates in the beauty contests, Crystal admits to herself that she does not feel as if she is really being herself. Smith writes, "Crystal is perplexed by her made-up face in the mirror. It doesn’t seem to go with her hair. Or the hair doesn’t fit the face. Anyway, she
doesn't look like herself in the mirror" (BR 105). Crystal seems to sense the disjunction between her inner and outer self that results whenever she tries to mold herself into an image that the community holds in esteem.

One of Crystal's most obvious attempts to free herself from the community's constraining image is her determination to continue dating the disreputable Mack Stiltner despite her mother's and her community's disapproval.

With Mack she feels she can be herself, whatever that means! she thinks, grinning, stumbling again on the steps. It means she can wear a purple shawl if she wants to, for one thing. It means she can fuck him if she wants to, which she does. Oh yes. (BB 97)

Yet even when Crystal thinks she is celebrating her individuality through her determination to date Mack Stiltner, the reader senses that Crystal is still looking outside herself for herself. As with Bentley and Brooke, the liberating narrative that Mack offers Crystal is false, for Crystal is still defined by a man as a sexual object available for his use. Crystal notes that "it's only when she's with boys that she feels pretty, or popular, or fun. In the way they talk to her and act around her, Crystal can see what they think of her, and then that's the way she is" (BB 136). Crystal can act the wild, loose tramp just as easily as she can act the pure, chaste Southern lady. But in both cases she is performing rather than acting on her own impulses. Katherine Kearns also discusses Crystal's tendency to transform herself into the fantasy figures of the various men in her life: "Her mystery, and men are intrigued to distraction by it, is that she is at once a projection of their desires and a cipher. She sees herself as
nothing, and the meanings superimposed by her lovers only reinforce her sense that she is forever metamorphic" (182).

Similarly, when Crystal experiences a dramatic religious conversion, she is seeking a sense of self outside rather than within. She uses patriarchal religion in the same manner that she uses men, as a mirror to reflect an identity for her that she cannot create for herself. She attends a religious revival, and a "current arcs through her body, making her feel like she felt when she was with Mack—alive, fully alive and fully real, more than real" (BB 123). But what Crystal finds in her conversion is not herself but self-denial. Religion becomes for Crystal another form of escapism which allows her to avoid the issue of self-definition. She describes the moment of being saved as "being gone and lost in all those flames, of giving herself to Jesus Christ and being nothing at all" (BB 125). Crystal is so desperately trying to define herself in relation to other people, or in this case, in relation to God, that she never achieves true self-definition. As Anne Goodwyn Jones notes, Crystal "feels real" only when she is being filled up with a man or God ("World" 253). Lee Smith asserts that Crystal's Southern background exacerbates her inability to define herself, which leads to the novel's tragic ending: "The way many women, and I think particularly Southern women, are raised is to make themselves fit the image that other people set out for them, and that was Crystal's great tragedy, that she wasn't able to get her own self-definition" (IN 243-44).

One would think that Crystal's experiences in college and then graduate school would help her to gain a sense of self, but she still allows others, men in particular, to
define her. She travels to Florida with Jerold Kukafka, a writer who is described by Crystal’s friend Agnes as a swarthy, hairy, very masculine individual who attempts to dominate people with his eyes. Agnes, who refuses to be intimidated by Kukafka, stares him down and asks Crystal why she doesn’t write a novel. Crystal’s only response as she follows Kukafka’s pacing figure with her eyes is "Oh, I couldn’t do that" (BB 153). Agnes notes that Crystal’s eyes "look exactly like they did that time when she had the religious vision at Girl’s State," and the audience realizes that once again, Crystal has succumbed to a patriarchal vision of what she should be (BB 155).

At one point in the novel, Crystal does seem close to achieving a true sense of self. When she returns to Black Mountain after spending time in a hospital to recover from Kukafka’s suicide, Crystal accepts a position as a ninth-grade English teacher at the high school. For the first time the reader sees Crystal doing something for herself, something that gives her a sense of accomplishment that could lead to a fully developed sense of self. As Anne Goodwyn Jones points out, "The scenes in her classroom show an incredibly different Crystal: she speaks, thinks, chooses, enacts, and has probably more words here than in the rest of the novel" ("World" 262). John D. Kalb also insists that "Teaching is a new process of discovering and away of becoming for Crystal" (26). Crystal has found a voice, and when she enters the classroom, she sets out immediately to tear down the rules and expectations that have preceded her; she tries to write a new narrative for a high school English teacher. She ignores her predecessor’s emphasis on reciting grammar rules and stresses the importance of...
content over penmanship in her students' papers. By the end of the year she is proud of what she has accomplished with her students, and she is looking forward to returning to teaching in the fall. For the first time, Crystal is participating in her community without allowing her community to define her. She will help her students to grow and learn, but she will do it on her own terms and in her own way.

Yet when Roger shows up with his plan to set Crystal up on a pedestal and allow her to escape the challenge of selfhood she has been seeking throughout her life, Crystal is too weak to resist him. Despite the fulfillment Crystal finds in teaching, she still accepts the New South narrative of ladyhood that insists that her profession is only a means of marking time until her "true career," marriage and a family, come along. In "The Second 'Rape' of Crystal Spangler," John D. Kalb asserts that with words, Roger makes a kind of verbal assault upon Crystal that causes her to lapse into passivity. Fitting Crystal into the only scripts he sees available to women, Roger insists that Crystal is not suited to become a spinster schoolteacher. He claims, "A woman like you needs a man. You need your own home, children, a position in the community. You need love. I want to make you happy, Crystal" (BB 199). Crystal's only response is an expressionless, "My God" (BB 199). Crystal is allowing Roger to become her "God," the one who defines her purpose in life. After Roger kisses Crystal, she feels the electrical charge that she felt with Mack and with God, but that she has never felt with Roger before.

Crystal is overcome by the powerful appeal of self-denial, and Smith is clearly linking the patriarchal forces that work to repress Crystal. Crystal offers herself to
Roger and chants as if in a trance, "Where are we going? Where will we live?" (BB 200). Ultimately, Crystal is seduced not so much by Roger as by the appeal of being defined by others. The text implies that despite the gains of the women's movement, modern women, and Southern women in particular, are still raised to live for others rather than themselves. They are raised to believe that they only have worth in relation to others, and therefore, they can only gain happiness by accepting the definitions—daughter, sister, mother, wife, lover, lady—that others have created for them. Thus, Crystal not only uses others as mirrors to guide her to an acceptable self, but she becomes a mirror, reflecting the needs of others rather than asserting her own.

Towards the end of the novel, the friends and relations who define Crystal seem to rely predominantly upon the image of the Southern lady. That Roger still views Crystal as his Southern lady is evident by his actions when Crystal unzips her dress for him and leads him towards her bedroom. Although he now has the courage to touch Crystal's breasts, he does not want to make love to her until they are properly married: "Not now, I want us to do this right, Crystal" (BB 200). Moreover, when Crystal complains that if she leaves school now, she will never be able to get another teaching job, Roger responds as a proper patriarch should, "But you'll never have to work. Don't worry, I'll take good care of you" (BB 201).

Despite her passive response to Roger's proposal, Crystal's awareness that she is somehow losing herself by accepting Roger causes the reader to sympathize with her plight. Crystal responds to Roger passively with statements like, "Whatever you think" (BB 200). Yet she realizes that she is destroying her chances at selfhood by going with
Roger: "Some part of her is screaming, or almost screaming, and then it breaks off and is still" (BB 200). She rationalizes her acceptance of Roger's proposal by insisting that Roger has always been her "inevitable" fate (BB 202), and she tells herself, "It's so comforting, really, to have somebody again to tell her what to do" (BB 202). But when she finishes packing her clothes for their trip, Crystal "lies down on her bed and cries and cries as if her heart might break" (BB 202). Despite the fact that Crystal seems unable to take any positive action to extricate herself from Roger's life, she does realize that she is giving up her independence and, in essence, herself, by acquiescing to Roger's wishes.

By the end of the novel, Crystal has effectively turned herself into the Southern lady frozen on her pedestal. She becomes so passive that she is almost physically paralyzed: "She just stops moving. She stops talking, stops doing everything" (BB 225). Crystal's mother has to feed Crystal and keep her clean, but Crystal's childhood friend Agnes notes that Crystal "looks better than she ever did" (BB 227). She has finally become the statue on the pedestal: completely passive, totally demure, selfless to the extreme. Lee Smith has rewritten the classic fairy-tale of Snow White or Sleeping Beauty in which the handsome prince brings the beautiful maiden to life with a kiss. In Crystal's case, her beauty and passivity do bring her the reward of a prince for a husband, but his kiss brings her death rather than life. Ironically, it is in this catatonic state that Crystal becomes most acceptable to her family and friends, for she is no trouble lying there on the bed. Crystal's mother is able to take vacations without worrying about Crystal, and Agnes enjoys sitting by Crystal's bed and reading to her
or simply holding her hand. The women of the community send over congealed salads, which resemble Crystal herself at this point, because they have heard that Crystal seems to like them. And Agnes suspects that Crystal is really quite happy to sit passively and watch the seasons come and go outside her window.

And perhaps Crystal is at rest, much as the dead are at rest, for she is no longer troubled with the cares and decisions involved in everyday living. Yet, the word "happy" connotes a joy in living that Crystal simply does not possess. Crystal is not happy, for she is not even truly alive. She is not able to create her own narrative because statues on pedestals cannot move, and therefore, they have no stories to tell. Crystal's individuality has been sacrificed to the needs of her community. She has become their pure and angelic Crystal again. As long as the community can view Crystal in this way, they feel they can lay claim to these characteristics also. Thus, the image of the Southern lady that the community presses upon Crystal becomes a way for the community to define its highest ideals. Smith appears to imply that Crystal's nearly catatonic state is the logical result of the narrative of the Southern lady upon the life of a Southern woman.

The physical costs of a woman's adherence to restrictive narratives such as that of the Southern lady are most clearly illustrated by Sybill's painful headaches and Crystal's nearly catatonic state of passivity. Yet all of the women in this chapter exhibit the emotional and psychological costs of conforming to narratives that confine rather than liberate. In Sybill, Myrtle, Brooke, and Crystal, Lee Smith creates transition figures who cannot fully accept the role of Southern lady, but who, rather
than creating original narratives, make the mistake of turning to more modern narratives that still confine them to stifling patriarchal definitions of womanhood. They split their selves to accommodate the narratives society offers as suitable for women, and since all, except Brooke, remain essentially unaware of their manipulations in self-division, they are confused and unable to escape the control that these narratives exhibit over their lives. Brooke most clearly exemplifies the split between an inner and outer self that is the Southern lady’s fate, and though her attitude at the close of *Something in the Wind* suggests that she will not allow this self-fracturing to continue, Smith appears ultimately unconvinced by her assertions, for she rewrites Brooke’s story with Crystal’s tragic tale. Crystal effectively represents the stultifying repression that women must endure when they commit themselves to restrictive narratives such as that of the Southern lady.
I. Many of Godwin's heroines share a tendency with those of Smith to allow their selves to be split by the demands of restrictive female narratives. Although all of the heroines discussed in this chapter—Francesca Bolt of Glass People (1972), Dane Empson of The Perfectionists (1970), Lydia Mansfield of A Mother and Two Daughters (1982), and Justin Stokes of The Finishing School (1984)—spend their formative years in the South, Godwin chooses not to stress the Southern backgrounds of Francesca or Dane. Instead, she explores the false promises of non-Southern culture by focusing on three kinds of constricting female narratives, traditional fairy tales, modern romance stories, and gothic novels, which have much in common with both nineteenth-century and New South versions of ladyhood.

Like the Southern lady, heroines of fairy tales, modern romances, and gothic novels are essentially passive in their interactions with men. They, too, are praised for their virtue and beauty, and their reward in the story is their assumption of the traditional roles for women of wife, mother, and homemaker. In "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale," Marcia Lieberman points out that in fairy tales, "the beautiful girl does not have to do anything to merit being chosen; she does not have to show pluck, resourcefulness, or wit; she is chosen because she is beautiful" (386). Moreover, Lieberman insists that "submissive, meek, passive female behavior is suggested and rewarded by the action" of the fairy tales (390). The happy ending of the fairy tale is guaranteed by the marriage of the heroine
and her acceptance of the traditional roles of wife and mother. And while in the modern romance novel women are often permitted to be more active by pursuing careers and, at least temporarily, independent lives, Ann Radway insists that in these stories, "all women inevitably end up associating their female identity with the social roles of lover, wife, and mother" (207). Finally, in the gothic novel, the heroine is often allowed to be very resourceful, creative, and active in solving the mystery of the plot, yet once she has had her adventures and is ultimately saved by the hero, she, too, is subsumed into a narrative of masculine "protection" and domination. Kay Mussel, author of "'But Why Do They Read Them?': the Female audience and the Gothic Novel," insists "women in these [gothic] novels are active in the mystery but passive in their relationships with men, reinforcing the social custom of male dominance in romantic affairs. Even their actions in the mystery are forced upon them by the necessity of preserving the domestic relations" (68).

The narratives of the Southern lady, the fairy tale princess, the romance heroine, and the gothic heroine differ in some respects. The Southern lady and the fairy tale princess, more than the romance or gothic heroine, are expected to be static images or ideals that invoke admiration with their beauty and moral superiority but are not allowed voices or movement. The heroine of the modern romance and the gothic are often described as having ordinary looks rather than extraordinary beauty. And their heros admire them more for their pluck, courage, or personality than for their outer beauty. Kay Mussel asserts that the gothic romances,
show women who have none of the conventional attributes of beauty or wealth, none of the external attractions that might make the attainment of a family of one’s own a simple process, in situations where their own virtuous and brave behavior overcomes evil, simultaneously protecting and appropriating a family. (65)

Thus, the romance and gothic heroines are initially allowed much more active participation the novel’s plot before they are "put in her place" by the hero’s side at the novel’s conclusion.

Despite any differences among the narratives of the Southern lady, the fairy tale princess, the romance heroine, and the gothic heroine, all four are essentially defined by their acceptance of patriarchal goals for women’s lives. They correspond to the "social mythology" that Kay Mussel claims surrounds women in our culture:

In our society, social mythology defines women primarily (that is, before anything else) in three ways: as wife, as mother and as homemaker. These three roles define the appropriate spheres of action for women as well as providing the limits of her world and the contents that will exist within those limits. (62)

Therefore, these narratives do not offer women true freedom of movement or opportunities for self-development because they are always limited by the static images they are expected to become or the stereotypical roles they are expected to play.

The fairy tale motif is strongest in Glass People, where Francesca, like Smith’s Crystal, appears to desire to break free of the stereotypes that bind her but eventually succumbs to the appeal of passivity and allows her husband to control her life. Like Crystal, Francesca lets others define her by reflecting their image of her rather than asserting her own individual personality. Dane of The Perfectionists, though stronger
in her ability to resist her husband's will, shares Francesca's desire to be consumed by an outside force. Influenced by modern romances and gothic novels that call for self-abnegation in women, Dane, though filled with anger and violence, is never able to put her strong feelings of dissatisfaction to constructive use.

Lydia of *A Mother and Two Daughters* is much more content with her life than Francesca or Dane. Like Lee Smith's Myrtle, she grows up fulfilling society's expectations of her as a young Southern lady. She is the "good girl" in the family who never causes a moment's trouble. As a teenager, she, more expertly than Smith's Brooke, juggles between the various roles others expect of her, being a good student during the week and a good date on weekends. She is the perfect Southern belle, coyly manipulating the man of her choice until he proposes almost despite himself. Lydia, like Smith's Myrtle, does not experience yearnings of independence until her middle years. And unlike Myrtle, Lydia even appears to achieve that independence through an amicable divorce and a successful career. Since the narrative of the Southern lady has been somewhat modified by the women's movement—divorce is possible, and women are permitted to have careers—Lydia is even free to think of herself as a modern woman without having to give up her image of herself as a lady. Yet her insistence on maintaining this image of the lady by living up to the ideals and expectations of her society ultimately keeps her from creating an original narrative for herself.

Finally, Justin of *The Finishing School* is the most positive character in this section because she outgrows her youthful desire to be controlled and directed by a force outside herself. Like Smith's Brooke, Justin eventually recognizes that the roles
she dons for the benefit of society cannot be equated with her inner self, and she controls the masks rather than allowing them to control her. Yet while Smith suggests that Brooke will break free of restrictive female narratives without actually detailing just how she will accomplish this difficult task, Godwin gives her readers more evidence that the adult Justin has learned to create her own narrative. Justin benefits from being removed from the South in her youth. Her successful career as an actress is a result of her philosophy never to cease creating herself anew.

For Godwin, the ability of her heroines to deal with restrictive feminine narratives indicates their ability to succeed or fail as authors of their own lives. Godwin is not alone in this concern. In Feminist Alternatives: Irony and Fantasy in the Contemporary Novel, Nancy A. Walker asserts that "a common motif in the contemporary novel by women is the story that must be revised or rejected: the fairy tale, myth, romance, plot, even history that defines and limits women's lives and choices" (89). And in Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers, Rachel Blau DuPlessis argues that many twentieth-century women writers "examine how social practices surrounding gender have entered narrative" and "consequently use narrative to make critical statements about the psychosexual and sociocultural construction of women" (4). Godwin's heroines in this chapter are, like Smith's transition figures, frustrated daughters, trapped between and among narratives that stifle their creativity by constructing their lives for them. And all of Godwin's characters except Justin, though once again more aware of their entrapment and thus more openly frustrated than Smith's transition figures, are still
unable to extricate themselves from both modern and traditional female narratives that promise liberation but deliver imprisonment.

II. Francesca Bolt of *Glass People* is similar to Smith's Crystal in her confusion over her identity and her frustrated search for a unified self. Throughout the novel, Francesca struggles between her desire to exert control over her own life by discovering an individual identity and the desire to become a reflection of narratives that society or individuals have constructed to define her. Francesca's preoccupation with mirrors is, like Crystal's, less an indication of vanity than a yearning for a sense of self that might be caught in the mirror's reflection: she "padded listlessly about the apartment, opening and closing the refrigerator, stopping to gaze blankly at herself in the oval mirror in the living room" (*GP* 10). As La Belle points out, "The goddess gazes in the glass not because she is vain, but because she needs to see that she is still beautiful. She exists only for herself (and for the world) as a beautiful being" (31). Francesca's beauty is central to others' definition of her and, consequently, to her definition of herself.

Francesca's first interactions with her husband Cameron indicate that she confuses molding herself to fit another's image of her with establishing a unified sense of self independent of the reactions of others. During her first weekend with Cameron, Francesca has a dream that indicates the loss of personal identity that a union with Cameron might produce: "She was wandering the streets of a large, gray, impersonal city. Nobody turned to look at her, nobody knew her name. Then she began looking
at windows, hoping to reassure herself by her own reflection. But there was no reflection!" (GP 35). When Cameron returns home and wakes her, Francesca is comforted by her ability to see herself reflected in his eyes. Like Crystal, Francesca has decided that she can use a man as a mirror to create an identity for her. She accepts the reflection of herself through Cameron as her destiny because she fears being alone, fears being a nobody, fears the challenge of creating herself in her own image. Francesca depends upon and enjoys Cameron's flattering gaze, and she relies upon the security that his definition of her offers. As Paulina Palmer points out, "Women certainly do achieve a degree of narcissistic pleasure from their position as the focus of 'the Look.' However, they pay a heavy price for it in terms of coercion and control" (34). Years after Francesca has accepted Cameron's gaze as the guiding force in her life, the reader sees that Francesca has begun to doubt her denial of self-determination. She yearns vaguely for a more satisfying life, but the role models available for her to use as starting points in the construction of her own narrative fail her.

Francesca's mother accepts patriarchal assumptions that define women in relation to men, and since she views her beautiful daughter as a fairy tale heroine, she does not worry about her future:

Kate would steal looks at this statuesque creature with the deep-set, heavy-lidded eyes and the rather swollen, childish upper lip, the graceful stemlike neck and the dreamy way of walking, moving. Is this really my child, Kate would think, this lovely sleepwalker? Should I wake her and warn her of the exigencies of reality? What are they? Do I know them myself? . . . . Let her be, Kate decided, not without jealousy: she
Kate, a young mother who is often taken for Francesca’s sister, is awed and somewhat jealous of the effect her daughter’s beauty creates. Not sure of “reality” herself, Kate does not attempt to guide Francesca in discovering a personal identity. Instead, Kate’s mothering consists of showing Francesca how to attract and keep a man, who is to be the source of Francesca’s identity: “Never push a man. Never beg or wheedle or make them feel guilty. Men hate that” (GP 171). Kate expects that if Francesca lives up to her end of the bargain, patriarchy will fulfill its promises. Since Francesca is beautiful, she will necessarily be rescued, and her fate will claim her. The descriptions of Francesca as a “heavy-lidded, lovely sleepwalker” clearly link her to those passive fairy tale heroines, Sleeping Beauty and Snow White. Both Kate and Francesca fully expect that Francesca’s prince will come.

Francesca’s story echoes the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast, for when her prince does come, it is in the form of Cameron Bolt, an energetic, ruthless, and ugly man who falls in love with Francesca’s beauty. But like Smith, Godwin turns the fairy tale upside down, and just as Crystal is effectively silenced by Roger Lee’s kiss, Francesca is put to sleep by Cameron’s. As the novel opens, Francesca is Cameron’s beautiful and pampered wife, and she is feeling useless and vaguely unsatisfied with her life. Since Cameron does all the shopping, cooking, and cleaning, Francesca spends her days sleeping, reading fashion magazines, and obsessively plucking the hairs from her legs. Her obsessive plucking is her only way of gaining a sense of control over a
life that has been so carefully constructed for her by her husband. Francesca claims, "It's my project. I get a great sense of accomplishment from it. It's my form of housecleaning. Since there is nothing else that ever needs cleaning around her" (GP 14). Just as Cinderella is released from her enslavement to housework when she marries the prince, Francesca has no duties when she marries Cameron. Francesca becomes the perfect fairy tale heroine, flawlessly beautiful and passive, and she receives the promised reward of a carefree existence. Yet Godwin reveals the frustration and dissatisfaction that lies beneath the fairy tale heroine's role. While Smith's Crystal remains essentially unaware of her catatonic state, Francesca complains to Kate that she is feeling trapped by her marriage: "Sometimes, I feel as though I am slowly becoming paralyzed. I can sit around for hours and do nothing, see nothing. I feel like I am slowly turning to stone" (GP 63).

Francesca's extended stay in New York is her attempt to escape Cameron's control and the stifling effects of her fairy-tale marriage, but like Smith's transition figures, she encounters nothing but falsely liberating female narratives. Through Francesca's affair with Mike, Godwin reveals that the modern women who is free to experience sex outside the bounds of marriage is no more free of being viewed as an object by men than the virginal nineteenth-century Southern lady. Francesca claims that she wants to "experiment with life, explore her limits and extensions, feel passion" (GP 70). Thinking that an affair with another man will allow her to reveal her sexual desires and break free from Cameron's control, Francesca meets a worthless philanderer, Mike, on the airplane and follows him to his hotel room. Yet rather than
finding liberation in this narrative of adultery, Francesca falls into the same pattern with Mike that she fell into with Cameron. She becomes dependent on him for her self-definition and direction in life, and when he rejects her, she feels worthless.

Godwin similarly reveals that the promise of liberation offered to women by employment outside the home will not free them if their inner worth continues to be determined by their outer beauty. Hoping to break Cameron’s hold upon her by refusing to take his money, Francesca searches for employment. But rather than finding freedom in the modern woman’s narrative of pursuing her own career, Francesca finds only discouragement, and her confidence is further eroded. When an employment agent suggests that Francesca, who has no skills, might find work as a model if she were to lose twenty pounds, Francesca is devastated, for her identity, like the Southern lady’s, is intricately linked to the world’s view of her as a flawless beauty. The suggestion that she might need to change her physical appearance shocks Francesca, and she only recovers after she has been made over both physically and emotionally by an adoring hairdresser.

Even the women that Francesca encounters attempt to use her as an object rather than encourage her to develop an independent sense of self. Eventually, Francesca does get a job as an amanuensis, gaining a sense of accomplishment from being able to perform her employer’s requests efficiently. Yet symbolically, Francesca’s job as an amanuensis, a person who copies something already written, suggests her inability to write her own narrative. Francesca’s employer is an eccentric woman determined to create her own Utopia, but she offers Francesca no liberating narrative, for she, like
Cameron and Mike, simply uses Francesca to meet her own needs. She expects Francesca to clean her filthy house, pay her stack of bills, and send letters to her relatives. She probes Francesca for material to include her project, but when Francesca gets sick, she sends her back to her hotel for fear that Francesca will infect her. As a model of an independent women, then, Francesca’s employer offers little more than a feminine version of narratives of use and abuse that Francesca has already experienced with men.

While convalescing, Francesca is attracted a description of a the "new woman" who can creatively control her own life and relies upon her inner strength rather than her outer beauty:

> But the new woman, Francesca read in the magazine, has gained enough assurance to judge what is most valuable in herself . . . Is beautiful because she is bold in affirming her existence as a free being . . . Has ceased being the ‘Warrior’s Delight’ and has become the proud and equal fighter in the noble war of Life and Love. (GP 170)

Yet Godwin suggests that Francesca is powerless to become this kind of woman because she can find no living models upon which to base this new woman. Her mother has taught her to rely on her beauty to attract men and to gain her sense of identity from her relationship with a man. And the only new woman Francesca can find, her employer, affirms "her existence as a free being" by using and abusing Francesca. When Francesca contemplates the future world, she fears that it can be no better than the people who will create it, people like her employer or her husband.
Thus, Francesca allows herself to become defeated by restrictive female narratives and her fears about the future. After she receives her lover's phone call and realizes that she is not important in his life, Francesca rushes to the bathroom where she vomits and imagines the worst about herself: "Everything was turning to water and running out of her. She had no real job, no real lover. Both were imitations, would not hold up under crises" (GP 173). When she returns to her bed and her magazine, the "new woman" in the illustration is gazing "raptly ahead, focused on some triumph Francesca could not see" (GP 174). Francesca's past has not prepared her to exercise her imagination so that she might see herself as a powerful woman whose beauty lies in her abilities and actions rather than her face. When Cameron journeys to New York in search of Francesca, he finds her ill, depressed, and pregnant. More aware than Smith's Crystal, Francesca weeps "with relief and with sadness," for she knows that despite her protests, she will allow herself to be taken care of by Cameron, and she will lose whatever dreams of independence she once had (GP 179).

The couple's shopping excursion in New York city foreshadows Francesca's ultimate abandonment of independence and acceptance of Cameron's view of her as a Madonna, an image more pure and mysterious than even that of the Southern lady. When buying Francesca a winter coat, supposedly for her prolonged stay in New York, Cameron and the salesladies maneuver and manipulate Francesca, who slips into a passivity from which she will be unable to extricate herself: "A lassitude had come over her, a sort of standing sleep within the coat. She felt she could go on standing here for hours, not really focusing on anything" (GP 192). And when Cameron insists
that Francesca try on the priceless Madonna dress from the St. Axel collection, just so that he can envision her in the dress when he buys it to hang in her closet, the reader sees the extent of Francesca’s loss of control and Cameron’s ritualistic worship of Francesca:

Francesca gazed at the three Cameron’s kneeling at her feet. His head was bowed over the luxuriant folds of the costume. "I adore you in this," he said.
"But, Cameron--"
"I want it, Francesca." She couldn’t see his face, just the top of his head, three heads, the mixture of reddish-brown and gray hair, three heads bowed.
"You want it?"
"I want to take it back with me. It will hang in your closet. I’ll take it out sometimes and remember the morning you tried it on, when it touched your skin."

(GP 196-97)

The fact that the dress is called the Madonna emphasizes not only Cameron’s attitude of worship but also his view of Francesca as pure and virginal despite her affair and pregnancy.

Cameron’s view of Francesca as an idol to be worshipped rather than as a woman to be loved strips her of her right to physical desire in the same manner that the Southern lady of plantation legend is denied her sexuality. His attitude of reverence towards Francesca is revealed in the scenes in which he marvels over her perfectly beautiful body or inhales the scent of her clothes when she is away from him. Yet his passion for Francesca has a quality of coldness to it that frightens Francesca, who appears to recognize that Cameron views her as a sterile object:
He touched each piece of her clothing as though it were very delicate, very valuable. At last she stood naked before him. This was the part that terrified her, when he knelt in front of her, still fully clothed himself, and kissed each of her bare feet, then let his eyes travel slowly, very slowly upward, inspecting inch by inch of her. As a collector might go over a piece of precious sculpture, examining it for chips or flaws. At such times, she thanked the fates for her beauty, she needed every bit of it. A woman a fraction less beautiful would have died under that cold, passionate scrutiny. (GP 12)

Cameron does not expect or want any sexual response from Francesca. He needs her only as an object which will stimulate his own desires.

In his worship of Francesca, Cameron not only robs her of her right to sexual desire, but he steals her right to self-expression as well. For Cameron, Francesca is not only an object of exquisite beauty but she is also an object of mystery, and he values her as such. He is constantly telling her to speak little, to let her beauty speak for itself, to cultivate her mystery. He has created for himself a goddess on earth, a lady on a pedestal, and it pains him when Francesca dares to reveal her humanity. Thus, when Francesca finally does return to California with Cameron and falls once more into her position as the pampered and adored wife, Cameron does not allow Francesca to sully his image of her with the sordid details of her relationship with Mike, the father of her child. Francesca wants to talk about her experiences in New York, and, in particular, her relationship with Mike, but Cameron insists that she maintain her mystery, drawing a connection between her pregnancy and the miracle of the Virgin birth: "As for any other . . . details . . . I consider them the necessary prelude to a miracle. Miracles should not be discussed like ordinary topics of gossip"
Since the couple no longer sleeps together, their relationship has finally become the form of idol worship that Cameron seemed to desire from the start.

By the end of the novel, Cameron has won. Like Smith's Crystal, Francesca abandons her efforts toward self-determination and lapses into complete passivity. In her pregnant state, Francesca finally feels caught up in a plan that totally consumes her and keeps her from having to make any decisions or plans for herself. Earlier, when discussing the possibility of a pregnancy with Cameron, Francesca had claimed, "It's as though I want some final force to enter me and take over my body, set me on some genuine destiny that can't be changed, that I can't turn back from" (GP 3). The unavoidability of Francesca's pregnancy encourages her to accept Cameron's definition of her as the pure and mysterious Madonna. She becomes merely a receptacle for Cameron's "miracle" child: "Her body would change, transform even as she watched it. She could nothing to stop it. Nothing. The knowledge gave her a strange thrill" (GP 207). The appeal of passivity wins Francesca over, and in the reader's last view of her, Francesca is reveling in her complete abandonment of responsibility to the capable hands of her husband: "She put away a hefty lunch, confident in the secret, rather sly knowledge that Cameron would never allow her to get fat" (GP 208).

Dane of The Perfectionists shares Francesca's desire to be consumed by an outside narrative that will sweep her up in its power and lead her to her destiny:

For a long time, Dane had been on the lookout for, if not an actual vision, at least an event charged with meaning which would signal the turning point of her life. Not only would she recognize it intellectually, but her very guts should respond to it. Like Jacob's angel, it would jostle her to her core and she would be transformed. (PE 29)
The narratives to which Dane has been exposed all lead her to believe that her life will not be "on course" until some outside force puts it there:

Where, then, did ecstasy hide? . . . . The heroines in her favorite novels all met their destinies face to face: Rochester galloping out of the fog knocked Jane down . . . Mary Magdalene saw the risen Christ and even the working girls in ladies'-magazine fiction achieved their Great Event. When, when would she ever find the reality greater than the dream? (PE 29)

Dane is caught in a web of narratives and fictions. She is either trying to pattern her life after romantic narratives that cannot serve as satisfactory models for her modern relationships, or she is creating her own fictions that distort the truth.

Just as the Southern lady depends upon men—father, husband, or son—to define her role in life, the heroines in the literature Dane reads are led to their destinies by men. In In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic, Michelle Masse describes the gothic marriage: "The husband who will remold her, forever hold her, and whose loving clasp will be like a gate closing off all exit is a Gothic husband" (21). Significantly, Dane misreads the novel which begins her list of her favorites. While Dane assumes that Rochester leads and transforms Jane, Masse asserts Jane's ability to "withstand the temptations of Gothic courtship" (195). Although Rochester attempts to convince Jane to deny her values, in essence, herself, by accepting him as a husband/lover despite his married state, Jane refuses. And when she returns to Rochester, she is following her instincts and accepts him only when their union can be
a true meeting of equals. Nevertheless, Dane links Brontë's novel to the stereotypical romances that portray women's lives as shaped by their men.

Therefore, when Dane encounters what she perceives to be a man of genius, Dr. John Empson, she tries to decide if he might be her life-changing force. And when John does abruptly ask her to marry him, the audience sees the extent to which Dane has incorporated the feminine narratives that call for passivity and self-denial:

She said nothing. Again, there was this funny numbness in her face. . . And she said nothing. It was as eloquent and decisive as leaping over the bridge. . . . All she wished for now was to complete her self-abnegation to the will of this determined man. (PE 67)

The scene in which John asks Dane to marry him parallels the scene from Jane Eyre when St. John Rivers asks Jane to be his wife and serve with him as a missionary. In their proposals, both men are more concerned that the women they have chosen are well-suited to their goals in life than with the hearts and spirits of the women as individuals. And both Dane and Jane feel the appeal of avoiding self-determination by surrendering to the will of their determined suitors. Jane's feelings when St. John make his final appeal for her to marry him foreshadow Dane's wishes for self-abnegation: "I was tempted to cease struggling with him—to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own" (Brontë 397). Yet divine intervention saves Jane. She entreats Heaven to guide her, and when she hears Rochester's voice calling her name, she has her answer and is able to resist St. John. Dane experiences no heavenly rescue, and she accepts John as the one who will lead her to her destiny.
When Dane and John have sex for the first time, Dane feels that she has at last found her "irrevocable act":

She had often wondered how martyrs felt, the moment before they were devoured by fire; or nuns, when their hair is being cut off, just before taking the veil. It must be something like this. He took her rather quickly, but it didn’t matter. She lay there afterward feeling totally obliterated by his will. She felt she had, at last, done something irrevocable. (PE 68)²⁴

Dane becomes the martyr that Jane does not allow herself to become. She allows herself to be absorbed into a stereotypical romance plot where the woman is "taken" by the man and feels some kind of release in letting her individual will be dominated and negated by his. Dane believes that in denying her self, she will be consumed and enlightened by a larger power, for she has fully absorbed the doctrine that self-abnegation is the key to spiritual fulfillment. Yet the death imagery in the passage above is evident. Dane’s self is dying when she allows the patriarch’s will to dominate her own.

In contrast, Jane, though appearing to be following the guidance of a patriarchal God, is actually guided by her own instincts. She asserts that the call from Heaven is "the work of nature," so often associated with the feminine, and she insists: "I broke from St. John, who had followed, and would have detained me. It was my time to assume ascendance. My powers were in play and in force" (Brontë 398). Clearly, Jane does not agree with the view that spiritual fulfillment is accomplished only through the denial of self, a view that St. John offers and Dane accepts. It is no coincidence that Dane’s name rhymes with Jane. Godwin rewrites Jane’s story through Dane.
Perhaps feeling that Jane's power to resist patriarchal domination presents the exception rather than the rule, Godwin offers a much more sober tale in Dane's story. Dane, despite her individual strength of character, allows herself to be victimized by a patriarchal culture that teaches women that they cannot rely upon their own authority. Yet she, nevertheless, feels the need for self-determination that marks her as a human being.

Consequently, when during the course of her marriage, Dane begins to feel less and less satisfied and fulfilled, she grows increasingly bitter and frustrated. After denying herself completely, she now wants to discover that lost self, and she finds her marriage to be confining rather than liberating:

After ten months of this mentally and spiritually exhausting marriage, she wanted to be just a body—and left alone. She felt tight in the head, like something was growing—a flower someone planted in a pot too small. (PE 22)

Dane's individuality is like a young plant that needs room to grow. While her husband John is forever harping on his need to achieve "union," Dane has discovered that without her own clearly defined sense of self, she cannot and does not wish to merge with another human being:

He kept encroaching on her space, trying to collide and merge with her like those horrible zygotes. It reminded her of a Walt Disney movie on reproduction which had been shown to her Girl Scout troop. She had been appalled when the cartoon sperm had whipped himself with a wet resounding plok right smack into the poor defenseless egg. Then, to background music, the awful joined thing began going wild, multiplying like a cancer, until there was no trace left of the two separate things. (PE 97-98)
When Dane imagined her marriage with John, she had hoped that they would be like "two stars shining separately but equally as bright" (PE 97). She is disappointed that rather than feeling the freedom of having engaged upon a mutual quest, she feels stifled and suffocated by her husband.

As Kerstin Westerlund points out, John may claim that he seeks a marriage of equals and a "shared universe," but his actions belie his words (PE 60). He makes the decisions about raising his son Robin, though he says that he expects Dane to be the boy's mother. He suggests books that Dane should read to improve herself, but he will accept no advice himself. He analyzes and labels Dane but condemns Dane for attempting to put him into categories (Westerlund 50). As Westerlund points out, "John is the captain who initiates and then conducts a relatively unilateral relationship, in which Dane's perspective is secondary to his. She is invited to share his universe rather than participate in a truly mutual quest" (62). St. John's attitude towards Jane Eyre is similar. His proposal suggests that he desires an equal partner for his mission in life: "Jane, come with me to India: come as my helpmeet and fellow-labourer" (Bronte 382). Yet when Jane suggests that she go with him as a sister, St. John reveals that he must have the power over her that a husband has over a wife in order for his plans to be fulfilled: "I, too, do not want a sister: a sister might any day be taken from me. I want a wife: the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death" (Bronte 385). Jane's shudder at these words indicates that she recognizes St. John's ultimate need to possess and control her will. In Dane's marriage
to John, Godwin is revealing what Jane's frustrations might have been if she had accepted St. John's proposal.

Perhaps even more detrimental to Dane's growth than her husband's patriarchal view of marriage is the fact that Dane has no script to follow when she is looking to create a marriage of equals. Carolyn Heilbrun claims that "new definitions and a new reality about marriage must be not only lived but narrated" (89). Certainly the exceptional marriage in which two individuals come together without losing their individuality does exist. But until this portrait of marriage is incorporated into the narratives after which women pattern their lives, women like Dane will remain confused.

In her confusion and disappointment, Dane turns to the narratives with which she is familiar. Though Southern by birth, Dane does not think of the Southern lady, but rather, as a lover of nineteenth-century British literature, of the Victorian woman, from which the Southern lady derives many of her characteristics: "She would be Victorian. Silent. Circumscribed. Closed" (PE 78). In order to preserve her individuality and her sanity, Dane, like many a Southern lady, decides that her only alternative is to retreat into a proud stoicism: "She could withdraw, yes... Through dignity. Yes. That was satisfying and self-preserving: to pull herself tight as a drawstring pouch, preserve what was already inside, allow nothing more to go in or out" (PE 77). Like Lily, Dane enwraps herself in a cocoon of isolation.

In Jane Eyre, it is not Jane who withdraws into a cocoon of isolation but rather St. John. After Jane's refusal to marry him, he punishes her by closing himself off
from her. His self-imposed isolation is an obvious form of manipulation, for he hopes that if he shames or hurts her feelings enough, Jane will submit to his will in order to get back into his good graces. Dane similarly retreats into herself as a form of manipulation, for she knows how much John desires union, and she uses her coldness is a deliberate weapon against him. Rather than insisting upon her heroine's blamelessness; therefore, Godwin's story suggests that the victim can victimize as well. A cycle of hurt is put into motion, and all participants become trapped in its power, alternately playing the roles of victim and perpetrator. Moreover, by closing herself off from human interaction, Dane becomes, like St. John, a self-destructive martyr.

Dane believes that if she can only learn to play the role of the silent martyr with more grace and self-less virtue, she might accomplish the Victorian woman's goal of transforming and redeeming those around her:

It might still be possible. She would try harder with John and Robin, acting out the role until it came naturally to her. Perhaps this entire situation was only waiting for her to garnish it with her love and grace. Then: might not John be transformed into a man she could feel passion for? Might not Robin come out of his shell, smile at her with the small milk-white teeth, snuggle up to her, make her proud? (PE 99)

Dane hopes that if she will only play her part well enough, John will become her hero and Robin, her angry stepson, will become filled with adoration for his "perfect" mother. In *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*, Jenni Calder asserts that the Victorian woman is viewed as "moral uplifter of society," and "her purpose is to 'improve the character of men'" (34). After all, Dane recognizes that Jane, with her wisdom and virtue, is able to transform both Rochester and his child Adele. The wild
and brooding Rochester becomes tender and open in Jane's presence, and the little coquette Adele is cured of "a great measure of her French defects" (Brontë 427). The woman's role as moralizing influence, stressed by both gothic novels and the image of the Southern lady, captures Dane's imagination. Yet by focusing on changes in her husband and her son, Dane would be no longer living for herself, but instead attempting to live vicariously through them, especially Robin, who would "make her proud."

The one scene in which Dane appears to be momentarily satisfied with John is when she is imagining him as Rochester, as distant and remote as she is trying to become. She claims that he looks "like some gloomy Gothic hero posed against the battlements," and she is disappointed and frustrated when he allows his pleasure to show at her advances towards him: "Damn it. Why couldn't he keep up the balancing act? The distant, stately lover floated away, far away as the cold stars, which seemed to laugh softly at her impossible romanticism" (PE 121; 123). Like Miss Iona, Miss Elizabeth, or Lily, Dane does not want personal revelations or messy realities. She asks John, "Couldn't we behave more like the Victorians? I mean, they gave dignity and form to their marriages. They respected each other's privacy, put their best foot forward" (PE 72).

Yet Dane not only closes herself off from John, but she keeps women who would befriend her at a distance as well. Like the Victorian woman or the Southern lady, Dane's first priority is to keep up appearances. She enjoys having Penelope, a young English girl, with them on vacation because Penelope so obviously admires and envies Dane's situation: "Dane liked having Penelope around because of the way
Penelope saw her marriage, her life" (PE 3). Dane uses Penelope as a mirror to give her a more positive reflection of her marriage than she can honestly give to herself. And when Dane meets Polly, another frustrated wife and mother, she reveals none of her true feelings, but instead, she creates a fictional marriage of superiority in which she is daily challenged but also fulfilled:

"John and I have a difficult marriage," she said, enjoying the ambiguity of this statement. . . . "Difficult, I mean, in the sense of challenging. With us, everything is perpetually in growth. It's exhausting for me at times. We are always just a bit beyond where I can grasp. But it's a rewarding kind of exhaustion." (PE 105)

Dane's fictional description of her marriage resembles Jane's representation of her marriage with Rochester at the end of Jane Eyre. Although challenged by Rochester's disabilities, Jane and Rochester are in such harmony that their marriage is completely satisfying. Jane insists,

I have now been married ten years. . . . I know no weariness of my Edward's society: he knows none of mine . . . . To be together for is for us to be as free as in solitude, as gay as in company. All my confidence is bestowed on him, all his confidence is devoted to me; we are precisely suited in character—perfect concord is the result. (Bronte 427-28)

By making Dane's marital fantasy an obvious lie, Godwin is challenging Brontë's idealistic vision of marital bliss in the concluding chapter of Jane Eyre.

As Dane weaves her story for Polly, she claims that she feels like a "poetess enchanting her audience" (PE 106), yet though her narrative may entertain, it can have little generative value if it is based upon lies and half-truths. Dane may be able to fool
others, but she cannot fool herself. She senses that John is repressing and coercing her, even if she cannot articulate how he is doing it. She realizes that the narratives she has been attempting to follow will not lead her to the self-fulfillment she seeks, and that the fictions she has been creating for the benefit of her friends are false. By the end of her vacation, she is so bitter and frustrated that she, like Miss Elizabeth, erupts in violence. Taking her anger out on Robin, a helpless victim of circumstances himself, Dane beats the boy until she is afraid that she just might kill him. Both Jane Hill and Kerstin Westerlund point out that Robin acts as a substitute for John. "Dane seeks a cosmic experience by almost killing Robin. Symbolically, this suggests that she must kill John, separate from him, in order to survive, much less to have the unordinary life that is her deepest desire" (Jane Hill 28). And according to Westerlund, "By making Robin into "almost a physical copy of the man," the author indicates that Dane's frustrated rage is ultimately aimed at her husband" (61).

When Dane imagines telling John about her violent acts, she appears to try to use the experience as a way of separating herself from her husband:

"Some force came over me, bigger than I was," she would say, possessed at last of some cosmic vision of her own.
"What was it like?" he would ask.
"It was powerful—and private. I'm sorry. I really can't tell you more than that. It was the sort of experience that can't be shared by anyone."
"But someone did share it," he would say, reestablishing the infernal balance.
"Bastard," she said aloud, squinting out to sea from the balcony.
(211-12)
The overwhelming force which Dane has been awaiting, her "cosmic vision," becomes nothing more than a destructive loss of control. Dane releases her frustration with her lack of control over her own life by beating a willful child into submission. Dane's last thoughts about the incident are not concern for the child or remorse for her actions but rather an elaborate scenario in which her husband, once again, leaves her feeling cornered and trapped. And Dane's last actions are to scan the horizon, as if she is still looking for that force that might change her life. The violence and despair of the closing scene of the novel reveals the danger Godwin sees in the repression of individual women into stereotypical female narratives. The suppression of the self can only last so long until it erupts into violence.

In "Monsters and Madwomen: Changing Female Gothic," Karen Stein asserts that "in their gothic narratives women reveal deep-seated conflicts between a socially acceptable passive, congenial, "feminine" self and a suppressed, monstrous hidden self" (123). In Jane Eyre, "the grossly disfigured Bertha is a monstrous incarnation of the passionate, angry aspects of the self that Jane must subdue in order to escape from a series of prison-like rooms. Only after Bertha's death, the death of the 'monstrous,' angry, assertive self, is Jane's marriage to Rochester possible" (Stein 128). Thus in Bronte's novel, Jane's anger and violence resulting from self-repression is displaced onto Bertha, the madwoman, who causes the fire that cripples Rochester. Godwin, in contrast, reveals the anger and violence as Dane's.

Just as Dane allows restrictive female narratives to control her life, Lydia of A Mother and Two Daughters, has since childhood been adept at playing the role of the
modern Southern lady. Unlike Dane, Lydia does not imagine herself in narratives of the past, but the modern narratives which she thinks are liberating her are more constrictive than she thinks. Like Smith's Myrtle, Lydia becomes so caught up in playing the part of the Southern lady that when she finally begins to yearn for a chance to imagine her life as she would like it to be, she is ultimately unable to ignore the expectations of her community. Self-creation eludes her when she accepts the updated, but still constricting, female narratives offered by the modern South.

Lydia exemplifies the New South version of ladyhood that makes some concessions to the women's movement and the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 70s while still expecting its ladies to accept traditional patriarchal goals for women. Lydia has always been the "good" girl in the family. While her mother and father would spend hours discussing her troublesome sister Cate, they never needed to worry about Lydia. As a young lady of the New South, Lydia is encouraged to get a good education, but she is still expected by her parents and her peers to find a man to take care of her. One of the reasons Lydia's parents are so worried about her sister Cate is that she has been unable to stay married. Lydia has always organized her life, and split her self, so that she meets the demands of whatever role she is expected to play. For example, as a teenager, Lydia was "a good student during the week and a good date on the weekend" (MTD 252). Later, when she sets her mind on marrying Max, Lydia becomes the coy Southern belle, manipulating him with her charm and innocence until he is captivated into proposing. As the wife of a bank manager and the mother of two sons, Lydia has fulfilled the expectations of her society.
And she meets the daily challenges of these roles by dividing herself into neat little compartments and matching her actions accordingly:

And during her marriage, her compartment system had served her well. Her compartments organized her. If she had labeled them in her neat handwriting, they would have read something like: MOTHER, COOK, HOSTESS, INTERESTED WIFE, WELL-DRESSED LADY SHOPPER, AMIABLE BED PARTNER. (MTD 253)

Lydia is so busy living up to the roles that others expect her to perform that she has little time to think about her individual needs. In fact, she is sleepwalking, another Sleeping Beauty. Organized and efficient, Lydia indulges herself by taking naps in her spare time until she is shocked by her son's description of her as a person who "just likes to sleep a lot" (MTD 117). At thirty-six, Lydia experiences a kind of epiphany: "She began to ask herself what kind of life would make one want to stay awake" (MTD 118). Like Smith's Myrtle, Lydia begins to search for her own needs and desires and what it would take to fulfill them.

Lydia's divorce from Max in her middle thirties is, then, her attempt to analyze her desires and, in the words of the cliché, "find herself." When Lydia imagines her life without Max, she imagines a peaceful solitude:

When she had begun to test out, in a quiet corner of her mind, the idea of leaving Max and living by herself, it was not any images of more impassioned, steamy lovers that were summoned up, but images of quiet, free spaciousness: spacious hours in which to structure activities that would express her; a spacious bed, with cool sheets, with nobody in it but herself. (MTD 133)
Despite the fact that Lydia's life has fallen into a now stereotyped pattern of feminine mid-life crisis, Godwin is not mocking Lydia's attempts at self-discovery. When Lydia attends classes at the University, she is truly excited by her increasing knowledge, and even her habitually guarded son Leo admits that since the separation, his mother has become "more animated" (MTD 135). Moreover, Lydia's sexual awakening with Stanley is, unlike Myrtle's, no tawdry affair but a gradually deepening and fulfilling relationship.

Yet Lydia still feels the Southern lady's need to live up to the expectations of those around her and to keep up appearances at all costs. Even after she leaves Max, Lydia is hampered by the tendency to meet everyone's expectations by organizing herself into acceptable roles:

And when she had felt she could no longer be Max's wife with the proper enthusiasm, she had moved out. There: that compartment closed now. Make a few new labels: MOTHER . . . STUDENT. RESPECTED FRIEND OF MAX. SECRET LOVER OF STANLEY. STILL A LADY. (MTD 253)

Separated or not, Lydia is unwilling to abandon her lady status; she may explore her sexual desires with her new lover, but as a modern Southern lady, she will not openly flaunt her affair.

Lydia's submission to the demands of others' expectations is, in her mind, a way of empowering herself. Much more self-aware than Smith's heroines who are entrapped by restrictive narratives, Lydia rationalizes her dependence upon the good opinion of others:
Why is it I have spent so many hours in my life worrying about and working for the good opinion of people I don't even like? Because I don't want to give the opportunity to misjudge me. If I conform outwardly to their approved image, then I can keep my distance from them and control what they think about me. But why should I care what they think of me? (MTD 280-81)

Lydia is never able to answer why she should care about what the community thinks of her. Perhaps her childhood desire to set herself apart from the rebellious Cate has shaped her so that even as an adult, she cannot stop herself from being the "good" daughter, the one who fulfills the proper roles with grace and beauty.

When Lydia becomes the TV star of a cooking show, she exemplifies the modern Southern lady's freedom to enter the work force and succeed at a career. And Lydia feels she is finally exerting some influence or power over the lives of others as well as herself. Yet while the New South version of ladyhood offers control and liberation, it cannot deliver these rewards as long as the lady is expected to conform to the expectations of others, especially men or a male-controlled media. Lydia can organize fundraisers with the Governor and lead her loyal fans into boycotts, yet she is ultimately more influenced by her fans than they by her. Her role on the TV becomes a kind of mirror for Lydia, and she feels that she must live up to the image in those first fan letters that mentioned her: "That young lady in the green dress reminded me of the real ladies of my generation: she had poise, charm, respect for her elders, and a pride in being just what God made her, a woman" (MTD 422-24). Moreover, Lydia feels that as a public figure, her actions must always be politically correct, so she buys an American car to set a good example. Most importantly, Lydia

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feels now more than ever the need to control her emotions. While she has always displayed the Southern lady's unruffled demeanor in the midst of crisis, as she did when she reserved her tears of grief for her bedroom rather than her father's funeral, Stanley notices that since her success on TV, Lydia has become even less likely to reveal her emotions. Lydia's weight loss to accommodate the TV camera's unflattering eye is simply the physical manifestation of the emotional control that her job exerts over her. Responsible to an audience of millions, Lydia feels compelled more than ever to live up to the expectations of society.

Lydia's yearning at the end of the novel is simply her longing for the freedom of dismissing society's expectations that she sees in Cate's life:

Why, then, did she feel . . . this sudden yearning, profound and unfulfillable, up here in Cate's kingdom? . . . What was missing? For whom or what did she yearn? What else was there to aspire to? . . . what was it, here that made it seem as if all the windows and doors of her own carefully appointed house had blown open, and a capricious wind had come whooshing through, and then, just as she had gotten over her fear that it might break or upset something, had gone blowing out again, bound for somewhere else, leaving her wistfully behind to watch it disappear into the unexplored distance? (MTD 559)

The wind that eludes Lydia is an originally constructed self that does not submit to the authority of prescribed feminine narratives, represented by Lydia's "carefully appointed house." Lydia's inability to escape the restricting models is revealed in that, whenever she feels unsure of herself, she needs Stanley to reasssure her that he would marry her if she so desired. When Lydia contemplates the future and sees the possible pairings of all her female relatives, she views herself as the "old maid" (MTD 560). The
desperation in her plea to Stanley, "Stanley, I think I'm serious this time. Do you still want to marry me?", comes from her deep-seated fear that she is only valuable as a woman if she has the ability to "get her man" (MTD 560). Lydia cannot free herself from the stereotypical female narratives that bind her.

Justin Stokes of The Finishing School differs from Francesca, Dane, and Lydia in that she is ultimately able to reject the constricting narratives that threaten to define her. As the novel opens, a forty-year-old Justin is remembering her fourteenth year when she was uprooted from the security of her Southern home. Justin resents her family’s move to the North to live with her aunt. Nevertheless, at the vulnerable age of thirteen, when a girl is just beginning to think of herself as a woman, it is helpful that Justin, unlike Smith’s Brooke, will be less exposed to restrictive narratives like that of the Southern lady. Justin’s mentor Ursula explains Justin’s opportunity in moving to a new place as her having "lost all the props that defined her" (FS 90). Thus, Justin has the opportunity to define herself.

The thirteen-year-old Justin, however, sees her move to the North as a punishment rather than an opportunity. She is disdainful of the taste and manners of her Northern relatives: "the people here were different. They were deep in themselves and slow to respond, not given to graces or flourishes. They were like their weather" (FS 7). Justin would have preferred to go on living in Fredricksburg, even under reduced circumstances, and she constructs an elaborate narrative about how her life might have been as one of the genteel poor:
My grandparents' illnesses had eaten up the family savings and my father's accidental death had robbed us of our only breadwinner. But why could we not have stayed on in the place where people had always known us? We could have moved into a smaller house and cheerfully pinched our pennies the way fatherless families did in books. Everybody would have said, "Look how hard Dr. Frank Justin's poor daughter is trying," and would have helped us, would have encouraged us in our bravery. (FS 7)

Justin's view of genteel poverty is obviously taken from books like Little Women rather than any real life experience.

Yet no matter how much Justin resents leaving the South, the move actually allows her a greater opportunity to shape her life less burdened by the narrative of the Southern lady. It is not that Godwin suggests that Justin's grandparents are a poor influence. On the contrary, Justin owes the courtesy and integrity that set her so remarkably apart from her rude little cousin Becky to her grandparents' teachings. In discussing The Finishing School, Anne Cheney insists that for Godwin, the South "is a repository of solid values, love, culture, and permanence" (65). And it is true that Godwin's characters find value in the South's concern for moral values, order, and manners. Yet Cheney ignores the many ways in which the South, its stereotypes, deceptions, and hypocrisies confine the Southern women in Godwin's novels. And while many of Godwin's heroines who leave the South do think of it fondly, often they appear to be wishing, half-heartedly, for the simpler days when women's decisions were made for them by the roles they were expected to play in society.

Justin's mother Louise provides Justin with an example of what can happen to the Southern woman when she accepts the South's definition of her and then loses all
her patriarchal supports. Louise Stokes follows the narrative of the pampered, willful Southern belle. She tossed away her opportunities for an education and a career when she fell in love with Justin’s father and decided to get married. Therefore, when both her husband and parents die, she is left helpless. Leaving her home to move in with her sister-in-law is the only way she sees that she can provide for her children, but all that Justin can see is that her mother has gone from being the pampered belle to the gracious martyr:

My mother said she was doing this for our future, for my brother Jem’s and my college education. But I couldn’t stop believing she had done it out of some perverse love of extremes: if she could no longer go on being the protected wife and daughter, then she would be the martyr. (FS 7)

Justin is becoming rapidly aware of the negative effects that playing the role of the pampered belle has had upon her mother, and she does not want to be similarly cast into a stereotyped role.

What Justin most fears, whether she lives in the South or the North, is succumbing to conformity. She cherishes her individuality and imagines a life of originality for herself. When comparing her new Northern home to her old Southern home, Justin finds her new community lacking in originality. Justin complains,

What bothered me most about these houses, what bothered me even more than their lack of history, was that they seemed designed to make everybody as alike as possible. . . . It was as though Lucas Meadows emanated a germ, and if you caught it, you would become just like everyone else. (FS 21)
Unlike Smith's Brooke, Justin does not want to be just like everyone else. She wants to be different. She hates the decorations that her aunt chooses for her room not just because they are tacky but because they appear to suggest her aunt's view of her as a stereotypical Southern belle:

I was still trying to figure out what image of me she had in her mind when she chose the paint and the fabric, which assaulted my peace of mind whichever way I looked. The color of the walls was an unsettling purplish-pink. ... And what about the figures of the milkmaids, row after row of them, with their wide skirts and pert, beauty-contest smiles, who adorned my curtains, the flounce around my dressing table, and the dust ruffle of my bed? Had Aunt Mona pictured me as being like that: a false-smiling, full-skirted girl? But how could she have? I wasn't at all like that ... Why had she picked the milkmaid fabric, then? Was there some obscure association in her mind between their accommodating facades and the old-fashioned graciousness of the South she couldn't wait to leave but still retained nostalgia for? (FS 33)

The thirteen-year-old Justin cannot understand her aunt's association of the milkmaids' "accommodating façades" with the gracious South she loves, but the forty-year old Justin, looking back, can see why her aunt chose as she did and how lucky she, herself, was to escape becoming one of those blandly smiling milkmaids.

As Justin draws further away from her mother and the feminine defeat Louise appears to represent, she grows closer to Ursula and her admirable independence. Before the break up in their friendship, Justin thinks of herself as Ursula's "mystical daughter" (FS 284). Ursula DeVane, bold and slightly eccentric, has traveled the world and experienced "culture." Justin latches on to Ursula not only because the cultured life she lives reminds her of the refinement of her old Southern home but also because Ursula, strong and independent, inspires Justin that she can live that way too.
is just becoming a young woman, and like Smith’s Jennifer, she is not quite ready to leave her childhood:

I knew I must turn into that young woman within a few years, but something in me held back: there was a lonely, mysterious side of myself I was just beginning to know, a side neither masculine nor feminine but quivering with intimations of mental and spiritual things. I had to save a place for these things. If I let myself be rushed into womanhood with all its distracting appurtenances, I might miss their quiet revelations and be a less interesting person for the rest of my life. (FS 121)

When she is with Ursula, Justin feels that she can put off her approaching womanhood and the sexuality it entails. Justin sees sexuality as threatening, especially to the female. She is upset when she sees her neighbors’ horses mating, not because she has never witnessed animals mating before, but rather "it was the way the mare had capitulated; how she hadn’t had much chance anyway" (FS 9). Justin senses that sexuality in a patriarchal society involves female submission, and in Ursula, who appears free of male domination, Justin feels that she has found a role model that can guide her into womanhood with her spirit unbroken.

Despite the positive influence that Ursula has on Justin, the closeness of the relationship yields dangers as well. Just as Smith’s Brooke had allowed her friend Charles to shape her mind and opinions, Justin is tempted to let Ursula control her life. Ursula’s personality is so forceful and dominating that Justin is in danger of being molded by Ursula in the same way that Ursula attempts to shape the talents and life of her brother Julian. On the night of his suicide, Julian tells Justin that he is glad she has come into his and his sister’s lives so that after his death, Ursula will have "someone
else to transfer her ambitions to" (FS 315). Justin, infatuated with Ursula, admits, "I loved it when she talked about me. She created me as she talked. She examined the substance of me and then prophesied, in grand, sweeping strokes, the uses to which I could be put" (FS 157). Justin, "enchanted" by Ursula, wants to be transformed by Ursula’s personality. Like Francesca or Dane, Justin wishes to be consumed by an outside force, in this case, the person of Ursula DeVane. When in college, Justin plays the part of a young girl enchanted by an older man, and as the twenty-year-old Justin prepares for the role she is to play, the audience cannot help but recognize the thirteen-year-old Justin’s feelings for Ursula:

I am an ambitious, impressionable young girl whose dreams and feelings are getting too large for her quiet environment. She craves change, she craves romance, she craves danger—the danger that leads to transformation. Then, enter suddenly this magnificent older man who had not only seen and the done the things she longs to do, but who seems bored and sarcastic and even sad about it. She is enchanted by him not only for the great world he represents, a world she wants to be a part of, but because, when he looks at her and talks to her, he appears to know something about her that she longs to know about herself. She feels somehow that if she can know and possess him . . . if she allows him to know and possess her . . . that the longed-for, mysterious world will be revealed and she will finally possess herself. (FS 45)

One need only substitute a "she" for the "he," and the thirteen-year-old Justin’s feelings for and expectations of Ursula are revealed. Yet enchantments cannot last; the spell must be broken if Justin is going to go about the task of creating an original self.

The parallels that can be drawn between Justin’s relationship with Ursula and Jane’s relationship with Rochester stress Justin’s need to break free of Ursula in order to remain true to herself. When Justin discovers that Ursula is having an affair with
Abel Cristiana, her image of Ursula as a woman who has escaped the problems of adult sexuality is destroyed. And she is shocked at Ursula’s betrayal of Abel’s family and Julian, who hates Abel. Like Jane’s discovery of Rochester’s wife Bertha, Justin’s discovery of Ursula and Abel’s affair destroys the innocence of the relationship they had established. Although the rift in Justin and Ursula’s relationship is caused, perhaps, by the youthful, unrealistic expectations that Justin places on her friend, the break is, nonetheless, necessary. When Ursula calls on Justin after Justin’s discovery of Ursula’s affair, Justin is afraid that, just as Jane returned to Rochester, she will return to Ursula because she feels sorry for her: "I began to have the most terrible fear that out of pity I might pledge myself to something, might promise to go back to her and let her mold my life" (FS 315). Similarly, Jane feared that if she did not leave Rochester after discovering his marriage to Bertha, she would be overwhelmed by his powerful personality and allow him to shape her into his mistress. Just as Jane recognizes Rochester’s ability to mold her, Justin recognizes Ursula’s power to influence her, and she sees the danger in allowing Ursula to control her life.

Yet when Justin returns to school in the fall, she appears to succumb to the temptation of adopting an image to please her community. She accepts the nickname and the persona of "Dixie," a vivacious Southern girl as different from the quiet, contemplative Justin as she can be. Like Smith’s Brooke, Justin has learned to adopt an exterior self that will please her community. As "Dixie," Justin can be outgoing, popular, and as quick with a smile as the milkmaids on the curtains in her room: "The milkmaids approved of Dixie. And Dixie did not see why Justin had felt so threatened
by the milkmaids. They were only an old-fashioned pattern printed on a fabric" (FS 312). If the novel had ended here, the audience would have despaired of Justin’s ever creating an original self. But Dixie is just a role Justin plays for her audience at school; she is a "cover," easily discarded when Justin no longer needs her. Nancy A. Walker asserts that contemporary novels by women are characterized by both a "fluidity of identity" and a "consciousness of the ironic distance between the self as formulated externally, by cultural heritage, and the self as an internal process of redefinition and discovery" (78). Justin, more so than Francesca, Dane, or Lydia is aware that the mask she dons in her youth to please her community can be safely abandoned when she possesses the confidence to assert her individuality.

Therefore, Justin’s story does not end with her submission to the image of "Dixie," the affable, carefree Southern girl. In fact, Justin’s story is never finished, and that is the lesson she learns from Ursula. Early on in their relationship Ursula warns Justin about the dangers of "congealing":

There are two kinds of people. One kind, you can just tell by looking at them at what point they congealed into their final selves. It might be a very nice self, but you know you can expect no more surprises from it. Whereas, the other kind keep moving, changing. . . . The keep moving forward and making new trysts with life, and the motion of it keeps them young. In my opinion, they are the only people who are still alive. (FS 4)

Justin takes this advice to heart so much that her philosophy of life incorporates Ursula’s promotion of change and movement: "As long as you go on creating new roles for yourself, you are not vanquished" (FS 322). Unlike Dane, whom Godwin
leaves scanning the horizon, still hoping to encounter the prescribed narrative that she will answer her questions about life, Justin uses her imagination and flexibility to take charge of her life, to create her own roles. When pondering why she is now, at forty, able to think back over her fourteenth year after burying the memories for so long, Justin claims,

> Maybe it's because I'm more confident of my own powers now, not so afraid of losing myself, of being molded by other people's needs of me, of being overwhelmed by them. (FS 321)

Justin is a successful actress, but she is also an artist in her creation of original self that can withstand the demands that society places upon it.

Justin's early displacement from the South is partially responsible for her ability to create an original life for herself. Her success may also have much to do with when *The Finishing School* was written. In 1984, having witnessed some of the benefits that the women's movement has been able to achieve for women, Godwin could no doubt imagine more success stories for women seeking independent and original lives than she could when writing Dane's story in 1970, or Francesca's story in 1972. Francesca, Dane, and Lydia, to varying degrees, ultimately fall short of their desire to live independent and original lives because they have absorbed, despite themselves, feminine narratives that limit their freedom to create themselves anew with each new day. Only Justin appears to have mastered this challenge. Perhaps her career as an actress makes this concept of continuous creativity easier for her to grasp. In any case, her story provides Godwin's audiences with hope. As Godwin's imagination expands to include...
women who possess the strength to disregard stifling narratives, she is able to inspire modern women with new, and more positive, models of feminine behavior.
I. In an interview with Virginia Smith, Lee Smith admits to experiencing the same pressure to conform to the narrative of the Southern lady that many of her characters feel:

I grew up to some degree feeling that if you didn’t fit right in, if you didn’t conform, you would go crazy. My mother, see, came from eastern Virginia and she was always trying to be a lady, and there was this notion that if you fit right in, if you were a lady and went to a nice school and married a doctor and so on, that was somehow comforting and would somehow keep you from going crazy. But the idea of being artistic was being outside of the norms in a certain way, and it was sort of dangerous. (V. Smith 791)

An original life was to be feared rather than envied, for the Southern woman did not want to be outside the sphere of normality. This chapter will concentrate on those dangerous women, Smith’s characters who refuse to conform and by doing so risk their sanity (according to society’s definition), but also bring meaning and order into their communities through their artistry.

These women who reject restrictive narratives such as that of the Southern lady in favor of creating their own narratives come from different locations and environments, but they share some important characteristics. First, they reject the idea of aristocracy upon which the ideal of the Southern lady rests. And because they refuse to set themselves on a pedestal, they are able to participate fully in their communities. Second, as they resist any narrative that restrains personal expression, they assert their
individual identities and insist upon the validity of their individual needs. The strongest of these women are Lee Smith’s successful artists. With their powerful imaginations and voices, they create original stories for themselves. Moreover, unlike the pretentious Miss Iona, the self-proclaimed guardian of art and beauty in Fancy Strut, these women do not put on airs. Instead, they create meaning and order for themselves and for their communities.

For Smith, the rituals that these women maintain and the fellowship they create within their communities renders them artists. Wishing to validate a female creativity that has been devalued by patriarchal culture, Smith focuses on her artists’ nurturing and caretaking abilities within their families and communities. As Carol Gilligan asserts,

Women’s place in man’s life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. But while women have thus taken care of men, men have, in their theories of psychological development, as in their economic arrangements, tended to assume or devalue that care. When the focus on individuation and individual achievement extends into adulthood and maturity is equated with personal autonomy, concern with relationships appears as a weakness of women rather than as a human strength. (17)

Smith wants her readers to recognize the unique creative power that resides in women’s capacities for nurturing and maintaining relationships. She challenges her audience to acknowledge the artistry of these women: "I think all these lives that are involved with people, particularly where women function, are not understood—not who they are, not what they are doing. They are creating order" (Hill, "Interview" 8). Although Lee
Smith acknowledges that artistic women are increasingly moving into the public sphere, she wants to recognize a women's creativity that traditionally has been different from men's in its private nature: "I have always been really interested in this notion of women's creativity as being quite different from men's. It is not public; it's so rarely public" (V. Smith 786).

In her essay, "From Shadow to Substance: The Empowerment of the Artist Figure in Lee Smith's Fiction," Katherine Kearns claims that "Smith cannot reconcile her vision of what the artist is supposed to be with what a woman is supposed to be . . . , for she cannot imagine an ordinary woman on the Olympus of high intellect and seriousness where the 'real' artists lie" (192). Smith, however, is more concerned with expanding our definition of what a 'real' artist is. For Smith, the artistic moment is to be found when people come together and create order through the commonplace rituals of everyday life. She wants to take art off Mount Olympus and back to the people. In "The World of Lee Smith," Anne Goodwyn Jones asserts that Lee Smith prefers "traditionally female immanent art to traditionally male transcendent art" and that this preference parallels her preference for the spoken over the written word. As Jones puts it, "Spoken words have a human context more concrete than that of written prose" (Jones, "World" 252). Yet, Smith must write if she wants her art to be available to her community. Therefore, she attempts to suggest the vocal and the physical with the written word, and so creates an art by and for a non-elite audience.

It is no coincidence that Smith's strongest female voices are in tune with the needs and desires of their bodies. Smith wants to keep her art connected to the people
and to the body. The female artists she creates, therefore, are quite different from her Southern ladies who are isolated from their communities and their bodies. Like French theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, or Hélène Cixous, Smith appears to recognize the modern woman's need to reclaim her body from patriarchal domination, and she insists upon the female body as a starting point for women's self-discovery and creativity. Kristeva would undoubtedly consider Smith one of many female artists who "seek to give a language to the intra-subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past" (198). Cixous advises women,

> Write yourself: your body must make itself heard. The huge resources of the unconscious will burst out. Finally the inexhaustible feminine imaginary is going to be deployed. Without gold or black dollars, our naphtha will spread values over the world, un-quoted values that will change the rules of the old game. (116)

The connection that Smith's artists feel to their bodies and physical desires, a connection that has been denied women by traditional female narratives such as that of the Southern lady, is closely linked to their ability to determine the course of their own lives and influence the values of their communities.

In opposition to a male high modernist art, which has been traditionally defined as abstract, elitist, isolated, and transcendent, Smith offers a female creativity that is concrete, democratic, communal, and immanent. In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," Adrienne Rich claims that "the myth of the masculine artist and thinker" has been that "in order to write well, or think well, it is necessary to become unavailable to others, or to become a devouring ego" (43). Rich rejects this myth and
searches for a way in which "the energy of [artistic] creation and the energy of relation can be united" (43). This unity of artistry and communal relation is what Smith suggests is accomplished by her heroines discussed in this chapter.

Katherine Kearns admits that Smith's "artist/muse" figures possess "the most fundamental requisite of the good artist: they are knowers" (184). They are like Emerson's poets who follow their imagination, "a very high sort of seeing, which does not come from study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees, by sharing the path or circuit of things through forms, and so making them translucid to others" (Emerson "Poet" 318). Characters such as Sally of Oral History (1983), Ivy of Fair and Tender Ladies (1988), Billie Jean of "St. Paul" (1981), Florrie of "Cakewalk" (1981), and Candy of Family Linen (1985) create their lives by following their instincts and intuitions, and they seem to have a gift for understanding the motivations and problems of the people around them and imparting their own wisdom to their community. Moreover, Smith's artists are also "knowers, doers, and sayers" in the sense that Emerson uses these terms: they are lovers of truth, lovers of good, and lovers of beauty (Emerson "Poet" 309). But while Emerson emphasizes the love of beauty in his poets, that they are the "sayers," Smith insists that her artists be people of action as well. They are knowers and doers, and the most successful of her artists are sayers as well.

As daughters, Smith's artists are able to reject the limiting narratives that their mothers sometimes offer them, and they are free to become mothers themselves and
pass on their values on the importance of living an original story. While nineteenth-century female writers felt the need to separate art from family because they could not reconcile the physical and emotional costs of childbearing with the time and energy needed to become an artist, Smith refuses to separate art from family. In *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Marianne Hirsch asserts, "Motherhood, in Victorian ideology . . . represents a confinement and potential destruction impossible to combine with the freedom and expansiveness seen as necessary to artistic creativity" (45). And in "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine: (Re)production, the Künstlerroman Tradition, and the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield," Susan Gubar claims that "even literary women like Elizabeth Gaskell, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and George Eliot, who were bent on perpetuating an ideology of motherhood, associate birth with the depravity of the fallen women or with the death of an artistic career" (20). Only with the advent of birth control and the decline in the mortality rates of both infants and mothers could female writers such as Virginia Woolf begin to free themselves from the either/or imperative of marriage versus career (Gubar, "Birth of the Artist" 20-21). Yet while women's control over their reproductivity may have something to do with Smith's rejection of what she sees as a false dichotomy separating art from family, her artist's freedom from compulsory maternity does not completely explain Smith's view, for some of her artists, such as Ivy Rowe, appear to have no access to birth control. And while Smith does admit the emotional and physical toll that repeated childbirth can have on her heroines, she still
asserts their capacity for artistry because she is attempting to expand our notion of creativity.

Most of Smith's artists do not create art in the traditional sense, products such as written poems, stories, and operas, or paintings or sculptures. Kearns explains how Smith's artist/muses offer "an alternative vision to art as monument." Rather than creating immutable objects of art, the creations of Smith's artists are meant to be used or consumed. For example, Florrie bakes cakes, Sally tells stories, and Candy cuts hair. Kearns does not include Ivy in her category of artist/muse, for she points out that Ivy's letters are immutably written down. However, Ivy does use/consume the letters because many of them are written more as a therapeutic means of self-expression than as a means of conveying information. Moreover, Ivy consumes her letters by burning them before her death when she has no more use for them. All art is, perhaps, more mutable than Kearns' remarks would suggest. No matter how permanent the art object, its value as art and its interpretation is dependent upon the receiver. At least I think Smith would make this contention, for she is not interested in an art that is obscure or an artist who is cut off from the world.

Kearns presents this release of artistic control as a weakness in Smith's artist/muses, for she claims that the muses "hold forth, in direct contradiction to Smith's own vocation as novelist, an impossible model of egoless generosity" (188). Yet I do not find characters such as Florrie, Sally, Candy, or Ivy to be either egoless or entirely generous. As this chapter should manifest, these women know their needs and work towards having those needs met. Moreover, their ability to yield control of
the artifact, in fact, illustrates their strength. Only a truly confident individual does not feel the need to make his/her creation immutable; it takes confidence to yield control. Smith’s artists see themselves as existing beyond the artifacts they produce, and they are confident that they will be able to create new works of art to express their future selves. In their focus on community and process, Smith’s artists challenge a patriarchal definition of art that emphasizes individuality and product. In "Nine Principles of a Matriarchal Aesthetic," Heide Göttner-Abendroth defines matriarchal art in a similar manner, for she claims that it is not a product, but rather a "process which takes place between the participants" (90). Thus, Lee Smith offers these women, who live their lives creating the artistic moments Smith wishes to celebrate, as alternatives to the stifling model of the Southern lady.

Smith’s mountain women appear to be much less influenced by the narrative of the Southern lady than their city-dwelling sisters, and so they are also frequently involved in creating the kind of ritualized moments that Smith finds so productive. The mountain communities that Smith describes in Oral History and Fair and Tender Ladies lack the aristocratic background of the deep South. The characters do not reflect on the days of slavery or the aristocratic pleasures of life on the plantation. Instead, they remember a constant fight against nature to make the land meet their needs. The mountain people realize that they must band together in order to survive, and the idea of setting women on pedestals would seem ridiculous to them, for their women work as hard as their men. Lee Smith admits that there is a big division in her mind between the stories that take place in the mountains of Appalachia and those that are set in the
deep or middle South, for she sees a lack of aristocracy in the mountains (PC). Clearly Smith, like Fox-Genovese, recognizes the important role that class plays in creating the ideal of the Southern lady.

II. Although Smith’s mountain women are not Southern ladies, not all of them possess all of the qualities of her fully developed artists. Pricey Jane and Dory of Oral History, for example, though at times victimized and voiceless, are in touch with their bodies in a way that prefigures Smith’s artists who are similarly grounded in the body and the physical. They do not flirt coyly or attempt to maintain an appearance of purity or innocence. They act upon their sexual desires. Pricey Jane would have gone off with Almarine whether Miss Lucille Aston had forced them to get married or not. And Richard Burlage is surprised and delighted when Dory explicitly asks him to suck her breasts and guides his hands so that he might sexually satisfy her. Above all, these mountain women are seen as natural rather than artificial. They are in touch with their bodies and their own desires. They do not cultivate the airs of the Southern lady or feel any need to rise above their neighbors.

Ora Mae of Oral History similarly acts upon her physical desires. Moreover she demonstrates an independence and assertiveness that will also be found in Smith’s fully developed artists. Ora Mae does not depend on a man to give her status within the community but rather chooses to make her own way in the world. Although she is in love with Parrot Blankenship, Ora Mae does not run away with him because she knows that he will end up deserting her later. She has sex with Parrot because she
wants it, not because he demands it of her. Ora Mae is aware of her needs as an individual, and she puts them before the needs of the men who come into her life: "He picked me a-purpose to fit his needs, never knowing he fit mine, too. But you do what you have to do, I say. It's not a lot of choices in the world" (OH 207). Ora Mae does not appear to achieve her full potential as a human being, and her vindictiveness and selfishness set her apart from Smith's artists. But she, nevertheless, possesses a strength of character that Smith's readers can admire.

Both female independence within a patriarchal world and the celebration of the female body and desire are qualities that directly oppose the narrative of the Southern lady. Moreover, all of these women are connected to their communities in a way that Smith's Southern ladies are not. Most in touch with their communities are the old mountain midwives and healers in Oral History and Fair and Tender Ladies. And though they are at times minor characters, they do possess all of the characteristics of Smith's artists. Granny Younger of Oral History and Granny Rowe of Fair and Tender Ladies, for example, are remarkable for their ability to live independently in a man's world with voices that cannot be quelled. They are influential matriarchs who do not worry about conforming to the images or expectations of other people. Granny Younger notes that Almarine Cantrell takes her advice and seeks a wife for himself because "Everybody does what I say" (OH 36). And Granny Rowe travels far to help Beulah give birth to her baby, even though Beulah has no faith in the old ways: "Beulah was fit to be tied, but there is not a thing you can do with Granny once she settles her mind on a thing" (FTL 143). Granny Younger's and Granny Rowe's duties
as midwife, local doctor, wise woman, and story teller ensure their participation in the most important rituals of the community: birthing, healing, and dying. Their art lies in their healing gifts and their tales of wisdom, products that are consumed rather than permanent. And though they are older and their sexual needs are not mentioned, they are in tune with the body and understand the needs and desires of their patients.

In Oral History's Pearl and Sally, Lee Smith offers her readers two contrasting figures who illustrate the vast difference between Smith's ladies and her artists. Pearl's imaginative potential is stifled by her adoption of the static image of the Southern lady, while Sally is able to create her own story. As a child Pearl possesses a strong imagination and a love of beauty:

Pearl had so many ideas. She used to sit and look at magazines by the hour, everybody around her saved them for her, and she'd cut out pictures and hide them away. Not only pictures of models in pretty clothes, either, the kind you make paper dolls out of. Pearl cut out weird pictures--a photograph of a storm is one I particularly remember, out of Life magazine. . . . Another picture she had was . . . this 110-year-old lady in some foreign country who by then looked a lot like a prune. (OH 241-42)

Sally notes that Pearl was always reading and dreaming of traveling to exotic places. Yet as she approaches her teen years, Pearl adopts an image of herself as a lady of refinement who should be surrounded only by beautiful objects. The coarseness of mountain life repulses Pearl, and her yearnings for romance, poetry, and beauty remind the reader of Smith's most adamant Southern ladies, such as Miss Iona or Miss Elizabeth. When Sally asks Pearl what it is that she wants, Pearl responds, "I don't want anything to be like this. I want things to be pretty. I want to be in love" (OH
Pearl's notions of "love" and "beauty" are now derived from the romance stories she reads, and she reasons that in order to have beautiful things surrounding her, she must marry a wealthy man and escape her mountain background. Pearl's adoption of the narrative of the Southern lady stifles the originality of her childhood visions.

Moreover, Pearl becomes class conscious and isolates herself from her family when she willingly places herself upon the Southern lady's pedestal. Realizing that she needs to marry into a higher social set in order to achieve lady status, Pearl marries Earl Bingham, a wealthy upholsterer in Abington, Virginia, who is twenty years Pearl's senior, and who, according to Pearl, adores her. She then sets herself as far apart from her mountain kinfolk as possible. Sally comments, "Pearl grew more and more high-falutin. She wouldn't associate with the rest of us, except Billy a little bit, and during all that time I lived over the Western Auto store she never once gave me the time of day" (OH 261). According to Lee Smith, the narrative of the Southern lady demands a class consciousness that Pearl is able to cultivate. Pearl willfully climbs up the pedestal and attempts to isolate herself from her family. Lee Smith satirizes the impermanence of the Southern aristocracy with the detail that Pearl's huge house with columns looks like "the Old South Motor Inn in Roanoke" (OH 269). Smith suggests that rather than being members of an immutable social order, individuals in the Southern classes move in and out of the various social classes like cars at a motor inn.

Yet Pearl finds that life on the pedestal is not as fulfilling as she had hoped. Though few details of Pearl's life as a Southern lady are given, her appearance and behavior clearly indicate her unhappiness. When Sally sees Pearl just a few years after
the marriage, she notes how terrible Pearl looks: "She was wearing a kind of long housedress, or housecoat, which under normal circumstances she would not have been caught dead in. She was skinny as a rail, white blotchy skin, and no makeup" (OH 269-70). Moreover, Pearl's assertions that she has always admired Sally's strength to act independently of society's expectations indicates that Pearl is finding the role of the Southern lady to be confining:

You always knew what you wanted and you always did it whatever the consequences, and I always admired that... I went the other way, you know, as far as I could get from all that. And everything is just so right for me now but I still feel like there's something I missed, something somewhere that you had ahold of. (OH 264)

Like Godwin's Lydia, Pearl insists that her life is perfect, and she cannot quite figure out why she feels a sense of incompleteness and longing.

Like Myrtle, Pearl attempts to combat her dissatisfaction with life on the pedestal by accepting the false promise of the modern narrative of sexual liberation. Pearl rebels against the image of the Southern lady by taking one of her young art students as a lover. Yet she does not have Myrtle's worldly wisdom to keep the affair a secret, so when she ends the affair with the boy and returns home, she is unable to withstand the shame that she must bear as a fallen lady. Pearl's affair with her student does not bring her the freedom from society's constraints that she sought, and Pearl never realizes that she has been searching for beauty, truth, and freedom in the wrong places: outside of herself.
Sally offers a stark and healthy contrast to her sister Pearl, and she is one of Smith's artists. Lee Smith says of Sally, "I like Sally. . . . I think she's very strong and she's meant to be a positive image of a woman as a woman at the end [of Oral History]" (Arnold 245). Rather than accepting the restrictive narrative of the Southern lady or living her life to suit others' expectations, Sally creates her own life story through trial and error. She admits that she has made her mistakes, such as running off to Florida with a disc jockey and spending several unhappy years there having an assortment of meaningless relationships. She follows this mistake with another by marrying a man who wants to "save" her and trying to lead a life that he would define as "respectable." But Sally is able to escape confining narratives when she recognizes them. After divorcing her husband, she claims that she is glad to be herself again: "I was happy I didn't have to be saved anymore, tired of putting up a front. You can put up a front for years until it becomes a part of you, you don't even know you're doing it. I was glad it was over" (OH 261). Sally can accept her past mistakes, learn from them, and put them behind her. And she allows herself to be herself rather than some image that someone else would like her to be.

Most importantly, she never isolates herself from life or those around her. The narrative she creates for her life includes rather than excludes people. She has never really gotten along with Pearl, but when Pearl tells her about her affair with the high school boy, Sally tells Pearl to pack up her things, and she takes Pearl back home with her. She describes her and her current husband Roy as "down to earth" people who
"don't want the moon" (OH 234). What the text suggests is so appealing in Sally is her strength, her endurance, her compassion, her honesty, and her self-knowledge.

Sally's artistry is manifested not only by her refusal to conform to others' preconceived images and her tireless efforts to create her own happiness, but also by her powerful voice. As Nancy A. Walker asserts, "language—the ability to speak, to tell one's own story—is at the heart of the contemporary novel by women" (39). Sally is a storyteller. Her digressions and layering as she tells her tales remind the reader of Smith's own narrative style in *Oral History*, in which the story is told from the differing perspectives by various narrators. In "The Power of Language in Lee Smith's *Oral History,*** Corinne Dale points out that Sally "repudiates traditional linguistic patterns: she hates poems and rejects narrative with its beginnings, middles, and endings" (Dale 33). Dale's article convincingly argues that Sally's voice becomes a kind of subversive narrative, or mother tongue, by incorporating the semiotic, pre-language voice into symbolic language. Sally starts and restarts her tale several times as she insists that it is impossible to find the story's true beginning.

Sally illustrates how Smith's artists are able to incorporate their creativity into their roles as family nurturers, and with respect for their own bodies. Her tale is told while she is preparing a pot roast for her husband Roy and as a source of entertainment for him since he is down with a broken leg. Moreover, Sally directly links her passion for her art with her passion for Roy: "There's two things I like to do better than anything else in this world—even at my age—and one of them is talk. You all can guess what the other one is" (OH 233). Like her grandmother Pricey Jane and her mother

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Dory, Sally is comfortable with her body and its physical needs. Yet Sally also has the forceful self-assurance and independence of Granny Younger and Ora Mae that Pricey Jane and Dory lack. Although as a child, Sally nearly worshipped her mother, she does not adopt her mother's narrative of waiting for a man to return and rescue her as Dory waited for the return of Richard Burlage. Instead, Sally chooses to live her life actively, and she is free to nurture and love her husband and children as well as herself.

It is in her seventh novel, *Fair and Tender Ladies*, that Smith makes her strongest argument against what she sees as a false dichotomy between female artistry and family. The heroine of *Fair and Tender Ladies* is like Sally in her forthright words and independent actions. The novel traces Ivy Rowe's life from her youth until her death. As a child, Ivy dreams of traveling and becoming a writer. Although she does travel, she does not go far, and she ends up right back on her mountain where she feels she belongs. The circular nature of Ivy's journey suggests that Smith's artists do not have to travel long distances or expose themselves to foreign influences in order to pursue their creativity. Moreover, Ivy raises a large brood of children as well as her eldest daughter's son. And though Ivy assumes that her dreams of becoming a writer are being fulfilled through her eldest daughter rather than herself, the novel is composed entirely of Ivy's letters, and we are allowed to see what she can not, that she is a powerful writer.

Ivy's teacher, Miss Torrington, represents for Smith the false art achieved when the woman separates herself from her community and her family. Miss Torrington, a northerner who is passionate for books yet disdainful of most people, encourages Ivy
in her love of learning and even wants Ivy to return to Boston with her to continue her education. Ivy is excited by this opportunity but is simultaneously battling her own emerging sexuality and her physical feelings for a commonplace boy, Lonnie Rash. Although she is not in love with Lonnie, she does care for him and her newly awakened body craves his touch. Ivy promises to go with Miss Torrington to Boston and manages to resist her feelings for Lonnie until Miss Torrington passionately kisses Ivy on the neck and sends her flying into the arms of Lonnie. When Ivy becomes pregnant, her body makes her choice for her, and she must abandon her goals of higher education to go and live with her sister in a mining town. Clearly, Ivy's female body, in one sense, betrays her because her pregnancy prevents her from pursuing her dream of becoming a fully educated and published author. Yet Ivy does not lose her art by losing Miss Torrington, who represents the kind of pretentious, institutionalized, isolated art that Smith wishes to avoid. Ivy continues to write her letters and her pregnancy appears to feed her art rather than stifle it. At the moment of her daughter Joli's birth, Ivy claims, "all the poems I ever knew raced through my head" (FTL 148). And although Joli's birth is presented as an overwhelmingly joyful experience, Smith does not give an unrealistically rosy picture of maternity, instead having Ivy describe her very real pain and suffering during the birthing process. Nevertheless, by connecting Joli's birth to Ivy's creativity, Smith is proclaiming a connection between Ivy's artistry and her connection to family and community.

Yet Smith does not ignore the dark side of the woman's role as nurturer of the family. When Ivy marries Oakley Fox, returns to the mountains of her youth, and
spends her days caring for her ever-growing family, she falls into a dark period when she does not write and appears to lose herself as well. She complains that she has lost her interest in reading, that she wants to do nothing except rest, that she feels as if she has been frozen in time: "Now I feel like I've been playing Statues and got flung down into darkness, frozen there" (FTL 196). Though she loves her children and her husband, they drain her energy, and we see the results in the fact that her letters come years rather than months apart.

When Ivy loses her writing, she loses herself, for her letters are her means of self-expression and self-representation. Ivy writes her letters, even when she knows they will not be read, because when she writes them events are clarified in her mind and her feelings are given a voice. For example, long after her sister Silvaney's death, she continues to write letters to her. She claims that Silvaney has always been her other half, and thus she continues to write to herself, even when the person of Silvaney no longer exists. During Ivy's dark period, she writes to Silvaney of her physical and spiritual exhaustion, of the babies she has birthed and lost, and of the distance that grows between herself and her husband as he struggles with the land to scrape a living for his family and she struggles to keep their family clothed and fed. Smith acknowledges that the hardships of the woman's traditional role as caretaker and nurturer can fight against her individual spirit, self-expression, and creativity as well as bring her joy and fulfillment.

Yet Ivy does not allow her artistry or her creative spirit to become stifled completely. The depths of her despair shocks her so much that she appears to will
herself out of her exhaustion and depression: "I went so far I scared myself, and now I have to come back up. It is like I've had an electric shock. So now I am so much alive, I am tingling" (FTL 210). During this period she remembers and reasserts her personal needs and desires. She abruptly leaves her family, taking off up the mountain with a traveling bee man who makes her feels young and free of her role as wife and mother:

I felt giddy and crazy, climbing the mountain, I felt like a girl again. It seemed I was dropping years as I went, letting them fall there beside the trace, leaving them all behind me. I felt again like I had as a girl, light-headed, light-footed, running all over town. When I thought of my babies, I could see them real plain in my mind, their bright little faces like flowers, but it seemed to me that they were somebody else's babies, not mine. I was too young to have them. (FTL 224-25)

Honey Breeding, the bee man, symbolizes Ivy's long neglected individual spirit, her self that she has forgotten in the daily cares of raising a family:

He is just the same size as me. In fact I think he is me, and I am him, and it will be so forever and ever. What I did, I did it out of awful longing pure and simple. I did it out of love. Say what you will, and I don't care what anybody said then or might say now, it could not have happened otherwise. I had to do it, I had to have him. (FTL 230)

Ivy's compulsion to leave with Honey has more to do with herself than with him. When she speaks of loving and needing Honey, the text suggests that Ivy is actually loving and needing the self that she is losing to the responsibilities and cares of wife and motherhood. Ivy escapes with Honey to reunite with that part of herself: "I felt I had got a part of myself back that I had lost without even knowing it was gone.
Honey had given me back my very soul" (FTL 232). Thus, Ivy’s retreat up the mountain nourishes her spirit.

Yet Ivy cannot indefinitely reject the life she has created for herself. She must return to the responsibilities of her children and her community if she is to be the kind of artist that Smith values. She cannot remained isolated upon the mountain. When Ivy returns to her family, she is physically ill, and she has paid a heavy price for her neglect of her family. Her daughter LuIda has died during her absence. Smith appears to suggest that complete autonomy is not a viable option for an artist, for she must stay in touch with her community. Yet despite the fact that Ivy’s feelings of guilt and shame make her feel that she would rather be dead, Ivy discovers that her place is among the living: "It is clear to me now Silvaney that however much I may have wanted to die, I am stuck smack in the middle of this life" (FTL 249). When Oakley mentions the tastiness of the honey and the family is playing the same games that Ivy played with Honey Breeding up on the mountain, the reader senses that Ivy will be allowed to heal. Though she has suffered in the process, she has regained her wholeness and her sense of self, and she will be able to impart her wisdom to others.

Smith’s Fair and Tender Ladies has much in common with the “female pastorals” that Elizabeth Jane Harrison discusses in Female Pastoral: Women Writers Re-Visioning the American South. Harrison proposes that in the works of the female writers she discusses, an "alternative female pastoral" is constructed in opposition to the male pastoral tradition in Southern literature. In the female pastoral, the heroine’s "interaction with the land changes from passive association to active cultivation or
identification" (11). Ivy Rowe both cultivates the land, returning to her mountain home with her husband and working the family farm, and identifies with the land, linking the changes in her life to the changing seasons: "I have a need to be up here on this mountain again and sit looking out as I look out now at the mountains so heavy with August heat in this last long hot spell before the fall. I can feel the season changing, in my heart" (FTL 301). Ivy also resembles the wise woman character that Helen Fiddyment Levy discusses in The Fiction of the Home Place: "the wise woman brings her separate homeland to life in its natural, domestic, and artistic manifestations through her sympathetic identification with the physical environment, a sympathy that arises directly from her own abundant womanliness" (9). In Smith's view, Ivy's connection to nature, her awareness of her physical desires, her ability to nurture family and impart wisdom to her community are all intricately connected to her artistry.

Through Ivy, Smith hopes to redefine a patriarchal notion of what an artist should be and accomplish. Ivy mistakenly thinks when she did not follow Miss Torrington's example of sacrificing all for the pursuit of high art, she gave up her chance to become an artist: "I thought then I would write of love (Ha!) but how little we know... I never became a writer at all" (315). Moreover, Ivy believes she would have become a real writer only if she had written romance novels. Smith asks her reader to recognize that Ivy's journals are true examples of art because they express her keen, honest, and original observations of everyday life. Ivy's misconception concerning her own creativity stems from the limited patriarchal view of art that Smith would like to expand. Since Ivy is not a published writer, as her daughter Joli later
will be, she does not think that she is a true artist. Yet Smith’s audience readily recognizes the power of Ivy’s imaginative and heartfelt prose.

And Ivy’s abilities as a writer are only one way in which she is an artist. Her artistic abilities are also manifested in the way in which she creates her own narrative, following her instincts that will lead her to self-fulfillment and connect her to the people around her. As Ivy puts it, "I have loved, and loved, and loved. I am fair wore out with it" (FTL 315). Smith aims to reveal Ivy’s artistry, and she succeeds because through her letters, Ivy directly and indirectly conveys her strength as an individual and her zest for living. Although she is temporarily disconcerted by the disapproval of her community when she becomes pregnant out of wedlock, or decides to take the rich, troubled mine owner’s son for a lover, or takes a young transient as a lover despite her twenty-year marriage and brood of children, Ivy never accepts society’s narrative that she has become a fallen woman, and she always accepts responsibility for her actions and voices her individuality through these actions. As Ivy humorously puts it in a letter to her sister, "I decided I had made my bed and I would lie in it, Silvaney, same as before. I thought, I’m getting to be an expert at making beds!" (FTL 164). The familiar expression “to make your bed” is habitually used negatively to mean that one has gotten oneself in a mess. Ivy, in her characteristically optimistic approach to life interprets the phrase to mean "to create your life," and she does just that, for she refuses to be confined by the expectations of society. Ivy lives life fully, and though she has her share of pain, she never appears to regret the decisions she makes.
Lee Smith's admiration for those characters who grasp life with both hands seems to be what Anne Goodwyn Jones is suggesting in her analysis of the folk song that acts as an epigraph to *Oral History*. The singer of the folk song insists that if he had known how painful love could be, he would have locked his heart up in a box and "tied it up with a silver line." Yet Jones notes:

Those who do lock up their hearts in Lee Smith's stories paradoxically lose themselves, or make other people miserable, or live, parasitically, in other people's stories. And those who embrace the gross world . . . do indeed suffer. But they have stories of their own to tell. ("World" 250)

Only those men and women who allow themselves to experience real life and the tumultuous passions of love will achieve a sense of personal identity that can be conveyed in their life stories. Southern ladies, who hide behind the roles their communities set up for them and retreat from the "gross world," cannot find themselves or form honest relationships with their neighbors.

Therefore, Lee Smith's artists embrace the "gross world" and their neighbors; they ignore the class distinctions that separate people from one another. Even Smith's artists who are brought up in the middle or deep South, where they experience more pressure by their families or communities to adopt the narrative of the Southern lady, are able to reject the narrative and the isolation it represents. They defy the social codes of Southern ladyhood, and by doing so, achieve a self-awareness and contentment that women who are unable to shake the narrative of the Southern lady cannot attain. Women like Billie Jean of "Saint Paul," Florrie of "Cakewalk," and Candy of *Family*
Linen defy family and friends who wish to mold them into proper Southern ladies, and through their defiance, they assert their individuality. Smith seems to suggest that in order to achieve individual identity, Southern women must often set themselves up in opposition to their communities. Yet at the same time, these women are integral parts of their communities, working within the rituals that allow them to be creative for and connected to others. Even the commonplace names of these women indicate their lack of aristocratic pretensions. Like Sally and Ivy, they are not concerned with social or class distinctions, and their exuberant personalities convey their love of life.

Billy Jean, the narrator of Smith’s "Saint Paul," is able to ignore class distinctions perhaps because they would so clearly work against her. She is of a lower social station than her childhood friends, Marlene and Paul, for her father works in the mines that their father owns, yet Billy Jean insists on being accepted for herself. Moreover, Billy Jean defies the conventions that demand sexual purity in young Southern girls. She acknowledges her physical desires, dating boys at an early age and allowing them to have sex with her. Billy Jean’s artistry lies in her relationship with her body. Rather than allowing society to control her body and to make it into an artifact, Billy Jean takes control of her body and lives her life as she sees fit.

Like Sally and Ivy, Billy Jean embraces change rather than clinging to stasis. She writes a continuously evolving narrative rather than accepting society’s ready-made and restrictive narratives. Although she becomes pregnant as a teenager and the father will not acknowledge or support his child, Billy Jean, like Ivy, never regrets her sexual behavior or the birth of her child, and she refuses to accept society’s image of her as
fallen woman. Instead, she is able to accept her mistakes and move into the future with a positive attitude. Over the years, Billy Jean marries happily, goes back to school when her husband dies prematurely, and earns her CPA license. She accepts her life and the passing of her youth with a grace that Smith's and Godwin's Southern ladies lack. When Billy Jean encounters her childhood friend Marlene, both women are middle-aged, and Billy Jean notes that Marlene looks ten years younger than Billy Jean because she "had spent a lot of those years . . . holding onto her looks" (SP 199). Yet, in Billy Jean's description of her friend, Marlene appears worn and frazzled: "she was thin as a rail with her hair all frizzed out in one of those fashionable new hairdos they wear now. Marlene looked like a model out of Cosmopolitan magazine, and every piece of jewelry she had on was solid gold. She smoked a lot, though, and picked at things with her nails" (SP 199). Apparently the strain of trying to live up to the physical demands of the Southern lady's image manifests itself beneath the make-up, jewelry, and fancy hair-do.

In contrast, Billy Jean disregards the emphasis on appearance that characterizes the image of the Southern lady. Billy Jean does not fight against her gray hair or rounded figure. She accepts her age as she accepts the events in her life: "I have filled out some, you might say. And I've got these streaks of gray in my hair that I won't let Neva at the Clip 'N Curl touch up--'I earned that gray hair!' I tell her, 'and you just let it alone!'" (SP 198). To Billy Jean, signs of age can become symbols of what she has been able to accomplish in her life. She is not tied to the notion that women
are only useful as young and graceful objects for men to admire. She rejects the emphasis on appearance that characterizes the image of the Southern lady.

Similarly, Billy Jean refuses to accept that as a Southern woman, she must be passive and demure in romantic situations. When Marlene tells Billy Jean that her brother Paul has always had a crush on her, Billy Jean is baffled but interested. The shy, intellectual Paul had never showed any interest in Billy Jean during their high school years. However, now that Billy Jean knows of Paul’s feelings for her, she does not hesitate to act on this knowledge. She marches right over to Paul’s house and offers herself to him:

Now you know me and you know I have never believed in beating around the bush. . . . I know everything! . . . I know how you sent me that money right after I had Betsy, and I know how you have felt about me all my life. So don’t try to deny it, Paul Honeycutt, I know! And I’ll tell you something else. . . we are not old people right now, and it’s never too late to make up for lost time. (SP 202)

Billy Jean is proposing a new narrative for women that would allow them to openly assert their sexual desires to the men in their lives.

Moreover, Billy Jean refuses to allow herself to be confined by static images that society or individuals attempt to force upon her. When Billy Jean reveals her feelings to Paul, he pushes her away, for what he loves about Billy Jean is not her person but rather the image he has created of her in his mind: "No, Billy Jean, you don’t understand—It wasn’t you, it wasn’t ever really you, it was the idea of you, which made possible the necessary. . . . I couldn’t possibly . . . I could never actually—" (SP 202). Just as the Southern woman has been asked to become a frozen image on a
pedestal, Billy Jean is being asked to remain an image in Paul's mind—a creation of his imagination that is both unreal and static. Paul has a box filled with mementos of Billy Jean, and he wants to keep the lid on that box. Discovering Billy Jean as a real person would unseal that box and disturb the precious image he has of her. Yet Billy Jean refuses to be limited by Paul's image of her. She is a bit surprised by Paul's reaction, but she simply acknowledges that he is a fool and then gets on with her creating her evolving narrative: "OK. If you're so dumb you'd rather have the idea of me than the real me in the flesh, as they say, then you can keep it. Goodbye!" (SP 202). Billy Jean may allow Paul to indulge his fantasy of her, but she will never attempt to try to become that fantasy. She will not allow her person to become an artifact in Paul's collection of mementos from the past. She enjoys the spontaneity of life too much to abandon it in favor of becoming a prescribed and static image.

Florrie of "Cakewalk" is like Billy Jean in her positive attitude toward her body, her awareness of her physical desires, her disregard of class distinctions, and her determination to live her life to please herself. She refuses to conform to the social codes of the Southern lady. She opens her life to those around her, whatever social circle they happen to embrace. And she demands that people accept her for who she is.

Florrie's unladylike behavior is evident from her girlhood on, particularly her freedom with her body and her awareness of her own sexual desires. Rather than maintaining a distant manner with the boys who flocked around her as a teenager, Florrie seems to encourage them with her open and flirtatious behavior. Florrie's sister
Stella complains that Florrie is earning herself a "reputation" (CW 230). And though she has the pick of any boy in town, Florrie does not pick the richest or the most distinguished but chooses to run off with Earl Mingo, "a man with Indian blood in him who had never made a decent living for himself or anybody else" (CW 237). Yet, Florrie seems happy with her choice of husbands, despite the fact that Earl is a wanderer who is on the road more often than he is at home. When Stella comes over to meet Earl, she is shocked to find Florrie, clad in nothing but a robe at one o'clock in the afternoon, sitting on her bare-chested husband's lap. Florrie's open and honest sexual nature, offensive to Stella's refined sensibilities, reveals her connection to the physical body that all of Smith's artists share.

Florrie's cakes are her most visible form of artistry, and they act as a manifestation of her life. Just as Florrie embraces change and creates an evolving narrative, Florrie's cakes change with each occasion and receiver. And just as Florrie sells or gives her cakes to all types of people, she similarly opens her heart and her life to all people, regardless of social class. Stella complains, "Why, Florrie will make a cake for anybody, any class of person, and that's the plain truth, awful as it is" (CW 229). Florrie, who refuses to acknowledge class distinctions, does not isolate herself on the pedestal as the proper Southern lady should, and she is much happier as a result. Instead, she offers her art to the commonest of people. Stella notes that people are always stopping in to talk with Florrie and admire her cakes. After her own children have grown up and left home, Florrie invites her son's ex-wife and her grandson to come and live with her. When Stella complains that it is just as if she were living in
a boarding house with a bunch of strangers, Florrie laughs and insists that might not be such a bad idea. Florrie offers her art and her life to anyone who might want to share it, and her nurturing capabilities actually enhance her artistry.

Like Billy Jean, Florrie accepts her aging as a natural part of her life narrative, and this acceptance allows her to achieve a sense of peace that Stella will never attain. While Stella is trying desperately to maintain an illusion of youth with her makeup and stylish clothes, Florrie, like Billy Jean, is not concerned with the gray in her hair or the wrinkles around her eyes. The beautiful autumn leaf cake that Florrie creates at the end of the story symbolizes her acceptance of both her life and the loss of her youth, while Stella is sheltering her skin from the wind because "the first signs of a woman's age may be found around her eyes, on her hands, and at her throat" (CW 256).

Candy, Miss Elizabeth's youngest daughter in Family Linen, is a similarly spontaneous and vibrant personality, and she refuses to conform to the ideal of the Southern lady that her mother worships. Like Billy Jean and Florrie, Candy does not worry about trying to maintain a youthful appearance. While her sister Myrtle faithfully visits a gym, Candy insists that she is too busy working to bother and that "she really doesn't care" (FL 119). She claims that "she's always done exactly what she feels like," and she marvels at the "way most women--well, most people, really--want to be told what to do" (FL 114).

Candy's ability to resist Miss Elizabeth's influence and reject the narrative of the Southern lady may result from the fact that she is not Miss Elizabeth's biological child, and she has the example of Miss Elizabeth's rebellious sister Nettie to learn from.
as well. Candy notes that she and Miss Elizabeth "never did see eye to eye. They were natural strangers" (FL 123). This could be because Candy is actually the daughter of Miss Elizabeth’s sister Fay, who was raped by Miss Elizabeth’s husband Jewell. Candy also has the example of her Aunt Nettie, who refused to define herself as a Southern lady. In the journal of her youth, Miss Elizabeth writes of her hoydenish sister:

> Always the tomboy, Nettie careered about the countryside on horseback and refused entirely to become the Lady she was born to be. . . . Nettie also had friends from town of whom I could not Approve, both male and female, with whom she went dancing at Roadhouses, and Fishing. I know not what Else, as freely as if she were a Boy. (FL 184-85)

It is from Nettie that Candy appears to inherit her rebellious nature, her disregard for class distinctions, and her intuitive strength. Nettie is a knower: "learning and knowing are two different things. Elizabeth learned aplenty, but she never knew much. Me, I’ve known more than I wanted to all my life" (FL 213). Benefiting from Nettie’s influence, Candy is able to reject her mother’s example and resist the narrative of the Southern lady.

Like the rest of Smith’s artists, Candy is comfortable with her body and her physical needs. Though she enjoys the company of men, she does not feel the need to get married: "she doesn’t want a regular man--Candy likes men, but she doesn’t want one. . . . She knows that’s what most people want. But not her" (FL 119). Candy’s affair of twenty years with her sister Myrtle’s husband Don also demonstrates how clearly Candy represents feminine sensuality. As Dorothy Combs Hill asserts in her
book on Lee Smith's works, "Candy does not seem so much to be betraying her sister as filling in for what her sister cannot be" (98). Myrtle, who defines herself according to the narrative of the Southern lady, is both physically and emotionally distant towards her husband. Both Don and Myrtle have spent so much time creating the "perfect" marriage that they have lost any chemistry that might have once brought them together. And Candy, who cherishes her own independence, provides Don with a warmth and sensuality without demanding that he abandon his role as a family man. Candy does not initiate the affair, but she is there for Don when he needs her: "He never meant for it to happen, or to continue. Candy believes this. Often, they'll go months, or years, between. It's up to him. She's here" (FL 119). After Miss Elizabeth's death, Don asks to come up to her apartment where they talk rather than make love. Thus, Candy provides Don with an emotional as well as a physical outlet.

Emotional warmth and the ability to love are dominant traits in Lee Smith's artists. Of course, Candy's affair can be seen in a negative light as keeping Don from having to confront Myrtle and solve their problems. Lee Smith does not contend that her artists are perfect, but they are warm-hearted and generous. There is nothing malicious about Candy's affair with Don. And Candy's physical warmth corresponds with her emotional warmth. Myrtle notes that Candy "has good intentions and a big heart" (FL 59). It is Candy who rushes to Miss Elizabeth's side and spontaneously presses her hand, while her more favored sisters are unable to approach their cold, austere mother. The positive results of Candy's emotional warmth and capacity for
nurturing are seen in her secure and well-adjusted children, whom even Myrtle admits have turned out better than her own.

Candy's role as the town's beautician involves her in the daily life of its members so that she becomes a creative force within the community. In an interview with Dorothy Combs Hill, Lee Smith acknowledges the significance of Candy's role in her community:

In *Family Linen* the character who is the most important character to me—and the most successful, well-integrated person—is Candy, who is a beautician. She functions as an artist in the book in the way that women often function in Virginia Woolf, women like Mrs. Dalloway or Mrs. Ramsay. They create the moment—the time and the place—for everybody else, where things can happen. Well, Candy does everybody's hair. So she participates in everything that marks the passing of time in town, every kind of ritual. I think that is a very important thing. (Hill, "Interview" 8)

Smith's mention of Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay indicates the influence that Woolf and her artistic vision have had on Smith and her work. Marianne Hirsch analyzes Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and claims,

In substituting Lily's art for Mrs. Ramsay's compulsive and fatal life of "giving, giving, giving," [Woolf] is also calling into question the traditional standards of female artistic achievement represented by Mrs. Ramsay, those that are dependent on sacrifice and subordination. (113)

Yet Hirsch also admits that in Lily's final vision of art, "intimacy redefines knowledge and constitutes art: not possession, it becomes a form of momentary contact, continually in need of being remade" (116). Like Woolf, Smith similarly suggests that intimacy and connection define the "artistic moment." Moreover, by refusing to allow Candy,
or her other artists, to sacrifice themselves or their needs for their families or communities, Smith is rewriting Woolf’s Mrs. Ramsay, creating a more positive representation of the female artist.

Candy’s duties as a beautician allow her to talk with and listen to people—to connect: "It’s all in her line of work. Or it might be that they just want somebody to listen, and that’s all. Because there’s nobody at home to listen to them" (FL 115). The fact that Candy lives in an apartment above her shop in the center of town suggests her close ties to her community. From her window she can see and participate in the daily happenings within the town. And like the old wise women of Oral History and Fair and Tender Ladies, Candy is involved in the most important rituals of the community. She might style the bride’s hair for her wedding day or give a new mother a hair-cut to suit her new role in life. And it is Candy who carefully and lovingly does her mother’s hair and make-up after Miss Elizabeth’s death.

Lee Smith’s artists share an ability to avoid being categorized by their community without losing a active place in that community. They demand to be recognized as individuals, and the community simply learns to accept them for who they are. Their adamant self-assertion earns them the right to be integral members of their communities. Some may accuse these strong women of selfishness, but Smith seems to contend that theirs is a self-centeredness long overdue and that only through concentrating on their own needs can Southern women achieve a fulfilling sense of self that will give them the foundation upon which to build honest, enduring relationships and impart wisdom within their communities. And since all of Smith’s artists are
effective mothers and nurture both family and community, their assertions of self do not cause them to neglect others. They maintain a balance between self and other that Smith views as an integral part of true artistry.

These women are able to embrace their communities without reservation because they have abandoned the out-of-date notions of class that coincide with the narrative of the Southern lady. Their ability to live in the present, reject categories of class, express their individuality, act upon their impulses, and accept their own decisions makes them stand out boldly from Smith's Southern women who are controlled by the narrative of the Southern lady. Lee Smith appears to be offering her readers an alternate and positive notion of Southern womanhood, one that is freed of the class distinctions that isolate the Southern lady from her community and the social conventions that keep the Southern lady from expressing her individuality. Rather than accepting static images put upon them by their society or individuals, Smith's artists create their own narratives that embrace change.

Moreover, Smith is giving her readers an alternative notion of the artist as one who creatively lives her life, expresses herself, and maintains her connections to the community. Her art lies in the ritualistic moments she creates within her community, again the movement of narrative, rather than in any permanent artifact, a static image. Sally's stories, Ivy's letters, Billy Jean's body, Florrie's cakes, and Candy's hair-dos and made-up faces share an immediacy, a transiency and a connection to the common people that has kept them from being recognized as art by our patriarchal culture. Smith claims, "I have always been interested in trying to portray characters who are
artists in ways that we don't really think of artists functioning, ways they function in
towns and society" (Hill, "Interview" 19). Thus, she challenges her readers to
recognize forms of creativity that do not fit the widely held standards of traditional high
modernist art.
CHAPTER 7
RESEARCHING OLD NARRATIVES AND PRODUCING NEW ONES:
GODWIN'S VISION OF FEMALE CREATIVITY

I. Like Lee Smith's artists, Gail Godwin's artists ultimately reject prescriptive, confining narratives of traditional womanhood, such as that of the Southern lady. And though, like Smith's artists, all of Godwin's artists do not create traditional artistic products, they are all artists in life, in their attempts to create original narratives for themselves. Godwin is now creating the ideal heroine she describes as "the subject of her own destiny, not the object of 'Blind Destiny': nor a character in somebody else's destiny" (FHH 28). Characters like Jane Clifford of The Odd Woman (1974), the title character of Violet Clay (1978), Cate Strickland Galitsky of A Mother and Two Daughters, and Clare Campion of A Southern Family understand the appeal of retreating into what Godwin's heroine Clare terms the "cave of wife-motherhood" (SF 489). But even if they succumb to its charms, their satisfaction cannot last. Thus, Godwin focuses on her artists as daughters rather than mothers.

And it is around this theme of domesticity that Smith's and Godwin's heroines differ significantly. While most of Smith's artists are wives and mothers who develop their creativity within the context of their relationships, Godwin's artists flee domesticity as a trap that will sap the energy that they need to pursue the development of self. Smith's artists may not act traditionally within their roles as wives and mothers, but most do accept these roles. Godwin's artists, for the most part, do not. While Smith's artists are able to incorporate marriage and motherhood into their
creative and evolving narratives, Godwin's artists view the roles of wife and mother as static images that will prevent them from realizing their own self-fulfillment. They are unceasingly driven by the challenge of selfhood, and no matter how tired or confused they become, they do not abandon the struggle to create meaningful and original lives for themselves, lives which cannot respond to the cultural demands of wife-and-motherhood.

Godwin's artists also differ from Smith's in that they are thinkers rather than feelers. They search for their best lives by analyzing the stories of women, both real and fictive, past and present. Critical thinking and research rather than the intuition and feeling that Emerson praises are their tools of self-discovery. While Smith's artists are more often uneducated women who spontaneously follow their hearts, Godwin's artists are always educated women who use their heads to determine the direction their lives will take. Moreover, Godwin's artists think more and act less. Smith demands more hands-on experience of her artists. Godwin's artists, rarely impulsive, hesitate and ponder heavily before they act. Thus, Godwin's artists are more aware of their efforts to lead creative, original lives, while Smith's artists, such as Ivy who does not recognize that she is a writer, are much less self-conscious. In Emerson's terms, Godwin's artists are the "knowers," while Smith's artists are the "doers." Yet both Godwin's and Smith's most successful artists are "sayers"; they convey their love of beauty to their communities. Their thoughts are "new" and when they "unfold" their "experiences" to the world, "all will be the richer" (Emerson 310).
Yet while Smith’s artists are able to express themselves while living in their Southern communities, Godwin’s artists must often flee the South to escape the pressures of Southern ladyhood. They then struggle against the appeal of false alternatives to the traditional roles of wife and mother. In *The Odd Woman* and *Violet Clay*, Godwin elaborates on how her heroines initially pursue restrictive narratives or a false art. Jane Clifford of *The Odd Woman* rejects the narrative of the Southern lady that dominates the lives of her mother and grandmother; however, she is still drawn to the prescriptive female narrative found in the romance story, and she finds herself playing the part of the long-suffering mistress to her married lover. Only when she finally breaks free of stifling narratives can Jane begin to imagine an original narrative for her life. Similarly, Godwin details how Violet is initially trapped by the narratives of the traditional wife and mother, who sacrifices her art for her family, and narrative of the gothic heroine, who spends her time running from evil men and their oppressive houses, hoping to be saved by the right man. Even at the close of the novel, though Violet has rejected the preceding narratives and discovered a personal artistic vision, she is not completely free of the patriarchal notion that her personal happiness depends upon eventually finding a man to love her. In both *The Odd Woman* and *Violet Clay*, Godwin spends much of her time exploring how Violet and Jane struggle against and eventually resist restrictive female narratives.

In contrast, in Godwin’s more recent novels, *A Mother and Two Daughters* and *A Southern Family*, Godwin acknowledges that her heroines Cate and Clare feel the appeal of restrictive female narratives, but she focuses less on this fact and spends more
time exploring how these women develop original narratives for themselves without abandoning their families or the rewards of a heterosexual relationship. Godwin's artists find it extremely difficult to create a narrative that synthesizes art and domesticity. They are only able to envision a life that incorporates both self-development and family by redefining both. But unlike Smith's artists, even Cate and Clare cannot reconcile motherhood to their pursuit of self-development.

II. Jane Clifford, the protagonist of The Odd Woman, is on a quest throughout the novel to find her "best life," one that might incorporate a fully actualized and independent self, satisfying work, a fulfilling heterosexual relationship, and even the possibility of children (OW 200). Like Smith's rebels, she rejects the limiting narrative of the Southern lady; however, she is very different from Smith's artists in that she is led by reason rather than intuition. She is not a feeler but rather a researcher. Her mother Kitty admonishes Jane, "You have to live your own evidence, dear little Jane. You cannot research everything, you know" (OW 181). But Jane has always sought the answers to her questions in literature, history, or family stories. And at times, Jane's love for narratives can get her into trouble. Although she consciously rejects the narrative of the Southern lady that she sees played out in the lives of her mother and grandmother, Jane initially is drawn toward the prescriptive narrative of the romance story. Yet unlike Francesca or Dane, Jane is eventually able to move beyond prescriptive narratives in her efforts to create her own story.
Jane sees the appeal that the traditional love story has for women, even the most independent of them, because she feels the appeal of the old narrative herself: "Yes, that is the story we still love most, she thought. How some woman went to work and got her man. Even 'emancipated women' like Sonia love to hear the old, old story one more time" (OW 58). Jane imagines a visit to her cousin Frances and her D.A.R. friends "who would exclaim over Jane's doctorate and then, after she was gone, speculate on why she had not been able to get some man" (OW 133-34).

Although Jane recognizes that the old narrative of Southern ladyhood threatens to confine and limit her, she is simultaneously drawn to the security that this well-worn narrative offers. Jane envies her grandmother Edith the clear-cut set of expectations that defined her life for her as a properly raised Southern lady in the first half of the twentieth century. Jane has always felt a special closeness to Edith. They share certain characteristics that bring them together. Both are drawn to the narrative of the Southern lady that encourages isolation and purity over community and passion. As a girl Jane spends her weekdays with her grandmother. She retreats from the sexually sparked house of her mother and stepfather to Edith's "chaste street" (OW 161). When Kitty claims that there are "some people who are passionate and others who are not," Jane fears that she is among those "who are not" (OW 176). Both Edith and Jane are fainters. Edith explains to Kitty, "This child is like me; there is a limit to the things she can take" (OW 136). The implication is that they can only take so much of life's hardships and ugliness.
Just as Edith escapes from the ugliness of the world by marrying Hans, Jane, if temporarily, retreats from life while she writes her thesis. Jane often reflects upon this time in her life: "oh, God, how she looked back with nostalgia, with admiring nostalgia, on that single-minded winter, that frozen, pure winter when she lived all day in her mind, writing her thesis in the library, her image in the mirror thin and burned clean, like a saint" (OW 296). Jane becomes isolated within herself and her mind in the same manner that the Southern lady becomes isolated on her pedestal. Both become enthralled by their own purity and separation from the common people so that they feel saintly. And like Edith, Jane, at least temporarily, denies the body and human relationships: "Her skin, it seemed to her, glowed with a mental and spiritual electricity, like a saint’s skin" and "More books . . . piled up around her, isolating her like mountains. She brought her lunch in a paper bag so she would not have to go out into the world of real weather and conversation" (OW 214; 213). In attempting to escape the Southern lady's influence, Jane mistakenly follows the patriarchal creed of the isolated ascetic. She has exchanged one stifling narrative for another.

 Appropriately for a saint, the topic of Jane's thesis is "The Theme of Guilt in the Novels of George Eliot." Yet Jane is most fascinated by her research on Marian Evans' personal life and her idyllic relationship with Lewes. Jane's yearning for a love as fulfilling as that of Evans is what eventually pulls her back into the land of the living. She creates a dream lover for herself. Taking the name of a scholar she heard speak at an MLA conference, she researches him in the library, discovers where he teaches, reads his articles, and eventually writes him a letter that starts the relationship.
Yet Jane does not yet realize that in adopting the narrative of mistress to a married lover, she will be keeping herself from the true self-creation that she seeks. Once again, Jane attempts to fit herself into a narrative that limits and confines her.

Jane puts her very capable imagination to poor use when she dreams up Gabriel Weeks and imagines their life if she could get him to leave his wife for her. Bothered by feelings of inadequacy because she can't "get her man," Jane, nevertheless, attempts to keep true to the narrative of the ever-patient mistress. Instead of expressing her true feelings, Jane obliges Gabriel by never discussing his wife or making unreasonable demands upon his time or energy. When Gabriel cancels their dinner together in order to avoid raising the suspicions of a colleague, Jane's inner voice protests vehemently, but she responds as the ever-patient mistress:

Not coming! After I'd looked forward to it all day! . . . . But the habits of the two-year-old stately waltz died hard, and Jane said in a slightly choked voice, "Oh, what a disappointment, Gabriel, and on our last night together." (OW 330)

It is only when Gabriel actually voices his expectations of her patience that Jane explodes into action to destroy the narrative that she has allowed to confine her. When he ends their phone conversation with the phrase, "Thank you for being so patient," Jane fears the anger she sees in her face and automatically begins packing her bags. Although she again views herself as playing a part—that of the abused mistress in leaving her lover--Jane is at least moving in a new direction, one that takes her out of a stifling relationship and narrative pattern.
During Gabriel and Jane's last meeting, Jane attempts to evade the control that language, reason, and narrative patterns have over her life by escaping into the moment with Gabriel, experiencing his "pure self" through a type of communication that does not employ words. She wants to abandon reason for intuition:

She struggled against the mode of thinking that had been her life: adding evidence to other evidence, comparing and measuring things against other things, remembering words said in a past moment to predict what might be said in a future moment, trying to apply one person's remedy to another person's situation—listening to all the voices, in short, except the "still, small one." (OW 286)

Yet no matter how quietly Jane sits and listens, she cannot quell the inner voice that questions in language and demands answers in language. Desperately seeking a pre-language experience in which she can unite with Gabriel in defiance of research and analysis, Jane is ultimately unsuccessful. Jane appears to be searching for a kind of jouissance, "the direct reexperience of the physical pleasures of infancy and of later sexuality, repressed but not obliterated by the Law of the Father" (Jones 248). In the end, Jane is left watching Gabriel snore and fighting off the multitude of questions that she has always wanted answered but never asked him. Failing to find the union and peace she sought, Jane combats her insomnia by turning once again to language. She escapes into a book. In her study of George Gissing's The Odd Woman (1893), Jane confronts the limited options available to Victorian women in search of self-fulfillment, and she finds her own choices similarly limited.

Godwin does not suggest that some inadequacy in Jane keeps her from escaping into the semiotic moment that predates symbolic language. Instead, Godwin views
language and human thought or feeling as inseparable. Reason, research, and analysis are Jane's tools for self-discovery, and Godwin would not suggest that she has any alternative. Language, whether written or oral, is the medium through which Jane hopes to discover answers to her questions about herself and her life. Godwin would appear to agree more with Elaine Showalter than with Julia Kristeva, who calls upon women to search for a feminine language in the presymbolic or semiotic moment. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," Showalter claims, "The problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution" (23). As an English teacher, Jane seeks her answers within language, for she feels that if she has control of language, she can control her life:

Her profession was words and she believed in them deeply. The articulation, interpretation, appreciation, and preservation of good words. She believed in their power. If you truly named something, you had that degree of control over it. Words could incite, soothe, destroy, exorcise, redeem... The right word or the wrong word could change a person's life, the course of the world. If you called things by their name, you had more control of your life, and she liked to be in control. (OW 3)

As Nancy A. Walker points out, "Language represents power, and for the essentially powerless person, acquiring and using language is a step toward understanding both self and power" (10). Jane's belief in the power of words explains her fascination with the Old English Dictionary, to which she refers often to check the exact meanings of various words that she and the people around her use. She feels that if she can just
pinpoint the exact meaning of these individual words, she might clearly understand what others are saying to her and how she should respond to them.

Jane’s love of words is superceded only by her love of stories, both formal literature and family tales. She minutely analyzes them, trying to glean from them some glimmer of truth that she can apply to her own life:

She ransacked novels for answers to life, she wheedled confidences out of friends, investigated and ruminated over the women she had sprung from, searched for models in persons who had made good use of their lives, admirable women who, even if not dramatic, might guide her through their examples. So much remained unclear. (OW 24)

Jane is convinced that if she is thorough in her research, she will eventually be guided to the happy life she seeks.

Yet despite the strong appeal that literature and stories have for Jane, she recognizes that they can limit and confine her if she allows them to dictate her life story:

Stories were all right, as long as you read them as what they were: single visions, one person’s way of interpreting something. You could learn from stories, be warned by stories. But stories, by their very nature, were Procrustean. Even the longest of them had to end somewhere. If a living human being tried to squeeze himself into a particular story, he might find vital parts of himself lopped off. Even worse, he might find himself unable to get out again. (OW 43)

Thus, Jane jokingly admits that she might be able to play her cousin Frances’ role, that of the modern day Southern lady, if she had part of her brain removed first. Jane fears getting trapped in a story that becomes much too tight a fit. As Jane ponders over the
various terms that are used to describe her—career woman, spinster, professor of English, intellectual, Romantic—she recognizes that though these terms may describe parts of her, she cannot allow them to define her:

I am all of these, thought Jane, but all of them are only parts of me . . . You remained indestructible by eluding for dear life the hundreds and thousands of already written, already completed stories. You climbed out of them before they rose too high. You reminded yourself that you were more than they were, that you had to write yourself as you went along, that your story could not and should not possibly be completed until you were: i.e., dead. Even then, no matter how good it was, others might learn from it, be strengthened or even transformed by it, but it could never, never be a perfect fit for anyone else again. (QW 44)

Much more consciously than Smith's artists, Jane similarly embraces the idea of change and a constantly evolving narrative. She sounds like Justin of The Finishing School, who learns that she must keep creating new roles for herself if she wants to keep herself from "congealing." Moreover, Jane appears to understand that even the best of models can never provide the perfect mold for her own life; she must create her own mold, and it will be a perfect fit for her life only.

In "Gail Godwin's The Odd Woman: Literature and the Retreat from Life," Susan Lorsch claims that Godwin offers a "forceful indictment of literature and the harmful effects it can have on its readers" because "Jane can never be happy except, perhaps, in the safe world of the imagination, the only world which can begin to fulfill the expectations literature had fostered in her" (31). I agree that Jane does, at times, allow herself to become trapped within narrative patterns that stifle rather than liberate, but this is only when she forgets her own advice that she must take what she needs
from the narratives offered her without expecting to find within any story a "perfect fit" (OW 44). Godwin, herself, claims that Jane did not attempt to "live through" the characters she found in literature, but instead that "she knew many of them and she examined their lives to see what she could take. But then she would discard what she didn’t need" (Welch 80).

Although by the end of the novel Jane still does not have the answers she seeks, her triumph is in her determination to continue the process of discovery: "From the little concrete house behind came the barely audible tinkle of a soul at the piano, trying to organize the loneliness and the weather and the long night into something of abiding shape and beauty" (OW 419). Godwin says of The Odd Woman's ending, "Many people think the book ends sadly, but at the end she [Jane] knows what she doesn’t want. She’s discarded the stories that she doesn’t want, and that is certainly is a great step in the right direction" (Welch 80). Jane’s artistry lies in her determination to create her best self and her best life. The materials of her creation are the confusing, and at times, constrictive narratives of women that she finds in literature and real life. Yet Godwin’s implication is that these are the materials with which we all must attempt to organize our lives. The trick is to use what is needed without allowing the narratives to dictate one’s life. And the true artist is continuously shaping and reshaping her life: self-creation is an on-going process.

Violet Clay, the title character of Godwin’s fourth novel, is different from Godwin’s previous heroines in that she is a self-proclaimed artist. The novel, written from Violet’s first-person point of view, opens with confidence: "I am a painter" (VC
3). Violet then goes on to narrate her struggles to become the self-assured artist that she now is. Like Jane, Violet's greatest desire has been to create a unique self: "I hadn't yet reached that point of resignation where I surrendered the image of my greatest self. If and when that day came, I might as well be dead" (VC 4). Thus, Violet is, like Jane, also an artist in the sense that she is attempting to create a fulfilling self and life. The central concern of the novel is Violet's search for a personal artistic vision and how she might incorporate that search into her life as a young Southern woman coming of age in the 1960s and 70s. Her progress is slow and her quest appears stunted until, at the age of thirty-two, a series of events leads to a fresh start for Violet.

As Violet’s history unfolds, the audience sees that Violet is plagued by the same worn-out narratives, which she calls "Old Plots," that hinder the growth of Dane, Francesca, and Jane. Violet's father dies in World War II, and her mother commits suicide when Violet is just a baby; therefore, the first of the "Old Plots" that Violet incorporates into her life is that of the orphaned child: "Thus I joined the hallowed clan of The Orphan. I became accustomed merely to holding out my hand and receiving from others the currency of sympathy. But at age thirty-two, I was discovering I couldn't buy so much with these earnings" (VC 4). By adopting the image of herself as "The Orphan," Violet sees herself as a victim of circumstances, someone who is acted upon by fate rather than one who creates her own destiny.

The narratives calling for such female passivity are numerous, and despite her grandmother's attempts to nurture her artistic ambitions, Violet is, nevertheless,
confronted and, at times, confounded by these narratives. As a child, Violet loves to hear the family stories in hopes of discovering clues to her own identity, and one of her favorites is the story of her grandmother's sacrifice of her musical talent to a life of normalcy and domesticity as a married woman. Her grandmother admits to falling for the appeal of the sacrificial wife and mother script: "The picture was that of a lady so feted in our day—her praises were sung in every women's magazine—the accomplished wife and mother who turns her gifts to the enhancement of Home" (VC 29). Violet's reaction to the story is mixed. She asks her grandmother why she didn't go to New York to try to become the concert pianist she had planned to be before the wealthy lawyer asked for her hand in marriage, but at the same time Violet is charmed by the romance of the story: "some deeply feminine side of me loved this story of how the talented young Georgette had succumbed to a blitzkrieg assault on her vanity" (VC 28).

Violet's grandmother appears to use her story of giving up her musical career for marriage and motherhood as a warning to Violet, yet Violet also suspects that her grandmother sabotages Violet's own efforts toward achieving an independent, creative life. Although Georgette warns her granddaughter against abandoning her ambitions in a similar manner when her best friend's nephew comes for a visit, the appeal of passivity is too great for Violet as she repeats the pattern set by her grandmother. Later Violet suspects that her grandmother of actually plotting with her best friend to unite their granddaughter and nephew, but Violet has become so caught up in the narrative of passivity that she is gently amused rather than justifiably angry: "There was something delicious and sensual about my abdication. I had walked willingly into
the trap of those tough and cunning old friends, playing us off like their pet summer puppets" (VC 31). Violet abandons her independence and falls into the domestic narrative that possesses a "sensual" appeal.

In her marriage to Lewis, Violet finds that both she and Lewis readily assume the gender roles expected of them: "He had been told about me, the orphan of War and a Romantic Suicide. He had, he said, a frequent dream of "saving" me long before we met (VC 31). Just as Violet has adopted the narrative of the helpless orphan, Lewis sees himself as her savior. She is passive; he is active. And for a while, Violet enjoys her part:

Often when he made love to me he would murmur almost angrily in my ear, "Poor little girl, I'll take care of you now," and this never failed to send me over the edge. There was something sexy about having been captured, having been forced by the machinations of those two old Eumenides to lie down in the sweet juices of traditional womanhood and abandon the hubris of an edgy, lonely struggle. I didn't touch a paintbrush those first months of captivity. What for? The colors of satisfaction oozed out of my very pores. I posed for myself in front of the mirror, turning this way and that, thinking: I am now a wife. (VC 31-32)

Violet goes from wanting to create art to thinking of herself as an object of art, the contented wife who oozes colors of satisfaction.

Yet this satisfaction does not last long. Violet's "nesting instinct" (VC 32), as she terms it, subsides, and she is left feeling restless and anxious about her lack of artistic progress. Moreover, when Lewis poses for Violet in the nude, he reveals his vulnerabilities, and Violet loses her construct of him as a creature of power and
mystery. Like Dane, Violet does not wish to see the human failings of her "savior":

though I finally did get my portrait in oils of him sitting back, naked, with that pipe, I had lost somewhere in the bargain his mystery for me. Now when he whispered in my ear, "I'll take care of you now," those fierce words no longer did their magic. I had looked upon his vulnerability. He needed reassurance, he needed taking care of, just as much as I did. (VC 34)

More importantly, Violet is able to use her art, even if unintentionally, to explode the traditional gender roles. When she paints, she sees through her own eyes, and she sees a vulnerability in her husband that contradicts his prescribed role as her protector. Violet’s painting is in sharp contrast with her gaze into the mirror, where, adopting society’s viewpoint, she sees herself only as a wife. 

That the worn-out narrative of feminine passivity and all-encompassing domesticity is failing to satisfy Violet is indicated by a recurrent dream she has about New York and her painting: Violet is trying to reach an Art gallery in New York but is never able to arrive with her work intact. In an attempt to ward off her dreams of escape, Violet asks Lewis if he wants to have a baby. Like Francesca, Violet sees the birth of a child as a tie that will seal her fate as a woman who must sacrifice her ambitions to the altar of domestic security. Violet’s confusion over which path to take in life, artistic ambition or domestic security, is exemplified by her actions after she and Lewis have intercourse. All winter long, Violet chants that she wants Lewis to give her a baby as she loses herself in the eroticism of self-denial, but then she runs to the bathroom and douches to prevent a pregnancy. When spring arrives, Violet has left Lewis to see if she can make it on her own in New York.
Unlike Smith's artists, Violet feels that her femininity and sexuality are irrevocably linked to female passivity and domesticity. Therefore, she must leave her marriage to pursue her artistic ambitions in New York. She cannot conceive of having both the domestic dream and the artistic dream. When she first moves to New York, she has a safety valve in the possibility that she might be pregnant. She realizes that if she had been pregnant she would have allowed Lewis to take her home where she would have surrendered to domestic security:

Safe again within the bounds of just enough approval, I would have painted my way complacently through all the violets, then the roses and the lilacs, and finally become my very own Still Life with Lilies. My grandchildren would fight over my best paintings after the funeral. They would hang them in their homes and get busy tending the Legend. How She of the Untamed Spirit had once flown the coop but returned in plenty of time to cultivate her own garden—and make their lives possible. (VC 45)

Having abandoned her art and her will to create a unique self, Violet would have become an object, her "very own Still Life with Lilies." The mention of Violet's funeral suggests that even though living, she would be dead to true life. And just as Edgar Allen Poe found his best subjects for poetry to be beautiful, dead, women, Violet's children would tend the "Legend" of their beautiful, dead mother.

Violet would have fulfilled her purpose as a traditional Southern woman: to sacrifice herself so that her children might live their lives. Violet has grown up with narratives that view personal ambition and motherhood as diametrically opposed. She cannot imagine the two co-existing in her life. She must choose. Joanne Frye similarly claims that Violet "has no available pattern for narrative connections that include both
work and womanhood" (77). As Linda Huf points out in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: The Writer as Heroine in American Literature*, the artist heroine is torn "between her role as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others, and her aspirations as an artist, requiring exclusive commitment to her work" (5).

Violet does not become pregnant, and during her time spent in New York painting covers for gothic novels to make ends meet, she unconsciously begins to adopt the restrictive female narrative of her subjects. Violet allows her affairs with men to keep her from pursuing her art; moreover, her relationships tend to be physical, obsessive, and destructive. Absorbing lessons from the gothic novels she reads in order to perfect her covers, Violet associates pain with love. Michelle Massé claims that "the intertwining of love and pain is not natural and does not originate in the self: women are taught masochism through fiction and culture" (3). Massé claims that she sees "masochism at the center of the Gothic" (2) and insists:

Girls who, seeking recognition and love, learn to forget or deny that they also wanted independence and agency, grow up to become women who are Gothic heroines. The ideology of romance insists that there never was any pain or renunciation, that the suffering they experience is really the love and recognition for which they long or at least its prelude. (3-4)

While Violet is with the various men in her life, she ignores her art and allows herself to become a part of female narratives of abuse. For example, when she is seeing Ivor, the disillusioned art teacher who believes art is dead, Violet is so immersed in their physical passion that she allows herself to be stalked by him as he possessively monitors her movements. Only when Ivor suggests that they move to Florida together, set up
a traditional home, and raise children, does Violet realize that she must end this
relationship. Though she is willing to let herself be distracted from her artistic
pursuits, she cannot abandon her artistic ambitions permanently.

Similarly, when she is living with Jake, Violet makes no progress in her art, and
she allows herself to become the victim in an abusive relationship. Both Jake and
Violet drink too much, end up fighting, and then find themselves playing scenes that
they pretend at feeling rather than actually feel:

Our fights were "picturesque." Their borrowed quality of having been seen somewhere before should have alerted us sooner that we lacked any original passion. We just climbed into old frames and played somebody else’s scenes. "You cow," he shouted, kicking me on the thigh and pouring sherry over my head. I wept according to the battered-woman’s script and cringed with more pain than I felt, while my cool self watched, thinking: There’s nothing the least cowlike about me; I wonder who he’s confusing me with. (VC 8)

Violet stays with Jake because she fears being alone, but according to her concept of art, she cannot achieve her artistic vision unless she is alone. Therefore, her relationship with Jake is both a means of avoiding her dream of artistic success, for fear of failure, and a form of self-punishment for failing to follow through on her artistic plans.

When Violet indulges her sexual feelings, she loses her art. Her body betrays her. Symbolically, this betrayal is illustrated by her need to use one of her paintings as a sanitary napkin when she starts menstruating unexpectedly in the city with no protection available. The very symbol of her femaleness, menstruation, steals her art

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from her. It is as if even biology is against her: she cannot be a woman and an artist both.

Violet can only reconcile her art with her femaleness when she begins to redefine art. Rather than accepting the patriarchal notion of art as an immutable product, Violet begins to realize that the process of art is what is most important. While isolated at her uncle's cabin in the woods, Violet learns the value of disciplining herself to paint every day, and she comes to the conclusion that the process of art is what is most important for her. She decides that she could never commit suicide as her uncle did as long as she can find enjoyment in her painting:

All those hours and days and years of brooding over my anonymity as an artist seemed unimportant, the faraway preoccupation of another world. I knew—if only, please God, I would be allowed to keep my eyes—I would go on painting till the day I died. As long as I could paint, even if I couldn't earn my living by proficiency as Mr. Summers had done, even if it was just for myself, I wanted to go on living. (VC 244)

Although she still seeks recognition, Violet finds satisfaction in the simple experience of her art. Thus, Godwin's definition art emphasizes the process involved in artistic creation.

Moreover, Godwin, like Smith, rejects the idea of the artist as an isolated, self-obsessed individual who cannot connect with his or her community. Disciplined, focused, and undistracted for perhaps the first time in her life, Violet is still unable to find her personal artistic vision until she seeks a subject outside of herself. As Katherine Frank asserts in her review essay, "Violet Clay: Portrait of the Artist as a Woman," Godwin insists that the "attainment of selfhood . . . always involves some
manner of self-transcendence" (Frank 122). Violet's first attempt at a breakthrough painting, "Violets in Blue," is, like her uncle Ambrose's second, unwritable novel, too self-obsessed. In describing her original conception of the "Violets in Blue" painting, Violet is, in essence, summing up her life as she sees it:

The literalness of the experience would be translated into paint. So that though I might know that "Violet" had originally stood for me (and for all those lives like mine, trying to make a place for themselves in the ongoing blue), the painting would have only the color violet, costumed in many tones . . . . That their color was a reflection, a variation, an emanation of my own had come to me only in the course of this evening. Had not Ambrose's act in some way been an echo of my own darkest wishes? (VC 109-110)

Although Violet has at least moved away from painting herself in death, in the "Still Life with Lilies" that she imagined painting as Lewis' wife, she is still too preoccupied with placing herself on the canvas. Ambrose was so caught in his past relationships that his self-absorption stifles his creative talents, and in despair, he commits suicide.

Violet is in danger of falling into the same pattern until she meets her neighbor Sam, a vibrant, athletic woman in the prime of her life, raising a ten-year-old daughter on her own. Sam's story as well as her body inspires Violet. While she poses for Violet, Sam gradually reveals the problems that she has faced in life: an inadequate education, an abusive stepfather, and a gang rape that results in a pregnancy. Sam is a survivor, and she recreates herself with each new challenge she sets as a goal. Not content to play the victim, she becomes an excellent carpenter, builds her own house, goes back to school, and has dreams of becoming an architect. Sam not only provides Violet with the subject and inspiration of her first great work, but she also suggests to
Violet that women might create a different story for their lives. As Violet reflects upon the traditional story of womanhood as she has learned it, with the man pursuing the woman until she turns around and lets him catch her, she realizes that Sam's story is exciting in its originality:

Now here came Sam, bringing with her another sort of picture and lots of questions. There was something about her picture that intrigued me also. Sam had built her own house and was running in a different direction. (VC 284)

Unlike the gothic heroines Violet spent so much time painting, Sam is not running from a house or a man only to surrender to both when the chase is complete. Sam creates her own houses and lives quite efficiently, contentedly and, perhaps, permanently without a man. For Violet, Sam represents a new kind of woman and she admires her power and potential. Conveying Sam's strength and possibilities to the canvas gives Violet her personal artistic vision and the recognition within the art world that she has sought for so long.

Yet Godwin does not suggest that Violet now has all the answers. In fact, Violet, despite her progress throughout the novel, is still looking for a narrative of romance to bring her personal happiness. As she contemplates her friend Milo's novels, she reflects upon the theme of romance that pervades them: "In his novels people would continue to be saved through love from seductive eccentricities. Would someone do the same for Sam one day? For me? I hoped so" (VC 321). Godwin seems to suggest that Violet, too, is a "suspended woman," the title given to the painting of Sam. She is held within the possibilities of the future without being
completely free of the worn-out narratives of the past. Violet achieves her artistic vision, but she cannot do so unless she isolates herself from the world of men. Ivor, Jake, and the police officer Violet so carefully avoids in the last section of the novel all act as impediments to Violet's art. The implication of the novel is that Violet, unlike Smith's Sally or Ivy, cannot be her best self within the context of a heterosexual relationship as they are traditionally defined. Joanne Frye asserts, "Violet Clay has not solved the problems of life nor has she found a way to resolve the conflicts between her sense of self as artist and her sense of self as woman" (85). Godwin has created a woman artist, but her creation has yet to reconcile her art to her femaleness.

Like Jane and Violet, Cate of A Mother and Two Daughters flees the South in search of her "best life." While her sister Lydia initially leads the life of the stereotypical Southern girl, Cate has always been the rebel in the family who refuses to conform to her family's or her society's images of appropriate womanhood. Like Jane, Cate is an English professor and she, too, uses literature as a reference manual for her life. For example, at various points in her life she ends or begins relationships after gaining insights from novels she is reading at the time. Although she does not regret her rejection of the narrative of the Southern lady, Cate, like Jane and Violet, feels the appeal of self-denial that similarly restrictive female narratives entail.

Despite her determination to create an independent and original life, Cate, influenced by the gothic novels she teaches, admits that she is occasionally tempted to allow herself to be taken care of, to lapse into passivity: "There had been times, lately, when she had yearned to collapse into the protective embrace of someone else's
responsibility" (MTD 36). When Cate discovers that she is pregnant, she longs to avoid the terrible responsibility of the decisions she must make:

It would have been a relief. Complete abdication. Let others take over. She remembered how she had lost her balance and fallen back into Roger Jernigan's arms. The temptation she had felt to keep on falling. To give up on keeping her stubborn, weary balance and just sink. What good was she doing anyone by trying to be herself? What good was she doing herself? (MTD 205)

And when Jernigan proposes marriage while Cate is visiting his estate, which includes a reconstruction of a medieval castle, Cate feels the temptation to merge her life with his while still recognizing the self-denial her acceptance would entail:

And in the dark of his room, tinctured with moonlight, she found it all too easy to abandon her modernity, to give herself up to basics. She was his female and he was her male. They knotted themselves together, struggling and clinging for a total closeness, a self-obliterating closeness. . . . What else was necessary? What on earth was the rest of the fuss about? Why not go back to this, stay inside this, get rid of that nervous, worrying self?" (MTD 239)

Like Violet, Cate is charmed not only by Jernigan's rustic castle, but also by the gothic story that celebrates male dominance and female submission. She feels that her femininity and sexuality are tied to the traditional domestic life in which the woman, in return for the security offered by the man, gives up her quest for self. Cate recognizes that her own mother, Nell, repressed much of the turbulence of her own personality in order to accommodate her more dignified and reserved husband. And though Nell looks upon her marriage as a blending of opposite personalities in which
each complemented and improved upon the other, Cate can only see how her mother changed into a completely different person when her father came home for the evening.

Again, Godwin suggests that her heroine’s search for self cannot be pursued within the confines of a heterosexual relationship as traditionally defined. Jernigan does not want Cate to stop working; he appears to admire her intelligence and capabilities. Cate does not fear his tyranny if she married him but rather her own abdication of responsibility: "I didn’t trust myself. It would have been very easy just to lie back and let him slip the ring on my finger and say, You give up now, and I’ll take care of everything. I would have been a zombie before the year was out" (MTD 400-401).

Moreover, in committing herself to union with Jernigan, Cate would be taking on his weaknesses and vulnerabilities as well as his strengths, and she is not prepared to do this. Just after telling him about her pregnancy, Cate sees Jernigan in a weak moment, and rather than wishing to comfort him, she wishes him gone: "His shoulders slumped and his face looked old... She felt pity and repugnance. Better for him to have gone than for her to see him like this" (MTD 214-15). What draws Cate to Jernigan is his power to take care of her. Despite herself, she has bought into the domestic myth of masculine strength protecting feminine weakness. Yet what draws Cate to Jernigan also causes her to reject him, for she cannot sacrifice her quest for self to this myth of domesticity.

When Cate leaves Jernigan and goes ahead with her previously scheduled abortion, she is asserting the importance that complete freedom over her own destiny has in her life. Cate spends Easter weekend with Jernigan and has her abortion on
Easter Tuesday. According to Christian tradition, God gave his son to die for the sake of humanity. Symbolically, Cate sacrifices the unborn life within her to her ever-evolving "self." Although Cate claims that the experience of the abortion "hurt [her] soul deep down," her "self" experiences a kind of resurrection through the process (MTD 401). She is willing to give up everything—passion, security, love—so that her "self" will have the freedom and space to grow and develop. When discussing her dreams for her future with her mother, Cate claims that she can tolerate being alone and obscure if she can just have the "freedom and mobility to investigate things as they are, and maybe call a few truths as [she sees] them, without getting arrested or put away in a madhouse" (MTD 368). Yet by the end of the novel, Cate has found the dichotomy she has set up between self and others to be false.

Cate receives a warning against pursuing her freedom to the point of complete isolation. While walking along the beach, she encounters an odd woman who appears to be an artist. When Cate asks the woman if she has seen the old shipwreck that she remembers from her childhood, the woman enigmatically responds that her "mirage" is in the opposite direction and that Cate probably won't find hers. Cate, though normally curious about strangers, is physically repulsed by this one. She considers the woman "a bad omen, a projection of what she herself did not want to become" (MTD 431). Godwin appears to suggest that in her search for her destiny, Cate must beware of mirages that might lead her into the desert of isolation rather than the oasis of well-being.
Cate may rail against the damages caused to the individual by her involvement in the nuclear family, but Godwin suggests that it is from the community of the family (not necessarily the traditional nuclear family) that individuals draw their strength and support. The lines from that precede the novel's epilogue suggest the value Godwin assigns to community: "We are not strong by our power to penetrate, but by our relatedness. The world is enlarged for us, not by new objects, but by finding more affinities and potencies in those we have" (MDT 523). The joyful reunion of the extended family at the end of the novel is a celebration of a group of people discovering their "relatedness" and "affinities." Cate, secure in the mountain retreat that her uncle left to her, draws her loved ones to her by giving a party for her recently married nephew. She reconciles with her sister Lydia, and even the abandoned Jernigan is allowed to participate.

Although the exact nature of Cate and Jernigan's new relationship is not explored, it appears that Cate will be allowed to have both passion and community, without having to submit to the constraining binds of marriage. Cate is freer and more mobile than ever, selling her self-designed courses to various universities across the United States. Godwin suggests that despite her fears to the contrary, Cate will not have to sacrifice passion, love, or security in order to create her own destiny. Cate's family at the end of the novel cannot be defined as a traditional nuclear one, but it is a family nonetheless, and Cate has learned that she does not have to give up the idea of having a family in order to pursue her goals of self-development. Moreover, Cate has learned that her career does not have to demand all of her energies, that she can
create a flexible schedule that suits her needs. Cate's newly found confidence even allows her to admit Jernigan into her life without the fear that she will allow him to dominate or control her. The dichotomy that Cate constructed between self and other falls apart when Cate is able to redefine her family and her career as inclusive rather than exclusive.

Godwin further explores the possibility of a heroine who can have family, a heterosexual relationship, and a fulfilling creative life in A Southern Family's Clare Campion. Like Jane and Violet, Clare flees what she calls the "deadly twin-embrace" of family life and the South in hopes of creating her best life as a writer (SF 384). Yet even after she has achieved success as a writer and is happily involved in a long-term relationship, Clare is frequently plagued by insecurities that have to do with her upbringing as a Southern woman and her family, the Quicks. Clare's best friend Julia notes that she often has to "reason [Clare] out of her expectations of failure and convince her of her own worth" (SF 16). Yet Clare is able to cope with her insecurities by using her powers of imagination and her abilities as a writer.

For example, in an attempt to confront her insecurities as a Southern girl growing up with working class rather than aristocratic forbears, Clare uses her imagination to appropriate the past of the Fauquier family, from whom she rents a beach cottage on an exclusive island off the coast of North Carolina. Mrs. Fauquier is a true descendent of the nineteenth-century Southern lady. She runs an inn successfully on her own and yet gives the appearance of being helpless and incapable of handling the details of management. She is always "deferential, almost apologetic,
seeming to want people to believe the inn ran itself without her—in spite of her even" (SF 425). Her daughter similarly deprecates her own accomplishments. Although she has helped run a home for abused children, "to hear her tell it, anything good or clever she had done had been pure accident!" (SF 430). The men in the family are lawyers who tell amusing stories and handle the money matters. Clare realizes that this kind of family is on its way out in the South, yet she is fascinated by them and turns to the scrapbooks she finds in the cottage for more information on their ancestors. Like Jane, Clare looks back nostalgically upon the pampered lives of the elite Fauquiers, and though she cannot approve of the institutions that they upheld and valued, she misses the security of having had those institutions to rely upon and make her decisions for her:

Julia had once told her [Clare] that she idealized the very institutions that would have kept her down if she hadn’t been so diligent, and so fortunate, in her escape from them. But Clare had argued back that she didn’t admire those institutions, she didn’t think she idealized them, but she wanted to know about a certain kind of security she felt she had missed out on. She wanted, for reasons she was still discovering, the experience of having had it. So she made reparations to herself the only way she could: through observation and imagination. And when you dwelt on something closely, in great detail, truly trying to apprehend it from the inside out, loving aspects were bound to slip in. Tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner. And then, having understood, having loved through the rendering, no matter how much you might disapprove in principle, you could go on to understand something else. (SF 417)

Clare is determined to understand her world. Her creative mind allows her to imagine the circumstances of others and empathize with them. This empathy enables her to
expand her experiences and draw lessons for her own life by seeing the world through
the eyes of others, past and present, fictive and real.

By appropriating the past of the Fauquier family, Clare learns that she need not
fear or resent the family's modern representatives:

She regarded the Fauquiers the way she regarded characters she had
carried through a certain quantity of pages in her books: she now knew
enough about them to predict what they would probably do next; she had
mastered them through her obstinate empathy, her selective observation,
and her imagination. It was as if she had been them for a time, and the
experience of having realized life from inside them soothed old
resentments and insecurities and freed her to go on to other human
mysteries. (SF 433)

Clare may be somewhat arrogant in her assumption that she can predict the present
Fauquiers' feelings or actions; nevertheless, by studying over them, she grows closer
to them and eases her own fears and insecurities as well. She can envy their
prestigious heritage less and spend more time creating her own story.

Clare's fascination with the Fauquier family relates to her attempt to get at the
concept of individual identity. Ever struggling with family and regional influences,
Clare longs to know where she starts and her environment stops: "What of me is
singly mine, and would be so regardless of whom I was born to and how or where
I grew up? What of anybody's was purely her own or his own, if you took away
family and region and upbringing and social class?" (SF 424). And though she cannot
define what exactly makes up one's personal essence, she believes strongly in its
existence, and she refuses to repress her own.
Nevertheless, Clare, like all of Godwin's heroines, has felt the appeal of self-denial that goes along with submitting to prescribed female narratives. When the daughter of her long-time lover decides to cloak her vibrant personality beneath a repressive form of Judaism, Clare understands what draws Lizzie to her fiance David and his restrictive religious customs. As an Orthodox Jew, Lizzie will not be allowed to wear pants and she will even hide her hair in public beneath a wig, taking it off only in the presence of her husband. Lizzie claims that observing the customs gives her "a sense of permanency, such a wonderful sense of security" and that "living like that was extremely sexy" (SF 488). Again, Godwin ties the woman's feelings of sexuality and femininity to traditional womanhood in which the woman's place is in the home under the protective dominance of her husband. And though Clare could never accept such an arrangement for herself, she remembers times when she held a similar desire to be defined by a masculine presence:

At fourteen, Clare had wanted to be a nun; and in her early twenties, before Writing took over, she vaguely dreamed of giving herself up to a man whose attractions would come down like a sledgehammer on her grim ambition and careful preservation of self, and wake her, sometime later, in a fecund, erotic cave of wife-and-motherhood. (SF 489)

Like Godwin's earliest heroines, Clare is drawn in her youth to the repressive female narratives that call for self-repression and denial to the will of the dominant masculine, be it God or man.

But though Clare flees the "fecund, erotic cave of wife-and-motherhood" through her creative calling, Godwin allows her a rewarding heterosexual relationship
that has eluded many of Godwin's earlier heroines. While Violet could not seem to have both art and love, Clare is both a successful writer and Felix's partner in life. Even more so than Cate, Clare is allowed to "have it all." Yet this does not mean that the struggle is over. Clare's family can still reduce her to a child with their emotional intrigues and boobie traps: "Clare's voice had risen to the pitch of a little girl's. It was true, thought Felix, they could set her back years. After the confusion of the past few hours, he was not entirely clear of 'Quick murk' himself" (SF 443). Yet Felix is there to help restore Clare's self-confidence and sense of being her own person. He gives her his honest reaction to the current entanglement within the Quick family, seeking to encourage Clare without protecting or shielding her. Clare's participation in a lasting emotional and sexual relationship with Felix brings out the best in her. Rather than becoming confined by the relationship, as Cate feared she would be if she married Jernigan, Clare's love for and with Felix expands her viewpoint and helps her to maintain a balanced perspective. Yet Clare is not married to Felix, and she has no children. Godwin apparently still finds the traditional heterosexual relationship to be incompatible with female artistry.

In A Southern Family Godwin illustrates even more clearly than in A Mother and Two Daughters the family's destructive potential for self-hurt. Julia claims that the atmosphere upon Quick's Hill, where Clare's family lives, is filled with "layer upon layer of debilitating resentments and intrigues that over the years had sapped the family members of their individual strengths" (SF 15). Clare's strong desire to make a name for herself and her wish to avoid family entanglements keeps her from returning home.
except for short and often emotionally painful visits. She feels confined by her family and claims that when she is at home, she loses "all capacity for independent mobility" (SF 14). She is speaking of not having a car, but the suggestion remains that she becomes so entwined in the workings of her family that she loses herself in the process. Despite the fact that Clare has escaped her family in the sense that she lives in the North and has become a successful writer, Godwin makes the point in this novel that none of us are ever totally free of our family ties, and we must learn to deal with them if we are going to be happy.

The action of the novel centers around the unexpected suicide of Clare's brother Theo and the reactions of the various family members to his death. Clare is consumed by guilt because she feels she did not give Theo the time or attention that a good sister would have, but once again, she deals with her insecurities by using her powers of imagination and her skills as a writer. She decides, despite his death, to write Theo a letter, apologizing for neglecting him, telling him how much she loves him and how she wishes she had been able to tell him so before his death:

all the time you were standing there I was thinking . . . Theo's beginning to fall apart, like everything else on Quick's Hill, and congratulating myself for having got out in time. Oh, dear God. Why didn't I just get up out of my chair and walk those few inches around the table and hug you? (SF 382-83)

Though Clare has lost the living Theo, she is still able to connect with his spirit through her imagination. And by connecting, she begins to heal herself.
Clare also uses this letter to Theo to clarify her feelings about the themes in her writing. Having attempted to abandon themes about the South and the family, Clare comes to the decision that these themes are important to her, they keep her writing alive, and therefore she cannot get rid of them. She experiments with a novel set in New York, "UnSouthern, unfamiliar," that will deal with "Great social themes vs. obsessional private themes" (SF 386). But after she returns from Theo's funeral, she finds the novel trivial and naive: "Who were these people? What did they have to do with anything that mattered? (SF 385). Clare comes to the conclusion that what matters in her novels, and consequently, what matters in her life, are matters of region and family. Thus, although _A Southern Family_ reveals the family's tremendous capacity for self-hurt, the possibility for forgiveness and growth within the family is maintained.

The importance of family to Godwin's conception of a healthy and creative individual is illustrated by the, at least partial, reconciliation between Clare and her stepfather. Clare and Ralph, who have been barely civil to each other for years, come together in the final pages of the novel. Ralph suggests a walk on the beach as a way of connecting with Clare, and by the end of their walk each is trying to make the other see their shared history from his or her point of view. The success of the walk is indicated by Clare's and Ralph's shared song at its conclusion:

> Clare took a deep breath and burst into song . . . . With aching heart, Ralph nevertheless joined in, because he understood that his message had been received and, in some measure, accepted—otherwise, she would not have initiated one of 'their' old songs." (SF 471)
Ralph and Clare have not completely reconciled; the pain for both of them still exists. But by attempting to communicate with each other, by trying to see the story from the other person’s side, they have at least begun a healing process.

In *A Mother and Two Daughters* and *A Southern Family*, Godwin focuses on her heroines’ efforts to develop their individual personalities independent of their families without losing the community and connectedness that the family offers. The process is difficult and often painful, but Godwin suggests the it is well worth the effort. This theme of the individual within the family is also played out in *The Odd Woman* and *Violet Clay*, though these novels focus even more heavily upon the struggle of Jane and Violet to escape repressive female narratives by creating original stories for themselves. All of the heroines in this chapter, Jane, Violet, Cate, and Clare, share powerful imaginations and analytical minds. They are strong thinkers, putting their faith in their own capacities for understanding the world around them and taking from its stories, real and fictive, what they need to live their "best" lives. Though at times they may be tempted to relinquish the struggle, they ultimately refuse to renounce the challenge of selfhood by retreating into prescribed female narratives of traditional wife and motherhood such as that of the Southern lady. Thus, they have moved beyond their mothers and grandmothers, yet their struggle is on-going rather than a fait accompli.

Moreover, though Godwin clearly values the family as a possible source of strength for her characters, she has not yet reconciled her heroines’ artistic goals with their biological potential for procreation. The cultural role of motherhood gets in
Godwin's way, and she has yet to envision a means by which women can focus on both creating families and creating themselves. In *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism*, Marianne Hirsch suggests some reasons behind an "avoidance and discomfort with the maternal" that emerges in some feminist rhetoric, reasons that might shed some light on Godwin's apparent discomfort with maternity in her novels. Hirsch claims that "the perception that motherhood remains a patriarchal construction . . . connects the figure of the mother with continued bondage to men and patriarchy" (166). Moreover, Hirsch finds that many feminist writings are "characterized by a discomfort with the vulnerability and lack of control that are attributed to, and certainly are elements of, maternity" (166). Jane and Violet cannot yet even envision a heterosexual relationship for themselves that will not threaten their emerging control of their lives. Godwin's focus is on Jane and Violet as daughters who must escape the restrictive female narratives of their grandmothers and mothers. And although Cate and Clare are more sure of themselves and their lives than Jane or Violet, Godwin continues her focus on them as daughters rather than mothers. Cate, Godwin's artist who is most directly confronted with the possibility of motherhood, and who chooses instead to have an abortion, quite obviously links maternity to the condition of being tied down and limited by both a baby and the baby's domineering father, Jernigan. And although Clare's lover has a daughter, the reader never sees her imparting advice or attempting to mother the girl.

Unlike Smith, who sees her artists as creative within the context of their roles as wives and mothers, Godwin focuses on her characters' ability to redefine the family
in a nontraditional way. Her happiest and most successful characters, Cate and Clare, do not marry or have children. Yet they are intimately involved in the lives of their families, and they are allowed the possibility of successful heterosexual relationships. Moreover, they redefine their careers, the outward manifestations of their inner growth, by insisting that their pursuit of their careers does not preclude their involvement with their families. Godwin, like Smith, suggests that women's creativity must be defined in a new way for modern Southern women who want to maintain connections to their family and their region. Yet Godwin finds the challenge of redefinition to be much more difficult and elusive.
CHAPTER 8
SMITH AND GODWIN: CREATING A NEW CULTURAL FEMALE IDEAL

She leans to the future and learns from her past
She feeds inspiration, she lives as a poet
and she's moved by the light and the life
of her very own soul

—C.A. Carick, "Womansong"

I. Both Lee Smith and Gail Godwin have found that the narrative of the
Southern lady stifles their heroines, keeping them from achieving their full creative
potential. The class consciousness and concern for appearances that the ideal entails
keeps Smith and Godwin's Southern ladies from truly interacting with their communities
and families and from developing unique lives. Yet characters such as Crystal of Black
Mountain Breakdown and Francesca of Glass People, who are defeated by stereotypical
limitations, are no longer the subjects of Smith and Godwin's stories. As these authors
move into the 1990s, they are undoubtedly seeing that many women in American
society do have more options than their mothers and grandmothers had. Thus, Smith
and Godwin's most recent works celebrate female artists, women who are able
creatively to shape their own lives. They may or may not be artists in the traditional
sense of creating a product, but they are always artists in the sense that they are authors
of their lives. Smith and Godwin are working to create a new narrative for Southern
women, one that will allow Southern women to express themselves as individuals and
develop their full potential as human beings.

In this concluding chapter, I will concentrate on the authors' latest works, Gail
Godwin's Father Melancholy's Daughter (1991) and Lee Smith's The Devil's Dream

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(1992). The books are quite different in tone and style, but each centers around a strong heroine. By comparing and contrasting the two heroines in relation to some of the major themes of both artists' works, I hope to demonstrate the similarities as well as the differences between Godwin's and Smith's visions of female creativity.

One of the major differences between the writing of Godwin and Smith is in the personalities and backgrounds of the heroines they create. While Godwin's heroines, with a white-collar background, are usually highly educated women who analyze and research their problems, Smith's heroines, from the working class, often have only a high school education, and they are guided by their intuitions as they follow their impulses to make important decisions in their lives. It is not that Smith values direct life-experience more than Godwin, but rather that Godwin's characters need to learn to trust themselves and their feelings, while Smith's heroines more naturally follow their instincts. Godwin's and Smith's latest heroines are no exception. Margaret of Father Melancholy's Daughter researches, analyzes, and finally learns to act in order to find her "best life." Katie Cocker of The Devil's Dream plunges into action and learns through trial and error how she wants her life to proceed. Both women are exposed to narratives, but the kinds of narratives differ in accordance with the women's backgrounds and class. And though they might initially allow themselves to become trapped in stereotypical narratives, they eventually use the narratives to their advantage, as building blocks to create their own unique stories.
II. As the novel opens, Margaret Gower of Godwin’s *Father Melancholy’s Daughter* is a twenty-two year old soon-to-be graduate of the University of Virginia contemplating graduate school in the fall. Like Jane Clifford of *The Odd Woman*, Margaret is a voracious reader, and she searches through the narratives that surround her for clues to her own life. Haunted by her mother’s abandonment when she was just six, Margaret has collected as many narratives about "absent or departed mothers" as her consciousness can hold in an effort to interpret her own and her mother’s feelings (FMD 58). Fictional stories are not differentiated from "real" ones; Margaret finds all stories useful. Stories about Snow White, Cinderella, Princess Diana, or Jane Eyre are not mulled over because of their romantic endings but because the heroines all lack mothers. Princess Diana’s mother, like Margaret’s, left when Diana was six, and her father brought home a new bride when Diana was fifteen. Margaret claims that "being socially enlightened," she "knew better than to want to be Diana," but she still draws parallels between her own and Diana’s life because she is "hungry for some unabashed pomp" and because she sees connections between Diana’s story and her own. Margaret attempts to manipulate a romance between her father and a newcomer to town because rather than focusing on Princess Diana’s marriage to Charles, as a typical adolescent might, Margaret focuses on the new mother that Diana accepts into her life. Margaret, who has felt the pressures of trying to act as her father’s wife as well as his daughter, would like to see a woman come into her and her father’s life who could take some of the responsibilities off Margaret’s shoulders. Although Margaret’s plan to have her
father wed does not materialize, her dependence upon narrative to help her understand her life is clear.

Margaret uses narratives, not to prescribe her own behavior, but rather to analyze her own feelings about the loss of her mother. She also uses the stories to discover why her mother left. One of her favorite stories deals with an apparently happily married mother of two girls who, rather than going shopping one day, drowns herself in a quarry:

There was just no reason for her to have done what she did, said old Mrs. Stacy, but sometimes in this world people were compelled to do things beyond reason. I loved the story. It was something I could get my teeth into. No reason. And yet, there must have been some compelling secret reason, if only I could shake away the externals and get at it from the inside. (FMD 55)

Margaret uses narratives to try to discover the reasons for her mother's departure and to give herself confidence. After all, Margaret notes that in the Nancy Drew stories, "The dead mother was the starting point for Nancy's life: after that, interesting things started to happen" (FMD 58). In The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism, Marianne Hirsch identifies what she calls "maternal repression" in nineteenth-century novels by women (44). In these novels mothers are either dead or trivialized so that the heroine can separate herself from her mother's, the traditional woman's, story and "conventional constructs of femininity" (11). The death of Margaret's mother allows her the same kind of freedom to "circumscribe her own developmental course" (44).
When Margaret does fall into the danger of allowing a narrative to dictate her behavior, she recognizes her mistake and corrects it. For example, having cooked a lovely dinner for her father and Adrian Bonner, Margaret, rather than participating in the conversation and voicing her opinions as she would normally have done, forces herself to fade into the background and serve the two men as Martha would have waited upon Jesus. Later she realizes that in repressing her natural inclinations just to impress Adrian, she is doing herself a disservice:

I threw out his empty beer bottles, disgusted with the modest Martha I had played last night. If you weren’t something, you shouldn’t play act at it. If you did, you’d have nobody to blame but yourself if, one day, the people for whom you’d been playacting saw you as what you had only been pretending to be. (FMD 283-84)

By the end of the novel, Margaret is not only refusing to play Martha, but she is creating an original narrative for herself by going to seminary to study to become a priest. No longer satisfied with the idea of being Adrian’s helpmate, Margaret is determined to be a voice in her own right.

Katie Cocker of Smith’s A Devil’s Dream similarly uses narratives as starting points for creating her own story. During time present of the novel, Katie is in her forties, a country music singer who is reflecting upon the process that got her there. Since her class and educational background differ from that of Margaret, the narratives she learns and employs are also different. Katie’s narratives are not literary, and she does not imagine herself as Princess Diana. The stories Katie grows up with in her
poor mountain community are the oral tales of her ancestors and their struggles to create their music.

Written as a succession of oral tales by different narrators, The Devil’s Dream centers around stories of women fighting against a patriarchal system to pursue their dreams of creating music. The first tale is that of Kate Malone, a beautiful mountain girl from a musical, carefree family, who loses her freedom to sing and play when she marries Moses Bailey, a preacher who finds music and dancing to be sinful. Moses subscribes to a vision of a patriarchal God who condemns the body and pleasure: "he said right out that there was to be no music at the wedding . . . that fiddle music was the voice of the Devil laughing" (DD 23). At first Kate obeys her husband, refraining from playing music in his house, but after a visit to her family, the love of music revives in her again, and she cannot resist teaching her children to play the instruments when their father is away. Moses is away often, seeking a sign from God for his direction in life, and Kate and her children are left alone, "living hand to mouth" (DD 28). In Moses’ neglect of his family Smith undercuts the patriarchal system’s claim that the patriarch’s first duty is to protect his family. When Moses discovers what Kate has been teaching the children in his absence, he beats Kate, frightens his oldest child off into the mountains where the child dies falling off a cliff. Moses then collapses in a fit of anger and mortification. Kate’s response is to love Moses more than ever until he dies. The narrator of Kate’s story claims that after Moses’ death, Kate goes "plumb outen her head," "singing little bitty snatches of songs" and "laughing and laughing" (DD 31).
"In our culture women have been associated with madness (Felman 133)"; therefore, the male narrator assumes that Kate's odd behavior shows that she has lost control of her reason. Shoshana Felman's definition of madness seems particularly applicable in Kate's situation: "madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation . . . a manifestation both of cultural impotence and of political castration" (134). When Kate becomes a wife, her father's control of her is transferred to her husband. And when Moses dies, Kate feels incapable of taking control of her own life. Kate's children are taken away from her, but she remains living in Moses' cabin, and just before her death, the narrator sees Kate again "on the porch in her rocking chair where I had seed her so many times, rocking and singing just like she used to . . . . Her hair had gone plumb white, but her voice was as sweet as ever. She looked real peaceful" (DD 32). In these last lines, Smith appears to be affirming Kate's artistry that cannot be silenced by her lack of power in the patriarchal world. Even after Kate's death, the narrator continues to hear her fiddle music coming from the abandoned cabin.

Kate Malone's story is one of both defeat and victory. She is undoubtedly repressed by her husband and his concept of a patriarchal, pleasure-hating God, but her voice is never completely silenced. Moreover, her music lives on not only in her own voice but in the voices of her children as well. For although they are taken from her, Kate's children inherit her love of music, and this love is passed down even to her great-great-great granddaughter and namesake, Katie Cocker.
Katie Cocker loves to hear the old stories of Kate Malone and the Grassy Branch Girls, a country singing group made up of Katie's grandmother and great aunts: "I used to read those clippings about the Grassy Branch Girls over and over . . . . I used to wish I was them" (DD 217). Katie's favorite times as a child were singing up on the mountain with her uncle and his family. But Katie's story parallels Kate Malone's in that she too is repressed by a patriarchal vision of a pleasure-hating God. But in this case, Katie's mother, Alice Cocker, is the source of the repression. Alice forbids that Katie become a singer because she is "convinced that most singing was a sin" (DD 211). The only singing of which Alice approves is that done in church. And Katie complains that when she "think[s] of home, [she] think[s] of darkness" (DD 217). Thus, when Katie escapes to her uncle's house where they sing, dance, and tell the old stories, she feels free, and she gains from the narratives a sense of hope that she can create a different life for herself.

Katie, though, still must battle against false narratives that might confine her. As a young girl, she wants to go to Richmond with her Aunt Virgie to become a singer, but she also wants to find a husband:

I got this idea that if I could find me a husband in Richmond, I wouldn't ever have to go back home. Doesn't that sound crazy now? What a reason to want a husband! But that's what we thought back then, us country girls, that's the way we were raised. We thought we had to have a husband to do anything. This sounds especially crazy to me now, since I've had several. . . . Anyhow, I was wild to leave home, I was wild to get me a husband--I guess I was wild in general, but ignorant as a post. (DD 210)
As a teenager, Katie has adopted the repressive image of woman as incomplete without a man. Yet it is clear from her comments that she has since learned through her experiences in the world the falseness of that image.

Smith clearly feels that experience is the best teacher, for her heroines may be guided by narratives, but they never really learn anything until they get out in the world and live their lives. They follow their impulses, and make decisions boldly, correcting mistakes after they’ve been made, but never brooding over them. Katie Cocker provides an excellent example. For better or for worse, she allows her intuitions and desires to guide her decisions. After graduating from high school, Katie is bored and frustrated with her life and her moralistic, nagging mother. After winning a high school beauty pageant with her voice as her talent, Katie "haul[s] off down the road with [her] cousin Georgia and [her] wild Aunt Virgie, a high school education and a rhinestone tiara and not a clue as to what lay ahead" (DD 217). Notice that despite her possession of a "tiara," Katie does not imagine herself as a princess. Both her class and upbringing would keep her from seeing the princess narrative as a possibility for her. She must "catch" her husband, not wait for him to rescue her. Katie does not analyze, weigh various options, or mull thoughtfully over her actions. Instead, she just jumps right in with both feet and accepts the consequences later.

One of the chapters Kate narrates in the novel is entitled "I Act Like a Fool," and she admits that she has not always been too proud of her behavior. Rushing headlong into a relationship with the scoundrel Wayne Ricketts causes her to end up in a hospital recovering from drug addiction. Yet Katie accepts her mistakes as just that,
mistakes, and she hopes that she has learned from them: "I was a fool. I might as well say it. But I was real young. I am not the first person to fall for a smooth line and a handsome face, either" (DD 248). Similarly, when Katie allows a record producer to take her to California and change the sound of her music, she is not proud of the way she was living or the music she produced, but she recognizes that she has learned from the experience: "Well, I'm not real proud of this next part of my life, nor do I feel awful about it, either. For we all go through phases and stages" (DD 276). Katie does not allow a fear of making mistakes prevent her from living her life, and when she does make mistakes, she does not allow regret to cast a shadow over her life either.

Moreover, good things often come to Katie as a result of her living through the bad times. For example, while she is living with Wayne Ricketts, Katie becomes close to Wayne's sister and brother-in-law, who help Katie with her daughter, and later give Katie the emotional and financial support she needs to make a name for herself in Nashville. Moreover, it is through Katie's connection with Wayne that she meets Ralph Handy, who later becomes Katie's lover, business partner, and husband. And she is reunited with Handy after he sees her on a television show singing a song from the album which was produced in California. Following her heart rather than her head may get Katie into trouble, but it also brings her joy. Smith clearly admires individuals who act spontaneously and instinctively and yet have the courage to take full responsibility for their behavior.
In contrast, Godwin’s heroines are much more hesitant to act upon their feelings or impulses. Margaret of *Father Melancholy’s Daughter*, for example, not only researches her life, but she also analyzes her options and spends a lot of time thinking before she acts. Though infatuated with her father’s friend Adrian Bonner, Margaret does not ask him to dinner or reveal her feelings for him. Instead, she attempts to deduce his feelings for her as she bides her time and keeps a guard over her emotions:

> I could wait, I was glad I was good at waiting . . . . And now, if I loved him, I could wait until Adrian Bonner, driving home one evening . . . perhaps one evening this summer. . . would suddenly realize how perfectly I suited him . . . . (*FMD* 243)

Unlike Katie, who rarely waits for anything, Margaret, fearing to appear the fool, is willing to put a hold on her feelings until she is sure that Adrian returns her affections.

The only time Margaret’s feelings wrest control from her mind is when she is drinking. Margaret is physically attracted to her best friend’s brother Ben, yet rather than giving into those feelings as Katie probably would, Margaret attempts to resist her attraction because she is not in love with Ben. After getting drunk and thoughtlessly sleeping with Ben, Margaret promises herself that she will never again sleep with another man whom she does not love:

> After last night’s backsliding with Ben, I felt I might be able to forgo sex for a long while, maybe for several years . . . even longer. I mean, what was the point, when it was just some nuzzling and an insincere spasm, and then the shame and letdown afterwards when you were alone and had to admit to yourself that you really yearned for the body of someone else: some maybe impossible someone else? This morning I felt capable of taking a vow, myself: Never again will I share my body with someone unless I am in love with that person. (*FMD* 302)
For Margaret, sex and love should and must go together, and though her body may feel
passion for Ben, she does not love him on an intellectual level. In a sense, Margaret
may not be following her physical desires, but she is following her heart. She is
determined to "behave according to the beliefs that [are] really [hers]" (FMD 302).
And for Margaret, what the body desires is not always what is best for the heart.

In contrast, when Katie's body desires someone, her heart naturally follows.
The men may turn out to be worthless, and Katie may not have loved them in the full
intellectual sense to which Margaret aspires, but Katie never regrets following her body
wherever it may lead her. Katie's tendency to follow her heart or intuition is closely
linked to her ease with her body and her desires. In tune with her physical needs,
Katie, like Smith's mountain beauty Dory, does not hesitate to satisfy her desires. As
the narrator of the novel's opening section claims, "She wouldn't let anybody walk all
over her, but she likes men, you can tell. You can always tell" (DD 12). At
seventeen, Katie's body awakens to the wonders of sex and she does not appear to
worry whether her actions are right or wrong. She simply does what feels right:

Naturally, as I said, the boys started coming around, and it wasn't long
before I was going with one of them in particular, Hank Smith, and it
wasn't long before we were rubbing up against each other on the dance
floor until I couldn't breathe right, and it wasn't long until I was
sneaking out with him after hours . . . . Maybe I knew, in some part
of my mind, that this was wrong--I can't say for sure if I knew it or not,
though. I can't say for sure if it was wrong or not, either. (DD 226)

Katie's insistence on following her feelings, her refusal to think beforehand about the
consequences of her actions, cannot be blamed upon her youth. Years later when she

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becomes reacquainted with Ralph Handy, she has him move into her house only three
days after their first date, and they get married as soon as possible. But while Hank
does not treat Katie right, Ralph does. Sometimes following her impulses gets Katie
into trouble, but sometimes her instincts lead her just where she needs to go. Rather
than moralizing over whether Katie's actions are right or wrong, Smith appears to
suggest that what matters most is Katie's attitude. If she can accept the consequences
of her actions without becoming bitter, she will be able to continue learning from and
enjoying her life.

Another example of the link between Katie's body and her mind is her reaction
to her pregnancy. It is while Katie is pregnant with her first child and unable to work
in the act with her aunt and cousin that she first begins writing music:

The bigger I got, the harder it was to sleep, and I'd often wake up in the
night with a tune running through my mind so loud and clear I'd have
to get up and write it down. No words, just the tune. I couldn't go
back to sleep if I didn't write it down, the tunes were as demanding to
be born as the baby herself. (DD 229)

Like Ivy Rowe of *Fair and Tender Ladies*, Katie appears to find that her first pregnancy
stimulates her creativity rather than suppresses it. In her article "Creativity and the
Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," Susan Stanford
Friedman points out that in insisting upon a "genuine bond between creation and
procreation . . . artists "run the risk of biological determinism":

It theoretically privileges motherhood as the basis of all creativity, a
position that symbolically excludes women without children and all men.
It also tends toward a prescriptive poetic that potentially narrows the range of language and experience open to women writers. (76)

Yet Smith is not insisting that Katie’s poetic creativity is inextricably bound to her biological creativity. Rather, Katie’s imagination is stimulated by the physical experience of pregnancy and the process of giving birth.

In "Creativity vs. Generativity: The Unexamined Lie," Erica Jong asserts that "the comparison of human gestation to human creativity is . . . thoroughly inexact," that while pregnancy is basically passive, creativity is painstakingly active (27). Yet she also admits that before the "essentially Christian view that the mind can only flourish at the expense of the body . . . bodily health and creativity were seen as complementary" (28). A healthy pregnancy is usually the sign of a healthy body. Thus, Katie’s biological creativity can be viewed as a sign of health that flows over into her poetic creativity. Most importantly, Smith appears to agree with Jong’s sentiments on the importance of connecting art to life:

I had belatedly discovered that art cannot exist without life, and that those writers who are overcareful to limit their lives (in hope of screening out all interruptions) often wind up with nothing to write about, or else are so spiritually impoverished by denying themselves human relationships that all their psychic wounds fester and they destroy themselves and their creativity in various other ways. (Jong 29)

For Smith, the closer that Katie gets to her body, the more deeply she will be connected to the wellsprings of her creative life. Moreover, by maintaining her link
to life and humanity (and having a child is certainly one way of doing this), Katie
nourishes her art.

In contrast, Godwin appears much less comfortable with her heroines' biological
roles as mothers due to the cultural associations of self-sacrifice and self-denial tied to
that biological role. The question of pregnancy does not come up for Margaret, but
her mother's behavior, despite the fact that it takes place in an earlier era, indicates that
Godwin is still finding it hard to reconcile a woman's artistic creativity to her biological
creativity. Ruth, feeling stifled in her marriage to an Episcopal priest, goes off to New
York with her artist friend Madelyn Farley to pursue her painting and to create a life
for herself independent of her roles as a rector's wife and a mother. Before Ruth is
able to return, if, indeed, she intended to do so, she is killed in an automobile accident.
When Madelyn is telling the family about how she first became interested in becoming
a stage designer, Ruth exclaims, "Oh, Maddy! You don't know how lucky you are .
... to be able to create something all your own like that!" (FMD 24). When Margaret's
father insists that Ruth has many creative talents and points to the loveliness of her
watercolor paintings as just one example, Madelyn responds, "Everything she does is
lovely, but I hardly think that's the point. Lovely is the art of pleasing others. Art is
about pleasing yourself" (FMD 24). Clearly, Ruth has a desire to create something of
uniquely her own, and she would like to focus on pleasing herself rather than her
husband, her child, or her husband's parishioners.

Margaret's recollection of her mother's departure also gives the reader hints that
Ruth was searching for a self unconnected to her roles as wife and mother:
During the first few weeks she had left, I had broken down in several of our phone talks and asked her when she was coming back. At first she said soon, but she needed to sort some things out. When I asked her what things, she said things about herself. Then, in a later conversation, she said she wished I were a little older. Then, she said, we could talk about all this better. . . . After that, I stopped asking her when she was coming back, although I believed—as far as I can remember, I think I believed—that she would come back. But it would not be the same. I think I knew that, too. She would come back bringing things that were new and strange, things inside her that were not about us. (FMD 119)

As a child, Margaret selfishly resents the thought that her mother might contain "things" that have nothing to do with her family. But as she gets older Margaret tries to imagine her mother's feelings at the time by literally pretending to voice her mother's emotions:

I just need a little vacation from them, much as I love them both; I need a little vacation from wifehood, motherhood, from being "The Rector's Wife." I need to collect myself. Surely there must be a central character in me behind all these parts; surely there is more than being cheerleader to a melancholic, swimming teacher, and afternoon entertainer of a child. I am those things, but where is the person behind it, the person who wants . . . what? I once wanted . . . what was it I wanted? Surely I must have wanted something. (FMD 128)

Margaret interprets her mother's departure as having to do with her search for herself, a search she cannot conduct while tied to the demands of a husband and child. Margaret even imagines that, in her mother's eyes, she might have been a mistake, "a mistake in her overall destiny" (FMD 129). Though Godwin seems neither to approve nor disapprove of Ruth's actions, she clearly can, like Margaret, sympathize with the reasons for Ruth's decisions. For Godwin, the mother's biological role is bound too tightly to the cultural phenomenon of the mother as one who sacrifices self in order to
nurture others. She sees a conflict between the artist's development of self and her obligations to her family that she cannot easily overcome.

Similarly, Godwin has trouble with her heroines accepting the role of wife with the cultural associations of subordination and self-repression that it carries with it. In her earlier novels, just as Cate of A Mother and Two Daughters and Clare of A Southern Family find that the role of mother does not fit into their plans of self-development, they similarly steer clear of the traditional role of wife as one that will limit their opportunities for self-determination. And at the end of Father Melancholy's Daughter, Margaret has put a hold on her romantic feelings for Adrian Bonner in order to pursue her goal of becoming a priest. By leaving Virginia to travel with Madelyn to Europe and New York, Margaret is refusing to spend her life waiting for Adrian's affection for her to develop into love. Godwin implies that Margaret cannot both nurture and uplift Bonner, as she did her father for so many years, and discover her self and her place in the world. Yet love is not eliminated from Margaret's future altogether. Her correspondence with Adrian suggests that they might discover each other some time in the future. In her letter to Adrian, Margaret welcomes his suggestion that he might visit her in New York and admits that she would very much like to see him again (FMD 401-402). However, she also tells him of her plans to attend seminary and become both a priest and a writer. Adrian may have a place in Margaret's future, but he will not define her future.

This is not to say that Godwin values an artist who is so self-centered that she is negligent of her responsibilities to humanity. Ruth's friend Madelyn Farley does not
come off well in the novel, since she exploits the lives and beliefs of others in order to create her theater pieces. After her father’s death, Margaret happens to see Madelyn on TV talking about how her inspiration for her theatrical pieces, which toyed with religious themes, was an Episcopal priest, the husband of a deceased friend. Margaret, deep in grief over her father’s death, calls Madelyn on the phone and leaves a message that indicates just how little she thinks of this woman who puts art above people:

Madelyn, this is a Voice from your Past. I have an important message for you. . . . Your muse is dead. . . . Now here is the next part of the message: What has been happening down here in Never-Never-Land far surpasses your theater pieces in two important respects. . . . Number one: the parts were played by real people acting on their true beliefs. Number two: the people were not your creatures, they were God’s creatures. . . . They were made of real flesh and real blood and they had pumping hearts, not just cutout ones. You touched our lives and changed them, but we weren’t just your sets. (FMD 357)

Madelyn, herself, admits that she is too much like her father, whose negligence while engrossed in his painting indirectly causes the death of Madelyn’s mother to appendicitis: “When it comes to my own work, I’m as heartless as my own father. He always put his art before people” (FMD 372). Just as the mad woman artist on the beach serves as a warning to Cate not to isolate herself completely from humanity, Madelyn and her father serve as warnings to Margaret to be wary of sacrificing people to the high pursuit of art.

Ironically, Margaret absorbs the lesson by serving the very people she has hated from the age of six. After journeying with Madelyn to Europe to learn more about her mother, Margaret decides to stay on with Madelyn in New York for a few months to
care for Madelyn and her aging father. When Ben accuses Margaret of sacrificing her life, Margaret retorts that a few months is not her life and that she is coming to value the perseverance of Madelyn and her father and is learning from them the importance of enjoying one's work in life: "I am learning from them how important it is to be doing something you like doing every day until the end of your life, whether it is painting a landscape between coughing fits, or sketching sets for a new theater piece while your ribs mend over brand-new heart valves" (FMD 398). Like Violet in Violet Clay, Margaret is realizing that the artistic process sometimes means more than the eventual product. Moreover, by serving and learning to care for her former enemies, Margaret is also living by the guidelines of her beloved father. Explaining her present situation to Adrian Bonner, Margaret writes, "I remember what you said, about why you admired Daddy. It was a phrase you used. He lives by the grace of daily obligation, you said. I am trying to do that, and I must tell you, it seems to be working most of the time" (FMD 402). Margaret respects the old-fashioned values of sacrifice and duty. Yet at the same time she recognizes the importance of developing one's self and making space for one's creative pursuits. Godwin suggests that as individuals, we must perform a delicate balancing act between our duties to ourselves and our responsibilities to our community.

Smith appears to share this viewpoint, for though Katie Cocker is determined to become a successful country singer, she is careful not to neglect others as she strives to get to the top. By marrying and having children, Katie multiplies her responsibilities for others, yet she does not allow these responsibilities to negate her pursuit of self and
art. Although she must care for a handicapped daughter by her first marriage and a seven-month-old little girl by the now deceased Wayne Ricketts, Katie does not give up her dream to go to Nashville. Moreover, she does not go alone, but instead takes her daughters, Wayne’s fourteen-year-old son by a previous marriage, and Wayne’s sister and husband, who love the children as much as she does. Katie, thus, is blessed with circumstances that allow her to work hard at her career without neglecting her responsibilities as a parent. When Katie does get sidetracked and takes off to California with her producer Tom Barksdale, she "miss[es] [her] family like crazy, the whole time" (DD 277). One of the things she hates about California is how "it was so easy to lose people in California" (DD 278). Tom’s friends will show up on his doorstep and then disappear without Tom knowing or caring where they have gone.

Katie considers her family as important as her career. So when she achieves success, her first purchase is a large farm where she can gather around her the people for whom she cares:

we bought a farm out in Brentwood and moved everybody on out there, none too soon as it turned out, because Ralph’s daughter Shirley wanted to come up to live with us, too, since she hated this yoga instructor her mamma was with, and so of course we said yes. Then Ralph’s son James and his wife Susan and their little boy Ricky Lee move up from Texas--James is a soundman--so we built them a house out at the farm, next to Don and Rhonda’s. (DD 288)

Katie’s generosity and her willingness to accept several families into her home and her life indicate the importance she attaches to relationships. And the extended family that Katie has created for herself on the farm in Brentwood does not just make demands but
gives her support as well. Many of them work in her band or with her music in some
way, and when she and Ralph are on the road, she has family, in addition to a full-time
nanny, to love and look after her children. Thus, Katie does not concentrate
exclusively upon her art; her path to art includes other people.

Of course, Katie's success, the money she has earned from her albums, gives
her certain advantages that an ordinary woman might not have. For example, she is
able to buy a farm, support many of both her own and Ralph's family members, and
hire a nanny as well. With less success, Katie might have found herself, like Ivy
Rowe, more troubled by the cares of wife and motherhood. Nevertheless, Smith
appears to be asserting that the balance between the pursuit of self-expression and
obligation to others can be achieved, and, moreover, that this balance is what will yield
a healthy life. After Ralph's death, Katie, overwhelmed by her duties to support "about
fifteen people, not including [her] band," overworks as she strives to feed them: "I was
neglecting my little twins, back home with Ramona and the rest of the family, they
didn't even hardly know me. All I did was work. I was much more comfortable on
the bus than I was at home" (DD 292; 293). This is a low period for Katie. She
begins drinking heavily and once again ends up in the hospital recovering from drug
abuse and exhaustion. Smith clearly sees a link between the neglect of others and the
neglect of the self. While one might think that by working full time on her career,
Katie is expressing herself and developing her art, she cannot grow as an artist if she
alienates herself from her loved ones, who are a means of support, not just a ball and
chain around her neck. As Katie puts it, "I don't know what I would have done without my family" (DD 292).

What helps Katie get herself together and get out of the hospital, in both instances, is a certain spirituality that Smith has not explored in her previous novels. For the most part, Smith has portrayed patriarchal religion and its representatives as a negative force that represses the female spirit. When Crystal is "saved" in Black Mountain Breakdown, she is attempting to avoid the challenge of selfhood by having God fill her up in the same manner that she has allowed men to define and control her. Similarly, organized religion is represented quite negatively in Fair and Tender Ladies, where preachers such as Sam Russell Sage and Ivy's brother Garnie are revealed as pompous hypocrites. However, in The Devil's Dream, Smith offers a new kind of spirituality in Katie's conversion at the end of the novel. Even before meeting Reverend Billy Jack Reems, Katie has a spiritual experience which awakens her from her first physical and emotional breakdown. Just after Wayne Ricketts is arrested, Katie finds herself pregnant and in a state mental hospital. But at her lowest point, when the nurses are trying to convince her to have an abortion, Katie hears a voice, which she associates with the strong women of her past like Kate Malone and with herself, that guides her back to health:

Katie Cocker, I heard. I could tell it was a voice from home, from up on Grassy Branch. . . . It was a voice I had not ever heard before, but it was as familiar to me as my own. Maybe it was my own in some crazy way which is past understanding. I listened for more. Katie, girl, I heard. You can either lay in this bed for the rest of your life, or you can get up and make something of yourself. It's up to you. You've got more singing to do. Get up. (DD 261)
The voice Katie hears suggests the presence of a higher spirit that guides and loves humanity, but it is not some outside force but rather a force from within herself.

After Katie ends up in the hospital once again for alcohol abuse, she encounters an organized religion that gives a name, God, to this voice. What Katie experiences with Billy Jack Reems and the Hallelujah Congregation is a celebration of love and community rather than the repressive rules and regulations she learned as a child in her mother’s church up on Chicken Rise mountain:

And though I continue to work too hard, I don’t get so tired anymore, because God is an endless source of pure energy for me. What my God says to me is Yes! Yes! . . . instead of No! No! which is all God ever said to anybody up on Chicken Rise, if you ask me! God wants us to express His love in our lives through using our creative gifts to the fullest, he wants us to use this life which He has given us. He wants us to be artists for Him. (DD 298)

Katie’s new religion rejuvenates rather than represses her.

Unlike her mother Alice Cocker, whose withdrawal into a fundamentalist religion causes her to fear and hate the body and its worldly desires, Katie feels that God wants her to celebrate rather than deny her physical needs:

I still know how to have a good time. I like to dance. I will take a drink from time to time. I like to have a date. There’s nothing wrong with any of this. Billy Jack says that, above all, God does not want us to put ourselves under a bushel. (DD 302)

Further, Katie feels freed of the stereotypes that have defined her at various points in her life:
I had been a dumb hick Raindrop with Virgie, I had been a honky-tonk angel with Wayne Ricketts, I had been a California pop singer with Tom Barksdale, I had been a good country woman with Ralph. For the first time in my professional life, I didn't have an image. I was alone again. And somehow, because of my new faith, I felt suddenly open to the whole world, stripped of all these past images, in a new and terrifying way. (DD 299)

More than ever before, Katie feels the challenge to create herself anew in an original and exciting way.

Yet it is interesting that Katie needs Billy Jack to tell her about a spirituality that originates inside herself. Billy Jack is a nurturing patriarch who gives Katie, his daughter figure, the permission to be herself. Smith seems to imply that even in the 1990s, women still feel the need to get permission to be to create their own lives. Billy Jack advises Katie to wait for the Lord to offer her a new direction in her life, yet he might as well be telling her to listen to herself and her heart, for Katie finds her answers, after spending time with her family and friends, in her own past and in her present capabilities. Following the suggestion of her accountant, Katie decides to produce her own album, which will contain the gospel and folk songs of her childhood.

Margaret, though her religious experiences have been quite different from those of Katie, develops a similar kind of self-reliant spirituality by the end of Father Melancholy's Daughter. As the devoted daughter of an Episcopal priest, Margaret has been raised within the rituals of a very traditional church, and her father is even more attached to the historic rituals of his church than many of his colleagues. Within these sacred words and actions, Margaret's father claims that human beings can find comfort and a means of organizing the confusing world in which they live: "The thing about
a ritual is that it brings containment and acceptance to people. The sacramental life is a kind of sanity filter against the onslaughts of experience" (FMD 274). Margaret must also feel this value in religious ritual, for she decides to study to become an Episcopal priest. Yet Margaret's personal spirituality is less self-assured and rigid than her background might suggest:

Though my father was in the religion business and I had grown up surrounded by people who behaved as if the whole question of who God was and where He could be found had been settled for them long ago, I knew it was more difficult than that. (FMD 188)

Unlike a Bible-toting fundamentalist, she does not feel that the great moral questions have been decided for her.

Nevertheless, Margaret does have confidence in the existence of a spiritual presence that is a part of her past, present, and future:

The nearest thing to God I could truly call my own anymore was that luminous, focusing consciousness that I sometimes became aware of when I was going about my business, doing the most mundane or disinterested thing, such as making Mrs. Dunbar's cocoa. Then, without any effort or petition on my part, I would find myself contained by an attention that seemed capable of remembering everything I ever did, things I had forgotten myself, and weaving (or having already woven) all of it into the pattern of what I was going to become. (FMD 188)

Margaret feels that God is within her, and yet not contained by her. She senses a plan for her future, for her process of becoming, but no clear-cut directions on how she is to achieve her potential:
But this presence lacked the comforting element I yearned for, because it needed me to get on with its work. I would have liked more of a Parent-God, into whose all-loving embrace I could curl up, into whose perfectly wise care I could give myself over and trust to make the most of me. Yet every day I lived brought me closer to the tired knowledge that belief in, or desire for, any such capitulation was regressive thinking. (FMD 188)

Like all of Godwin's previous heroines, Margaret is tempted by the relaxation that passivity offers, but she also realizes that giving over the struggle, even to one's concept of God, is a retreat from the challenge of life and selfhood that her God has put before her.

Margaret accepts the challenge and finds that before she can go forward with her life she must come to terms with her past, with her feelings of loss and abandonment over her mother's departure, with her feelings of anger and frustration with her father for his bouts of depression and for having "allowed" her mother to go away. After calling her childhood nemesis, Madelyn Farley, and dredging up the past, Margaret feels calmed and soothed because she is finally going to confront her past. Even her childhood witch in her closet disappears: "I knew, as you always know such things, that my witch no longer resided there .... Perhaps all she had been waiting for . . . was for me to invite her out and make friends" (FMD 358).

Margaret's witch represents all her childhood fears. As a child, she is afraid that the lonely, but powerful witch might reach out and grab her one night, taking her with it into "some unimaginable domain" (FMD 41). The witch also becomes associated with Margaret's loss of her mother, for Ruth is the only one who knew how far to leave the closet door ajar in order to appease the witch. Yet when Margaret
dreams of the witch during her depression after her father's death, the witch no longer frightens her. Instead, old and weak, she is weeping, and "oddly, the weeping voice was not that of a raspy old crone, but of a young woman" (FMD 343). Margaret's witch is nothing but her own fearful self, and when she invites the witch out of the closet, she is accepting her fears and promising to face them.

Thus, when Margaret calls Madelyn Farley on the phone, and when she later agrees to travel with Madelyn to Europe and New York, Margaret is facing the fears of her past as well as forcing herself to stop analyzing and start experiencing life. Margaret has spent so much time reading over her parents' letters and trying to understand her parents' lives and relationship that she has put a hold on her own experience. But on the night she calls Madelyn, Margaret has decided that she has struggled with her parents' stories enough. She rereads her parents' correspondence during their courtship, and then puts them away:

> The letters occupied me until midnight. Slipping the rubber bands back around them in their envelopes, I felt I was finished with something. . . . I felt compassion for the two people concerned, but it was their story. Where was my story? When was it going to begin? (FMD 350-51)

Yet by finally distancing herself from her parents' lives, Margaret answers her own question, for her story begins when she stops agonizing over her past and simply accepts it.

Godwin voices her own conviction on the importance of dealing with one's past in the discussion between Father Gower and Adrian Bonner on the concepts of original
sin and the resurrection. Gower suggests that original sin has to do with "repeating our parents’ mistakes," and his explanation of the Resurrection, as it applies to each individual, similarly incorporates the idea of confronting one's past:

It [the Resurrection] means coming up through what you were born into, then understanding objectively the people your parents were and how they influenced you. Then finding out who you yourself are, in terms of how you carry forward what they put in you, and how your circumstances have shaped you. . . . And then you have to slough off your ‘original sin,’ . . . . You have to go on to find out what you are in the human drama, or body of God. The what beyond the who, so to speak. (FMD 276)

At times Margaret seems in danger of "repeating [her] parents’ mistakes." For example, her extreme admiration for and attraction to Adrian Bonner, many years her senior, resembles Ruth's early feelings for Father Gower, before her restlessness and frustration with his depression causes her to leave him. Margaret appears poised to make her mother's mistake of jumping into a relationship and becoming the supportive and nurturing wife before she has discovered her place in the world as an individual. But Margaret's decision to confront her past saves her from this mistake.

Margaret is able separate herself from her mother's story so successfully precisely because she makes the effort to research and know her mother's story. Marianne Hirsch, who points out that nineteenth-century heroines are motherless in order to provide them with the opportunity to disassociate themselves from the example of their mother's script, also notes that for these same heroines, "the silence of mothers about their own fate and details of their lives, insures that those lives, those stories will be repeated by daughters . . . if the daughters knew the mothers' stories, they might
not repeat them" (67). Margaret, to the best of her ability, learns her mother’s story; thus, she experiences "the power that a knowing connection to the past might offer, whether that past is powerful or powerless" (67). Father Melancholy’s Daughter is similar to the modernist novels Hirsch discusses, for although the mother’s story is not told directly, it is recovered through memory by the daughter: "Even while the daughter-artist still does not become a mother, the mother’s life can be and needs to be known and explored in its details, incorporated into the daughter’s vision. Yet these texts about the mothers are elegies; they are not composed by the daughters until the mothers are dead. Only then can memory and desire play their roles as instruments of connection, reconstruction, and reparation" (97). Father Melancholy’s Daughter is about Margaret’s journey to discover who she is, as a product of her family and her circumstances, and by the end of the novel she is ready to discover what she will become.

Yet, like Katie Cocker, Margaret still feels the need to ask the patriarch’s permission to develop herself as she sees fit. Margaret knows that her father, a traditionalist in church matters, did not approve of the idea of women entering the priesthood. In a letter to Adrian, she seeks reassurance that in her case, her father would have made an exception and approved of her idea decision to attend seminary:

I would like to be a writer and a priest . . . though, on Daddy’s account, it still makes me nervous to use the latter word in relation to myself; this is one of the things I’d like to discuss with you: do you think he would have minded terribly? I like to think he would have made an exception in my case, and that would have loosened him up for other cases. (FMD 402)
Like Billy Jack Reems, Father Gower is a nurturing patriarch who, had he lived, would very probably have supported Margaret's decision to become a priest. Nevertheless, Godwin, like Smith, recognizes that her heroine still feels obliged to ask permission to pursue her dreams.

Like Margaret, Katie Cocker learns that her future is intricately linked to her acceptance of her family and her past. In her chapter entitled, "I Act Like a Fool," Katie admits that at one time she believed that she could willfully abandon her past, but she now realizes how foolish this belief was:

That's what I was after—a new life. I was young enough and foolish enough at that time to really believe there was any such thing. I wasn't ever going to speak to Virgie again, or Mamma or Mamma Tampa... well, I got in that green Buick and took off. I was determined to make it on my own. (DD 248)

Katie eventually learns that she cannot "make it on [her] own." She learns that she needs other people and that she needs to love and be loved.

Moreover, with her decision to produce an album of old family songs, Katie finally understands that she cannot separate herself from her roots. Like Margaret, Katie must reconnect with her family and her past. Therefore, she assembles in Nashville every member of the family who will come, and Katie plans to use as the album's title an old hymn she used to sing up on Grassy Branch, "Shall We Gather at the River." The title of this hymn suggests the life-giving force of community, and Katie's efforts to gather her family together in Nashville indicate that she is comfortable with herself and where she comes from:
I made a lot of mistakes. I thought I had to do it all by myself, see. It took me a long time to understand that not a one of us lives alone, outside of our family or our time, and that who we are depends on who we were, and who our people were. . . . I know where we're from. I know who we are. The hard part has been figuring out who I am, because I'm not like any of them, and yet they are bone of my bone. (DD 14)

Katie has discovered that her family and her past has shaped her into the unique individual that she is, and now she has the confidence to unite with her family without feeling that they will overwhelm or smother her.

Smith concludes The Devil's Dream by emphasizing the art from which Katie Cocker sprang. It is not the highly refined or educated art of the superior few but rather the communal art of everyday people: "The last thing you hear as they shut the door is Mamma Tampa, telling her old crazy stories one more time" (DD 311). Mamma Tampa’s stories, which have been told around firesides and passed down over the generations, produce the kind of ritualized moments in which Smith finds a long neglected art. Though one might think that the adjective "crazy" disparages Mamma Tampa’s stories, it actually solidly connects the stories to Smith’s view of art. For Smith, women who are artistic, who have refused to conform to traditional stereotypes, and who are "outside the norms in a certain way" are considered crazy (V. Smith 791), just as Kate Malone, in her old age, is considered to be crazy by the male narrator of her story, despite the fact that her voice is "as sweet as ever" (DD 32). Society may see these women and their stories as crazy, but Smith clearly views them as possessing a kind of sanity and vision that nourishes and strengthens the community.
Godwin and Smith are presenting a new cultural female ideal as a healthy alternative to the ideal of the Southern lady. In contrast to the Southern lady, whose class-consciousness and pride in appearances isolates her from others, Godwin and Smith's artists are intimately involved in their communities without allowing themselves to become pawns of the community. They have the strength to reject the community's demands that they conform to stereotypical images that deny self-expression, creativity, and originality and to create their own narratives instead. And unlike the Southern lady, their artists do not allow themselves to be sacrificed to the needs of the community, for they realize that such sacrifices lead to deception, corruption, division, and stagnation rather than the health that the community seeks.

Godwin and Smith suggest that artists, particularly female artists, must balance their individual needs against their duties to others. This balance is not easily achieved, especially since traditional roles for women have for so long allowed the scales to tilt heavily in the direction of self-sacrifice and nurturing to the neglect of self-discovery and self-fulfillment. Gail Godwin questions whether or not women can possibly find the time and energy needed to develop themselves and their art within the traditional roles of wife and motherhood, which demand so much time, energy, and self-denial. Therefore she focuses on her heroines as daughters who redefine the concept of family to reconcile their needs for intimacy and community with their needs for independence and freedom. Smith, also acknowledges the dilemma confronting the wife and mother who is also an artist, but her emphasis is not the same. Smith is more concerned with validating a neglected form of female art that is private and nurturing in nature, and,
therefore, her artists, intuitive and in tune with their bodies, are often more comfortable with their roles as wives and mothers.

Yet for both Godwin and Smith, the artist's development of self and art is an ongoing process, an evolving narrative, that requires an active imagination. The artist must acknowledge and reconcile her family and her past to the person she is becoming, and she must possess a spirituality that is defined by her willingness to love and be loved without losing herself in the process.
In their fictional works, Lee Smith and Gail Godwin reveal the confinement and destructive powers inherent in restrictive definitions of womanhood such as the ideal of the Southern lady. Nancy A. Walker sees this same goal in the works of many western contemporary women writers that "undermine the old mythologies of gender relationships by questioning and revising them: challenging the stereotypes, fairy tales, traditions, and histories that have prescribed the plots of women's lives" (186).

In their earliest works, Smith and Godwin acknowledge the power that these destructive stereotypes have in molding women's lives but offer few positive alternative models of female behavior. Smith's Crystal Spangler of Black Mountain Breakdown best exemplifies her vision of a woman defeated by her attempts to live up to the images that others, specific individuals and her society in general, have constructed for her. Even in a character like Brooke Kincaid of Something in the Wind, who appears to possess a strength of character that will allow her to escape the narrative of the Southern lady, Smith offers no real alternative to repressive female narratives. The novel focuses on Brooke's recognition of and struggle against the narrative of the lady but ends before revealing how Brooke might live a life that is self-directed. Similarly, Godwin's Francesca Bolt of The Glass People and Dane Empson of The Perfectionists seek identity and purpose in their lives but are defeated by their acceptance of restrictive narratives of womanhood to be found in the plots of fairy tales, romance stories, and gothic novels. Nancy A. Walker asserts that it has been important to
modern women writers to show the "continuing power of the old plots, and to acknowledge the weight of tradition and habit," for "to acknowledge the power of the old texts, old scripts, is simultaneously to claim power for the text one is writing, and when, as in the case in these novels, the old texts are viewed ironically, the power they lose in the process is transferred to the new texts, as the ironist claims superiority over the subject of her irony" (187). Thus, despite their portrayal of these early heroines as victims, Smith and Godwin's early works claim a power for both author and reader who recognize the heroines' victimization and may be warned by it.

Smith and Godwin's later works also possess characters whose self-discovery and communion with others is limited by their adherence to the narrative of the Southern lady; however, these women are usually not the major or the only fully developed characters in the novels. Smith's Pearl in Oral History is directly contrasted with the positive image of her sister Sally, and in Family Linen, Miss Elizabeth, Sybill, and Myrtle are viewed against the more positive character of Candy. Similarly, in Godwin's The Odd Woman, the heroine Jane is able to recognize and learn from her grandmother Edith's and her mother Kitty's acceptance of the narrative of Southern lady. And although Lydia in A Mother and Two Daughters, despite all her struggles against the narrative of the lady, ultimately allows others to define and prescribe her behavior, her sister Cate is able to create a life for herself that rejects restrictive female narratives. Thus, in their later works, Smith and Godwin begin to explore ways in which modern Southern women can free themselves from debilitating female narratives.
In their more recent novels, Smith and Godwin create female characters who are artists, some who create artistic products, all who creatively shape their own lives. Smith and Godwin's artists, such as Smith's Billy Jean of "St. Paul" and Godwin's Jane of The Odd Woman, share an ability to evade confining female narratives, possibly drawing upon them and feeling their appeal, but not allowing them to dominate or ultimately control their lives. In addition, their artists, such as Smith's Ivy of Fair and Tender Ladies and Godwin's Justin of The Finishing School, share a concern with taking what is valuable from the past and an ability to change with each new day, using their imaginations to created themselves anew. And their most recent heroines, Smith's Katie Cocker of The Devil's Dream and Godwin's Margaret Gower of Father Melancholy's Daughter, exhibit a spirituality that celebrates caring and nurturing behavior within the community without sacrificing their individuality or personal needs.

Yet there are also some differences between Smith and Godwin's artists. One major difference in Smith and Godwin's works is the class of the characters about which they most often write. Smith's artists are usually working class women, while Godwin's are most often upper-middle class, professional women. This difference plays an important role in how the individual women feel about maternity and women's traditional domestic role. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese asserts,

Class oppression like racial and ethnic discrimination deprive many women of the "protection" under which many middle-class women have chafed. Forced by economic necessity to work outside the home, frequently deserted or abused by husbands or other male kin, poor women have never been restricted to a domestic haven. (Feminism 19)
Smith’s working class women, such as Candy of *Family Linen* and Billie Jean of "St. Paul," need to work in order to feed their families, so they do not fear that if they marry they will be confined to the domestic sphere. Ivy of *Fair and Tender Ladies* works on the land beside her husband in addition to taking care of her children and her house, so while a lack of time and energy to develop herself is an issue with Ivy, her working class status keeps her from absolute confinement to the domestic world. Even Katie Cocker of *The Devil's Dream*, whose work, singing and writing music, is a more traditional kind of art, emphasizes the fact that her family depends upon her paycheck. Since Smith’s artists’ pursuit of self is often intimately entwined with their families’ economic health, Smith’s artists have less fear that their traditional roles as wives and mothers will keep them from developing their art or themselves.

In contrast, Godwin’s upper-middle class artists appear more afraid that if they marry and have children, they will succumb to the ideal of female domesticity and abandon their pursuit of self and art. Title character Violet Clay must escape her marriage before she feels free to develop her painting to a level which will satisfy her. Cate of *A Mother and Two Daughters* fears that if she marries the business tycoon Jernigan and bears his child, the temptation to become Jernigan’s appendage rather than a person in her own right will become too great for her. And Clare of *A Southern Family* feels that maternity is not for a woman such as herself who is determined to become a successful author. Heroines such as Jane of *The Odd Woman* and Clare see examples of what happens to strong, independent, and ambitious women when they
marry. Their mothers, Kitty and Lily, abandon their ambitions to become writers and allow their husbands to take care of and confine them.

Another difference between Smith and Godwin's artists is the different methods they use to make decisions and interpret their worlds. Smith's artists are intuitive and have little formal education beyond high school while Godwin's artists are usually analytical and highly educated. This difference, of course, relates to the characters' differing economic and social class. However, the difference between an intuitive, empathetic artist and an analytical, rational artist can also be related to Smith and Godwin's different focuses within a current feminist debate over the importance of valuing feminine difference versus the need to ignore the "supposed" differences in order to focus on the equality between men and women. In creating intuitive, empathetic artists, Smith celebrates traditionally feminine characteristics that have been devalued by patriarchal society. In contrast, Godwin's female artists manifest her concern that women break free from patriarchal definitions of femininity. Thus, her artists are intellectual and analytical, traits that are traditionally considered to be masculine.

These differences between Smith and Godwin's works can be seen as a reflection of an ongoing debate within feminism. The women's movement of the late 60s and early 70s focused on liberating women from the traditional nurturing and supportive roles of wife and mother within the domestic sphere. The movement sought to gain power for women in the masculine public spheres of business and politics and to allow women the right to express traditionally masculine emotions such as ambition and
aggression. And women were often encouraged to view motherhood and other traditionally feminine roles in a negative manner because they were used by patriarchal society as a means of enslaving women. Paulina Palmer claims, "The goal for which feminists strove in that period was the elimination of gender difference. The model of androgyny, with men and women adopting a combination of 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes, was then fashionable" (14). Thus, early feminists stressed equality and sameness between men and women.

Over the past twenty years, however, while most feminists still see the need for women to gain political and economic equality, many now challenge the idea that women should attempt to adopt the same kinds of moral values or priorities as men. Palmer concludes that the problems inherent in the androgyny model have been recognized:

The acceptance of it has been found to result in women striving to adopt 'masculine' instrumental attributes, while masculine, phallocratic values-schemes continue to exist unchallenged. A re-evaluation of the feminine identity and traditional feminine attributes is now starting to take place. With the advent of the cultural feminist movement, emphasis is placed on the positive value of 'feminine' qualities. These included sensitivity, gentleness, the ability to cooperate and nurture. (14-15)

This focus on celebrating women's difference and on valuing what has been devalued within patriarchal society has prompted feminists to approach motherhood and the female body in a new manner, to look at them not only as patriarchal means of exploitation but as "sources of personal pleasure and fulfillment" (Palmer 105).
Yet the cultural feminists’ propensity for celebrating female difference as a means of freeing women and promoting a healthier world can be problematic as well. As Elaine Showalter asserts, "Simply to invoke anatomy risks a return to the crude essentialism, the phallic and ovarian theories of art, that oppressed women in the past" (17). And Toril Moi questions the validity of feminists’ attempts to develop a set "feminine virtues" to compete against the masculine values of patriarchy:

Gratifying though it is to be told that women really are strong, integrated, peace-loving, nurturing, and creative beings, this plethora of new virtues is no less essentialist than the old ones, and no less oppressive to all those women who do not want to play the role of Earth Mother. It is after all patriarchy, not feminism, which has always believed in a true female/feminine nature: the biologism and essentialism which lurk behind the desire to bestow feminine virtues on all female bodies necessarily plays into the hands of the patriarchs. (123-24)

Thus, there remains an ongoing debate within the feminist movement, which includes admittedly diverse members who make no claims to unity, on how much energy should be given to developing this idea of feminine difference.

And I see in Smith and Godwin’s artists a reflection of this debate. Smith, attempting to valorize a kind of art that has been viewed as feminine and devalued by patriarchy, celebrates the female body, motherhood, and the importance of intuition in her novels. All of Smith’s artists are in tune with their bodies and their sexual desires. Ivy of Fair and Tender Ladies has poetry rushing through her head when she is about to give birth, and Katie Cocker’s first poems are inspired by the birth of her first daughter. And rather than analyzing and weighing the consequences of their behavior
before they act, Smith's heroines are impulsive and spontaneous. Moreover, when
Smith portrays artists, such as Sally of *Oral History*, Florrie of "Cakewalk," and Candy
of *Family Linen*, whose products are often consumable rather than permanent, she
seeks to bring to the forefront artists who she feels have been neglected by those who
define art in masculine, transcendent terms. By expanding her definition of art to
include the "artistic moment," the opportunities for communion and interaction within
the community that her artist creates, Smith stresses the importance and value of those
nurturing and caring qualities that are traditionally viewed as feminine.

In contrast, Godwin is much more hesitant to celebrate motherhood and the
female body as a means of pleasure and fulfillment. Like those feminists who view
"women's productive capacities as making her vulnerable to male manipulation and
control" (Palmer 105), Godwin finds the cultural expectations of wife-and-motherhood
too confining, and she fears the essentialism lurking within claims of an inherent female
difference. Characters such as Cate of *A Mother and Two Daughters* and Clare of *A
Southern Family*, who voice their concerns that getting married or having children
would limit their capacities for self-development, most clearly illustrate these fears.
Unlike Smith, Godwin emphasizes the sameness between men and women by stressing
her artists' use of reason, analysis, and deliberation when making decisions. And
Godwin's artists, more so than Smith's, are concerned with maintaining their
independence and gaining recognition and a place for themselves in the patriarchal
world.
In emphasizing these differences between Smith and Godwin's artists, I am not suggesting that one author's view is superior, nor am I attempting to resolve the feminist debate between celebrating feminine difference and fearing that such a celebration of difference falls into the trap of essentialism. Rather, I am suggesting that these issues find their way into Smith and Godwin's works, consciously and/or unconsciously, because these authors are attempting to create a new cultural female ideal that liberates rather than confines modern women. Despite the differences between their artists, both Smith and Godwin assert the need for women to creatively shape their lives independent of traditional female narratives, such as that of the Southern lady, which confine and stifle. Moreover, both Smith and Godwin recognize the importance of relationship and community to the development of self. Their ideal artists maintain a balance between their commitment to their individual needs and the needs of their community.

Jessica Benjamin suggests that all individuals in western culture are driven and shaped by these two needs to assert the self and to maintain connection with others:

It might be possible to posit two fundamental capacities that, in our culture at least, shape human development: the strivings toward the other for connection, attachment, closeness; and the strivings toward assertion of self for activity, mastery, and exploration. These two capacities define a human nature that strives to become independent and differentiate self from other, as well as to remain connected to and protected by a sense of oneness with a loved and trusted companion. (204)

Patriarchal culture polarizes these strivings into the masculine realm, which asserts the self, and feminine realm, which maintains closeness with the other. Benjamin suggests
that we need to reunite these "aspects of human life that have been split, preserved as antagonisms, in the gender system" (220). Similarly, in In Another Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Carol Gilligan calls for the inclusion of women's experience to theories of maturation and self-development, for with this inclusion, "the concept of identity expands to include the experience of interconnection" (173).

By creating artists who strive to assert their individual needs while still maintaining healthy relationships within their communities, Smith and Godwin appear to be moving with hope towards Benjamin's and Gilligan's utopian world in which individuals will not feel torn between their needs for self-assertion and their needs for connection.
NOTES

1. Further along in the text, I will be referring to Southern white women simply as Southern women in order to simplify my prose. In doing this, I am not intending to ignore the reality of women of color in the South, yet this study primarily concerns how the image of the Southern lady affects white Southern heroines in the works of Lee Smith and Gail Godwin.

2. See Marcia Lieberman's "'Some Day My Prince Will Come': Female Acculturation Through the Fairy Tale."


4. See Kay Mussel's "But Why Do They Read Those Things?": the Female Audience and the Gothic Novel."

5. Jones is using the terms "Confederate woman" and "Southern lady" interchangeably here.

6. In Ladies, Women and Wenches: Choice and Constraint in Antebellum Charleston and Boston, Jane and William Pease also stress the differences that race and class created in the daily lives of nineteenth-century Southern women. Yet, they also acknowledge the power of the ideal of the Southern lady in shaping cultural expectations of women's behavior: "when mid-nineteenth-century Americans defined proper female behavior, they enunciated a single formula for true womanhood in the belief that the ideal woman so differed from the ideal man that all women had more in common by virtue of their sex than did all residents of a single city, all communicants of one church, all members of a particular class" (7).

7. As evidence of the Southern lady's tenacious hold upon the Southern mind, Jones recalls that the 19th Amendment had a much harder time being ratified in the South, suggesting that the Southern white men felt their entire way of life was being threatened if women were to be allowed out of their traditional spheres (Jones, Tomorrow 15). And Jones notes that in 1981, the "South [was] nearly solid once again in its refusal to ratify an amendment [the Equal Rights Amendment] that challenges its traditional notions of sex roles" (Tomorrow 17). Finally, Jones contends that legislators of Louisiana did not rewrite the state's definition of husband as "head and master" of the household until 1979. These incidents suggest to Jones that although the power of the myth of the Southern lady has decreased over the years, the change in attitudes towards the role of women in society has been slower in the South than elsewhere in the country.
Similarly, in The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, Ann Firor Scott finds that although the image of the Southern lady has lost much of its strength to influence the modern Southern woman, it has not completely disappeared (x). According to Scott, by 1930, Southern society, like the rest of America, was becoming more complex, and women as well as men were exposed to a wider variety of life styles and more diverse influences than Southern women of the previous century (229). The myth of the Southern lady began its decline after the Civil War when the responsibilities of Southern women increased while their men were away at war. According to Scott, when the weakened men returned from the war, the women were accustomed to the new responsibilities and often retained them (106). Moreover, the influence of the image of the Southern lady weakened as opportunities in education and the work force increased for women (Scott 110). Finally, the women’s groups that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led women into the public sphere and the right to vote brought women into politics at least nominally (Scott 210).

Yet while the behavior of Southern women was changing—they were working outside the home and entering the public sphere—many women still found it "effective to operate within the ladylike tradition" (Scott 210). Thus the image of the Southern lady was no longer a "complete prescription for a woman’s life" but became rather "a style which as often as not was a facade to ward off criticism of unladylike independence or to please men" (Scott 225).

8. Boles and Atkinson appear to be using the ideal of the lady and that of the Southern lady interchangeably. And since the two ideals share many of the same characteristics, their study will be useful in my investigation of the vestiges of the Southern lady image to be found in the modern Southern mind.

9. Although Boles and Atkinson do not discuss exactly how they came up with these modernized behavioral characteristics, these are the behaviors they questioned their respondents about: entertaining to help husband professionally, teaching children family traditions, writing letters to her own family, entertaining her own family, entertaining husband’s family, reading history, reading classics, managing household, keeping in touch with husband’s family by phone, keeping a diary, playing a musical instrument, and keeping in touch with her own family (133).

The temperamental characteristics that were used could apply to nineteenth-century Southern ladies as well as twentieth-century ones: simple, good, passive delicate, rich, innocent, submissive, mannerly, economical, humble, sacrificing, nonintellectual, sympathetic, kind, weak, generous, pious, shallow, hospitable, and calm (134).

10. Specifically, of the Southern women polled, at least 70% believed that the lady should be simple, good, passive deliberate, rich, innocent, submissive, mannerly, economical, humble, sacrificing, nonintellectual, sympathetic, kind, weak, generous, pious, shallow, hospitable, and calm (134). Specifically, of the Southern women polled, at least 70% believed that the lady should be simple, good, passive deliberate, rich, innocent, submissive, mannerly, economical, humble, sacrificing, nonintellectual, sympathetic, kind, weak, generous, pious, shallow, hospitable, and calm (134).

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delicateness, submissiveness, humility, weakness, piousness, shallowness, and hospitality—there was not one temperamental trait that 70% or more of the Southern women thought they possessed (Boles and Atkinson 136-37). These responses not only suggest the feelings of inadequacy that Boles and Atkinson note, but they also say something about how the ideal of the Southern lady has changed over time, at least for this small sample of women. For them, the Southern lady does not have to be delicate, nonintellectual, weak, shallow, or of a particular economic class. Furthermore, by eliminating many of the "negative" characteristics on the list, this group of Southern women is indicating that for them, the Southern lady is still an image worth imitating.

11. Middleton-Keim uses the term "pink-collar" to refer to "those women whose jobs are low-paying, traditionally female ones such as clerical, sales, and service jobs" (144). The Southern women are from rural northern and north-central Alabama; the Western respondents live in the Central Valley of California.

12. For more details on the lives of Lee Smith and Gail Godwin, see Dorothy Hill’s Lee Smith and Jane Hill’s Gail Godwin.

13. In 1862, Mary Boykin Chestnut voices similar thoughts on the ill effects of idealizing the Southern woman and placing her on a pedestal, "Much love, admiration, worship hardens and idol's heart. It becomes utterly callous and selfish" (200).

14. For a discussion of Carl Jung’s influences upon Gail Godwin, especially with regard to her novel The Finishing School, see Anne Cheney’s "A Hut and Three Houses: Gail Godwin, Carl Jung, and The Finishing School."

15. Smith leaves the identity of Jewell Rife's murderer a mystery. After repressing the memory for years, Elizabeth's daughter Sybill remembers seeing her mother kill her father, Jewell Rife, with an ax and stuff him down the well. Although Jewell's body is found in the well as Sybill predicts, Nettie later claims that Fay must have killed Jewell and that Elizabeth never knew of his death. Both Elizabeth and Fay, victims of Jewell's sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, have a sufficient motive to kill Jewell. The murder may well have been a joint effort. In any case, Elizabeth's concern for appearances certainly leads her to hide Jewell's death just as she hides the fact that the daughter she raises as her own, Candy, is actually Fay's child by Jewell.

16. As Michelle Masse asserts in In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic, the gothic heroine's "suffering, its causes, and its results test the benefits of being a 'good girl.' Returning to benign reality, earning a husband, and erasing horror are the wages promised for virtuous passivity at the novel's end" (19).

17. Gail Godwin's strongest condemnation of the image of the Southern lady is seen in the minor character Cousin Frances of The Odd Woman. I do not explore her personality in depth because she is so like Godwin's stereotypical "Mrs. Stephens." Concerned primarily with maintaining her outer beauty and her position in society,
Cousin Frances is a correct and conservative member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Daughters of the American Revolution. And like Jennifer's grandmother, she appears particularly obsessed with maintaining the image of the Southern lady in an effort to forget her origins; she is the illegitimate daughter of a teenage runaway and a disreputable stage actor. Godwin's attitude toward Cousin Frances and her adoption of the role of the Southern lady is made clear by the protagonist's remark that she might enjoy Frances' "safe and secure" life if she had "a lobotomy first" (OW 132; 134).

18. Sandra Lee Bartky insists that all women within patriarchal culture, not just Southern ladies, are encouraged to determine their identities in relation to their physical appearances: "Our [women's] identities can no more be kept separate from how our bodies look than they can be kept separate from the shadow selves of the female stereotype" (38).

19. Faludi admits the success of shows such as "The Golden Girls" and "Designing Women" but claims that the networks "seemed willing to support single-women shows only when the heroines were confined to the home in nonthreatening roles in a strictly all-female world" (159). Faludi further contends that, "with the exception of 'Murphy Brown,' the '80s prime-time lineup offered almost no shows centered on a single woman in the working world, much less one deriving pleasure or pride from her vocation" (158).

20. These cover stories were taken from the following issues of Self: May, September, January, and February of 1992; May of 1993.

21. Brooke's uncertainty about the Southern lady image might be explained by Lee Smith's own background. Raised in the small mountain town of Grundy, Virginia, Lee Smith was sent to a private girl's school in Richmond for her last two years of high school, and it is from her experiences there that she draws the material for her second novel, Something in the Wind. Lee Smith may have been trying to write her own liberating narrative by creating the Brooke she wants to exist rather than the Brooke society might actually produce.

22. For a more detailed discussion of the Snow White fairy tale in Glass People, see Kerstin Westerlund's Escaping the Castle of Patriarchy: Patterns of Development in the Novels of Gail Godwin.

23. For a discussion of how Godwin uses the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast in Glass People, see Karen C. Gaston's "Beauty and the Beast" in Gail Godwin's Glass People."

24. As Kerstin Westerlund asserts, "The religious imagery used conveys an image of characters trapped in a misogynist culture. There is a sense of hopelessness in the sealed nature of what Dane has entered" (45).
25. Smith admits to being heavily influenced by Eudora Welty's writings, and Smith's depiction of Sally and Roy's domestic harmony links her to Welty, for according to Louise Westling, Welty's writings "reaffirm the fruitful alliance of male and female humans and celebrate their domestic arrangements" (183).

26. Ivy is also like Sally in that she, too, has a sister, Beulah, who, like Sally's sister Pearl, unsuccessfully attempts to distance herself from her family by adopting the mannerisms and airs of the Southern lady.

27. Since most of Smith's characters are heterosexual, there is something homophobic about her portrayal of Miss Torrington, one of her most pretentious and snobbish characters, as a lesbian. Kearns insists, "In choosing heterosexual love Ivy loses, by her definition of art, the chance to become an artist; by implication, the only woman who could reside in the marble halls of art would be one so centered in her femaleness as to have achieved autonomy" (192). Yet, Smith clearly sees Ivy as an artist, and the only reason Ivy does not see herself as an artist is because her definition of art has been molded by a patriarchal world. An artist who is centered in herself and has achieved complete autonomy is, in Smith's eyes, accepting a limited view of art rather than expanding the possibilities of female creativity. Thus, by making Miss Torrington—the conventional, isolated artist—a lesbian, Smith links homosexuality to what she sees as a repressive form of art.

28. Lorsch also claims that "Jane's immersion in her work and the chaste frozen environment in which she thrives reflect her fears of and retreat from sexuality and the world around her" (24).
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**CW**—"Cakewalk." In *Cakewalk*.


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Candidate: Deborah Rae Wesley

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Approved:

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Major Professor and Chairman
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

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