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**The Representation of Masculinity
in the Novels of William Faulkner**

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ABSTRACT

THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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The aim of this thesis is to scrutinize the representation of the postbellum masculinity in the South through a dialectical lens in three novels by William Faulkner: **Sanctuary**, **The Sound and the Fury**, and **Absalom, Absalom!**. This study draws upon the theory of masculinity conceptualized by critics like Raewyn Connell, Todd W. Reeser and Michael Kimmel whose ideas have been instrumental in analyzing masculinity as a social construct and interrogates certain exclusively Southern notions such as “The Cavalier” and “The Lost Cause” within the context of performative masculinity. As a Southern author, Faulkner underlines the performative nature of manhood by rendering his psychologically castrated male characters as delusional and oblivious. The study of **Sanctuary** focuses on the Quixotic quest for lost manhood after the Civil War. The process of departriarchalization is foregrounded in the analysis of **The Sound and the Fury**. The discussion of the last novel, **Absalom, Absalom!** is centered around how the “cavalier” is mythologized through the act of storytelling. By focusing on these three novels, the study demonstrates that Faulkner interrogates the validity and the sustainability of the so-called Cavalier figure the Southern masculine identity was constructed upon by placing them in subversive counternarratives that dismantle the Southern men’s privileged status.

KEYWORDS: Masculinity, Performativity, The Cavalier, Lost Cause, Faulkner

ÖZ

THE REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY IN THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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Bu tezin amacı, William Faulkner'ın Sanctuary, The Sound and the Fury ve Absalom, Absalom! adlı romanlarında Güneydeki İç Savaş sonrası erkekliğin temsilini diyalektik bir bakış açısı ile irdelemektir. Bu çalışma, Raewyn Connell, Todd W. Reeser ve Michael Kimmel gibi erkekliği bir sosyal yapı olarak analiz edip bu olguyu kavramsallaştıran erkeklik kuramcılarının görüşlerinden faydalanmakta, ve “Süvari” ve “Kayıp Dava” gibi Güneye özgü kavramları performatif erkeklik bağlamında sorgulamaktadır. Güneyli bir yazar olarak Faulkner, psikolojik açıdan iğdiş edilmiş erkek karakterlerini kendi gerçekliklerden bihaber bir hale getirerek erkekliğin edimsel doğasının altını çizmiştir. Sanctuary adlı romanın incelemesi İç Savaş sonrası kaybedilmiş erkekliğin Kışotvari geri kazanım yolculuğuna odaklanmaktadır. The Sound and the Fury romanın analizinde Güneyli ailenin ataerkillikten arındırılma sürecinin üzerinde durulur. Son roman Absalom, Absalom!'ın tartışması ise “Süvari” figürünün hikaye anlatma yoluyla mitselleşmesi üzerine şekillenmiştir. Bu üç romana odaklanan bu çalışma, Faulkner'ın, Güneyli erkeklerini merkezîyetlerinden ayıran karşı anlatılara yerleştirerek ve onların ayrıcalıklı statülerini ortadan kaldıran tasvirler sunarak Güneyli erkek kimliğinin temelini oluşturan sözde süvari figürünün geçerliliğini ve sürdürülebilirliğini sorguladığını göstermektedir.

ANAHTAR KELİMELEER: Erkeklik, Edimsellik, Süvari, Kayıp Dava, Faulkner

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INTRODUCTION

In her seminal work, *The Second Sex* (1946), Simone de Beauvoir notably asserts: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (330). This bold proclamation that pinpoints female identity as a summation of some invasive societal and cultural indoctrinations rather than referring to a person’s biological make-up is frequently cited and rigorously examined within the field of feminist theory as the foundation of the perception of women in modern Western societies. If women are indeed social constructs, does this imply that being a male is congenital? Is there such thing as innate masculinity? Rather, do men also suffer from similar ordeals patriarchal institutions impose upon them even though their gender seems to indicate an advantageous status historically? Compared to feminist theory that cemented itself as a fundamental area of the Humanities, scholarly works on masculinity have not been as prolific, and in general have been products of their time, often leading to contrasting notions of masculinity. In other words, how masculinity was perceived in the 19th century differs greatly from how it was regarded as a social role in the 1950s. Accordingly, today’s notion of masculinity is vastly different from that of the 1970s. Therefore, researchers have become more and more interested in masculinity over the last few decades. In light of what critics such as R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel and Todd W. Reeser came up with in the 1980s and the 1990s, masculinity studies today lean into social constructivism which assumes gender as an artificial construct developed from individuals’ interactions with their society. In that sense, many concepts and theories found in feminist studies such as gender performativity have become applicable to men’s studies. This, in turn, has led to an increase in the presence of masculinity in the academic field.

Indeed, as far as the western world is concerned, female identity is manufactured. That is to say, the first step towards initiating honest conversations on masculinity studies is to acknowledge the gendered subject due to the fact that masculinity borrows numerous elements from the interdisciplinary field of feminist

studies. After all, it all comes down to Beauvoir even when one's goal is to explore men's issues in patriarchal societies. Over the last several decades, what men's studies have discovered about masculinity aligns greatly with what she observed three-quarters of a century ago: Men are not born, they are artificed and then molded into social beings only befitting the society they live in. Needless to say, when we approach men's studies from this social constructivist angle, any indication of essentialism immediately dissolves. It is this dimension of masculinity studies that makes it especially interesting for me to reconsider longstanding stereotypes dictating what being a man means.

However, even in the absence of essentialism or social role theory discarded years earlier, it is still not possible to arrive at a conclusive or holistic definition of masculinity. It goes without saying that "man" is a social construct, but how can we reconcile different aspects of his ever-changing stature? Is masculinity fragile? Is it anxious as a result of its many privileges? Can one define it as an accumulation of oppressive displays of hegemonic power exerted on women? Why do many consider it to be toxic? Is it destined to be in a perpetual crisis? In order to come up with possible answers to these questions, one needs to limit their scope to a specific time period, a specific collective history or a specific culture, as trying to analyze a definitive and universal concept of masculinity is an abortive effort that will inevitably reach a dead end. In short, masculinity can only be considered as an umbrella term comprised of innumerable forms of masculinities. If I were to focus on the representation of masculinity in American Literature in general, my findings would most likely be far from conclusive no matter how much I tried to be specific. Therefore, I have turned to the American South in my pursuit of explicating what connotations masculinity has had below the Mason-Dixon Line.

Admittedly, I recognize that I am not the only scholar working on the subject of masculinity in the Southern context. Given the South's rich history of colonization, alongside its devotion to patriarchal institutions, the collapse of the plantation system after the Civil War, and slave enfranchisement movements that shook the established order to its core, one can observe a sudden change in relation to masculine identity in

less than a century. It would not be an oversimplification to claim that aristocratic white Southern men began the 19th century as omnipotent slaveowners who were at the top of the social hierarchy and ended it as defeated and broken soldiers who lost all of their prerogatives. Such a dramatic fall from grace is almost unprecedented in history. Thus, my decision to explore possible reflections of this immense change in literary texts led to this study. How did this change disrupt these Southern men's gender identities? How did the antebellum South's normative ideas of masculinity adapt to the postbellum period? Could hypermasculine role models of the South survive in a climate of equality?

The notion of the Southern masculinity in this study is built upon an extensive literature review. Literary works by Toni Morrison, Margaret Mitchell, Anne Rice, Tennessee Williams, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Allison and Cormac McCarthy have been evaluated. Consequently, many forms of masculinities that have been observed accumulate into a coherent opinion on the normative masculine ideal of the South and how it dealt with the castrating effects of the Civil War. However, it is worthy of note that no two of the portrayals of these emasculated, problematic and troubled men resemble each other. No other author has exhibited his/her observations of the plurality of masculinities while firmly sticking to a critical outlook on the postbellum South than William Faulkner. In a period when possibilities for male characters in the South were constrained within mythical portraits of manhood, Faulkner seems to have deliberately dismantled his male characters, exposing their anxieties, delusions, antics and compulsions to his reader in order to reassess pervasive stereotypes of masculinity. Whether or not one likes Faulkner's focus on his male characters, his literary strategy in the context of masculinity is to interrogate, not embrace. In that manner, compared to his contemporaries and literary descendants, Faulkner emerges as an author who dwells on the idea that masculinity as an artificial construct the most in his apparent penetrations of the established norms imposed by his culture from multiple angles. That is why after carefully eliminating many authors, I settled on Faulkner in this study.

Without a doubt, there have been numerous scholarly works written on William Faulkner within the context of masculinity. Owing to his temporal and regional affiliation to the South of the late 19th century and the mid-20th century, he can be considered as a quintessential figure of the postbellum Southern literature. Furthermore, his primary concern, as I will elaborate in my study, is almost exclusively related to men and men only with very few exceptions. It is remarkable that despite his connection to the South, Faulkner's novels and short stories hold up a mirror to his society where men lost their social status with no indication of retrieving it. Considering how masculinity theory can be quite effortlessly applied to most of his works, I had to choose three novels whose principal focus were dubious men. For instance, I had given much thought to including *As I Lay Dying* (1930) because most of the male characters in this novel embody the South's emasculating effects quite vividly, but I had to eliminate it during my preliminary research due to fact that its central concern was a female figure, Addie Bundren.

One can ask, if masculinity in Faulkner's texts is a topic handled many times before, what makes my study stand out? Even though many scholars have delved into Faulkner's male characters' psyche and their questionable sexual identities before, apparently the body of literature that utilizes the postmodern theories of gender performativity and social constructivism is currently rare and limited. In addition, in my study, I approach Faulkner's characters filtered through some specifically Southern concepts such as the mythical Cavalier figure and the Lost Cause. Granted, there are many scholars that have commented on Quentin Compson's obsession with the chivalric ideals of the Old South in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) or Horace Benbow's gallantry in *Sanctuary* (1931), but my study directly compares Faulkner's male characters to the South's early normative masculine models in order to evaluate their performances of heterosexual masculinity in a sociocultural context.

I argue in my study that William Faulkner's texts disclose the postbellum South's obsession with performative masculinity by offering counternarratives that develop grounded, expository, cynical and disturbing perspectives on Horace Benbow

and Popeye in *Sanctuary*, Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* and the men of the Compson family in *The Sound and the Fury* by depriving them of their patriarchal and hegemonic immunity. I call these texts counternarratives due to their acute refutation of the South's earlier, unanimously accepted and mass-produced concepts of manhood such as the *Cavalier* and the *Lost Cause* represented in media and literature. Dismantling ferociously these untouchable myths about masculinity, Faulkner reformulates both the genres these stereotypically heroic, honorable and virile men are propagated from, and the Southern blueprint of masculinity shaped by different historical processes, cultural conditioning and patriarchal institutions. The discussion of his novels disclose the tenuousness of gender identity and demonstrate the plurality of the term "masculinity".

The discussion of *Sanctuary* is based on a juxtaposition of Horace Benbow and Popeye who serve as doubles of each other. Bridging the gap between a lawyer and a bootlegger by focusing on their infantilization, feminization and racial ambiguity, I interrogate the intersections between these two performances of the postbellum Southern masculinity that yearn for a reclamation of their potency in a narrative that echoes hard-boiled detective stories. In the discussion of *The Sound and the Fury* I focus on the process of the depatriarchalizing of the Southern family by claiming that Jason, Benjy and Quentin, the future patriarchs of the Compson family, are unfit for the preordained role they are supposed to fulfill due to their physical and mental conditions which prevent them from completing a fully-fledged masculine performance. In the analysis of *Absalom, Absalom!* I argue that Faulkner offers an alternative history for an emblematic cavalier figure, Thomas Sutpen by implying that the act of storytelling functions as a propaganda tool for Mr. Compson, General Compson and Quentin who are desperate to rebuild the antebellum Southern manhood adorned with chivalric notions. Overall, in my analysis of these three novels, I negotiate the ways William Faulkner disseminates any traces of fundamentalism and essentialism related to the Southern manhood by exploring his unique depictions of sexually fluid, castrated and disempowered men such as Popeye, Horace, Benjy, and the ones such as Thomas Sutpen and Mr. Compson who still mistakenly and

anachronistically try to protect the South's problematic social hierarchy in pursuit of their masculine identity.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework of masculinity studies and includes a comprehensive historical background of the South. In this section, I draw upon history, mythology and psychoanalysis in an attempt to explain the earliest notions of masculinity that were adamant on finding the core of "man". Then, I explicate how those theories of masculinity have changed over several decades. In accordance, I highlight the works of Connell, Kimmel and Reeser in particular, as their broadly accepted social theories revolve around gender performativity and masculinity as a social construct. Connell argues that there is not one, holistic definition of manhood. On the contrary, there are multiple masculinities that are connected to different positions of power, making this institutionalization of masculinity "hegemonic" by default. Correspondingly, Kimmel comments on the correlation between masculinity and power in patriarchal societies and recognizes this correlation's adverse effects on not only women, but also men. In a similar vein, Reeser also accepts the plurality in masculine identity, and addresses the asymmetry between the positions of power and those that do not have access to his hegemonic power, claiming that these patriarchal privileges white males have come with an array of victimizing possibilities.

After establishing these current viewpoints on men's studies, I enquire into the South and its own normative masculine figure: The Cavalier. For the antebellum South, the Cavalier encapsulates what masculinity means in the way it constructs a mythical form of masculinity defined by gallantry, skill, power, honor and courage. The exploration of this mythical figure is a key to my close readings of Faulkner's novels, as the Cavalier figure functions as a reference point for the male characters in the novels I have chosen to evaluate. Apparently, the Cavalier does not lose its position as the pinnacle of manhood in the postbellum South, yet it becomes an ideal that is impossible to reach in the egalitarian New South. However, the Lost Cause of Confederacy fills in the gap left by the Cavalier's absence in the postbellum South. The Lost Cause, as an ideology, presents the reasoning behind the Civil War as heroic

and noble, reconnecting Southern men to their pseudo-chivalric roots. After delving into the Lost Cause, I include a chronological survey of literary texts that reflect the downfall of the Cavalier in the postbellum South. Thomas Nelson Page's *Marse Chan*, W. Gilmore Simm's *Woodcraft*, Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*, Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Carson McCullers's *Reflections in a Golden Eye* and *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, Dorothy Allison's *Bastard out of Carolina*, Charlaine Harris's *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* and L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* are evaluated within the context of the postbellum masculinity. Overall, this survey offers a comprehensive outline of the gradual decline in the representations of Southern manhood after the Civil War by showing how the South's aristocratic white patriarchs morphed into effeminate figures, grotesque caricatures, criminals and monsters in less than 100 years.

Finally, I single out William Faulkner, discussing his place in the world of literature, and then list the scholarly works on Faulkner in the context of masculinity that have been extremely valuable for my research. As these scholarly works clearly demonstrate, Faulkner's texts embody a diverse range of approaches to and depictions of masculinities that illustrate the performative nature of manhood. In the remaining chapters, I concentrate on three novels of William Faulkner: *Sanctuary*, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*

In the second chapter, I begin my discussion on *Sanctuary* with some comments on how it is, in fact, a subversion of the popular hard-boiled detective novels from its time. As these pulpy novels are known for their hypermasculine protagonists, I read Horace Benbow's characterization as a feminized man as Faulkner's way of deconstructing his seemingly heroic Southern male. Further, I also elaborate on the fact that Horace and Popeye function as doubles, and how this doubling complicates Horace's position as a white male in an even more transparent way due to Popeye's racial ambiguity and impotence. Impotence is one of the major points of discussion in the novel. Similar to Popeye's physical impotence, Horace also shows several signs of metaphorical impotence in his inability to act upon his sexual desires for his stepdaughter. Hence, both of these men try to compensate for their flawed gender

performances by substituting it with other objects or ideologies. In my view, the text suggests that in the postbellum South white men are neither put on a pedestal, nor they deserve to be. Similarly, Temple Drake, the novel's most central female character is instrumentalized by Horace in attempt to reclaim his lost manhood, not unlike Popeye's deliberate exploitation and commodification of her body. For this reason, I call Horace's quest to save her from the underworld "Quixotic" and connect it to the Lost Cause, as it does not stem from any noble intentions regardless of how much Horace tries to reframe it as idealistic. Furthermore, I touch upon Faulkner's rewriting of the myth of Demeter-Persephone as another showcase of Horace's feminized nature in his embodiment of Demeter's motherly role. Ultimately, by returning to his flailing marriage after he completely loses his faith in the justice system in the end, Horace embodies the gendered defeat of the postbellum South.

The third chapter focuses on *The Sound and the Fury*. Here, I analyze how the three prospective patriarchs of the Compson family are unfit for such role as they cannot conform to what is expected from a gender performance in the South. The novel, which is a subversive take on the plantation fiction, projects a sense of doom through its use of a Southern family that does not have a future. In this novel, Faulkner carefully replaces the traditional black narrator of this genre with Benjy, Jason and Quentin, who are the sons of a white Southern family. Primarily, I turn the spotlight on General Compson's watch as an intergenerational symbol that unites the men of this family. As I note, Benjy Compson cannot represent a fruitful future for his family because of his mental disability and castration. In a similar fashion, Quentin Compson's latent homosexuality and fragile masculinity create an evanescent figure that is not convenient for serving as the head of a family in an extremely heteronormative culture. Accordingly, I link Quentin's efforts to protect his sister Caddy's honor with The Lost Cause, as it has more to do with his own gender performance than Caddy's reputation. Therefore, I claim that these actions that are chivalric on the surface are actually self-serving. Finally, Jason Compson takes over this family but his greed and inclination for crime implicate the chances for a survival for this patriarchal Southern family are slim to none.

The fourth chapter focuses on the process of mythologizing an emblematic Cavalier in *Absalom, Absalom!*. In my close reading of this novel, the South's tendency to apotheosize its masculine figures in their propaganda-driven biographies that I have included in the first chapter becomes contributory, as Faulkner offers a mocking and critical angle on this mythologizing process by adorning his text with gothic conventions akin to Edgar Allan Poe's works. In this text, the story revolves around Thomas Sutpen's life story told by many other characters. Since he is a tragic hero for Mr. Compson, a chivalric masculine ideal for Quentin, an irredeemable demon for Rosa Coldfield and an amalgamation of all for Shreve, the novel highlights the impossibility of any life story to be completely objective. Quentin's desire to give a voice to this legend is especially noteworthy, as it both bestows him a hypermasculine father figure he most definitely lacks, and poses a possible escape from his fragile masculinity through catharsis. Therefore, Quentin's interest shares elements with the Lost Cause in his way of pursuing a cause that only serves to preserving his privilege. Overall, the character of Thomas Sutpen depicted in the text might best be described as an ambiguous figure whose masculine identity is constructed by the storyteller and/or the listener rather than what he did or what actually happened. Thus, the text exposes the fallacious mindset behind this years-long dedication to the Cavalier figure in the South by underlining how each character that interprets his story either possesses hidden agendas, ideologies and anxieties or is consciously or unconsciously victimized by their own societal indoctrinations.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1. Masculinity

Despite its undeniable perseverance as an abstract and intangible concept throughout history, masculinity as a social theory is remarkably recent, so much so that we can determine the second half of the 20th century as the inception of masculinity theory as we know today. In this initiatory chapter, I trace the origins of what is deemed masculine starting with the ambivalent depictions of male heroes in historical and mythological texts, and then move on to several early scholarly works which appear to be heavily reliant on these archetypal figures in their evaluations of manhood. In my findings, I note that the majority of these early 20th century scholars emerge as preoccupied with devising an absolute definition of a universalized *man*, rather than observing potential branches masculinity might comprise. However, in the 1980s R. W. Connell marks a notable turn in the field by apprehending masculinity from a social-constructionist perspective, which eventually leads to surfacing of innumerable masculinities. Following the lead of Connell, scholars such Michael Kimmel, Thomas W. Reeser, Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe have contributed valuable insights about the irresolute aspect of masculinity and its connection to performativity. The chronological survey of theoretical works in the field demonstrates multiplicity of masculinities juxtaposing incessant and often contrasting arguments.

Since antiquity, concept(s) of masculinity have been under close scrutiny. For example, some parts of the ancient Babylonian text, *Code of Hammurabi* dated between 1755-1750 BC explicitly deal with some rules men need to play in heterosexual relationships. Similarly, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (c. 2100-1200 BCE) both assigns gendered roles to its heroes and examines homosocial connections between men. Abstract conceptualizations such as virtue, honor, heroism, strength, virility that are still associated with masculinity today can be found in *Beowulf*, *The Iliad*, and *The Odyssey*. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the earliest attempts towards theorizing masculinity were the results of clinical studies of Sigmund Freud who, in Oedipus

complex, turns to antiquity and mythology in order to dissect the male psyche. Later, psychoanalysts followed suit as evidenced by Carl Gustav Jung's studies which delve into masculine archetypes from myths and historical accounts, and Jacques Lacan's studies which summate masculinity as the pretense of having the phallus.

However, in the second half of the 20th century, critical thinking on masculinity slowly began to steer away from psychoanalysis and essentialism, and moved towards social concepts as a result of socialization: the sex role theory. In 1956, *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process* by Talcot Parsons and Robert F. Bales was published, and through its specific focus on family, it examined certain characteristics family members play as social roles. Following this train of thought, in her 1957 essay "The New Burdens of Masculinity", Helen M. Hacker analyzed visible changes in masculine roles in the face of social variations "initiated by the Industrial Revolution" (227). In this manner, the ever-evolving nature of masculinity and femininity in general became apparent, which led to the need to differentiate "gender" from "sex". Although John Money is known as the first scholar who invented the word "gender" as an entity separate from the idea of the biological sex in 1955, it was Ann Oakley's *Sex, Gender, and Society* (1972) that identified the cultural aspect of gender.

In 1977, Andrew Tolson wrote *The Limits of Masculinity* and noted that unlike women, men needed to fulfill different roles in public spheres and private spheres as a direct consequence of capitalism. "Man" is expected to be a breadwinner, an attentive father, a good husband simultaneously. Therefore, there is a sense of "impossibility" (31) in his situation. Tolson's findings can be seen as a connecting tissue between the sex role theory and the more recent social construction theory which went on to become the most widely accepted gender theory in the field. In the same year, Erving Goffman wrote "The Arrangement Between Sexes" that describes masculinity and femininity as "practices". In his comparative approach, he observes:

What persons who are men do in affirmation of their sense of identity requires their doing something that can be seen as what a woman by her nature could not do, or at least could not do well; and the reverse can be said about persons who are women. Furthermore, some of these doings the individual does in the company of the other

sex, an arrangement facilitated by diverse institutional practices, allowing for the dialogic performance of identity. (326)

1977 also saw the release of Deborah S. David and Robert Brannon's highly influential book, *The Forty-Nine Percent Majority*. The book is crucial in its division of the male sex role in the western world into four simplified rules: "No Sissy Stuff", "Be a Big Wheel", "Be a Sturdy Oak" and "Give 'em Hell". Observing these rules provides a clear picture of what is ultimately expected from twentieth century men in general. "No Sissy Stuff", as implied by its title, is inarguably based on binary oppositions and rejects any concept that is associated with femininity. A man cannot, under any circumstances, look and behave in a feminine manner. "Be a Big Wheel" accepts wealth and power as essential components of masculine identity. As with "No Sissy Stuff", "Be a Sturdy Oak" feeds upon dichotomies, and dictates that emotions belong to the feminine sphere. The message is clear: A man should not convey his feelings in a way that is visible to others. Lastly, "Give 'em Hell" associates aggression and dominance as absolutely necessary markers of manhood, anatomizing the stereotypical violent male figure which can be found in all through history and media. (10-328)

In 1981, Joseph Pleck published *The Myth of Masculinity*, which became a game-changer with regards to the development of masculinity as a theory. In this book, Pleck arrives at the conclusion that debunks the sex role theory popularized during previous decades. It is worth noting that he occupies a pioneering position due to his mapping of the male sexual identity as an imperceptable concept due to its fickle nature, and theorizing masculinity as a social construct. Considering that it is an era when the Western world was under the omnipresent shadows of the hypermasculine Ronald Reagan, and the authoritarian Margaret Thatcher, the 80s is, inarguably, a landmark for gender relations. Consequently, drawing upon the empirical research done in the 1980s and the 1990s that traced the ways English-speaking world constituted the genesis of the masculine identity in specific cultural and organizational environments such as workplaces and schools, sociologist Raewyn Connell comes up

with ideas which conceptualize masculinity in relation to psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, postmodernism, and perhaps not-so-shockingly reveals a repertoire of masculinities that branch out in her book, *Masculinities*.

In *Masculinities*, Connell finds that our concept of masculinity is fairly recent, “a few hundred years old at most” (68). Therefore, one cannot realistically speak of masculinity as a set of markers that intrinsically defines anyone who is born with an XY chromosome. On the contrary, akin to the attributions typifying female sex, so-called masculine traits and practices are arbitrary and inconsistent throughout history. For example, before they were transformed into a symbol of femininity, high-heeled shoes had been famously worn by European men with political power in the 17th century. Perhaps this anecdotal evidence alone may not be enough to call attention to the transient quality of masculinity, however, from wearing skirts to having long hair, many Western cultures are ubiquitous with examples pertaining to the ever-changing nature of gender roles that shows what is deemed feminine today might have been considered as masculine depending on the century, society or culture. As in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, Michael Kimmel points out: “manhood means different things in different times and to different people” (5), making it impossible to define masculinity outside its cultural, regional, denominational, ethnic and spatial context. The problematization masculinity as a fluctuating social construct gains a new dimension by Kimmel’s approach on the issue, as he tackles on the romanticized cowboy figure and self-made man as some of his primary concerns. The authenticity of these undeniably American inventions is, for Kimmel, rather debatable, and as a result of industrialization and the ensuing changes in the economy, the 20th century men are prone to anxiety in the face of the disparity between the harsh reality and the dominant images of masculinity in media.

Similarly, in his book, *Masculinities in Theory*, Todd W. Reeser posits masculinity as a notion “dependent on an endless list of other signs that themselves can never be nailed down” (37). In this junction, Connell summarizes masculinity in a westernized point of view following four approaches: essentialist, positivist, normative and semiotic. The essentialist definition searches for the core of men, something, as

Connell notes, Sigmund Freud “flirted with” and then “came to see that equation as oversimplified” (68). Apparently, even amongst essentialists there is no consensus regarding the essence of man and “claims about a universal basis of masculinity tell us more about the ethos of the claimant than about anything else” (69). Meanwhile in the positivist approach, “the logical basis of masculinity/femininity (M/F) scales in psychology, whose items are validated by showing they discriminate statistically between groups of men and women” (69). Connell finds this approach problematic, since both men and women differ among themselves in their respective genders. Narrative definition treats masculinity as “a social norm for the behavior of men” (70), which is solidified by media if the persistence of cowboys, warriors and hypermasculine heroes is any indication. Again, Connell calls this definition paradoxical, considering the fact that not many men can meet the criteria of such impossible level of manliness or “display the toughness or independence acted by Wayne, Bogart or Eastwood” (70). Lastly, the semiotic approach borrows from Jacques Lacan and concludes that “the phallus is master-signifier and femininity is symbolically defined by lack” (70). Despite admitting its benefits in terms of cultural analysis, Connell finds this approach “limited in scope” (71) as well. As an alternative to these four definitions that eventually limit the scope of masculinity, Connell proposes another solution that aims to identify where this sexual difference is generated.

Thanks to her central position in the academic studies on masculinity, Connell’s ideas laid the groundwork on which further research have been based. However, perhaps more than any other concept, the term “hegemonic masculinity” gained prominence to the point that it became synonymous with Connell herself. Its Marxist and Gramscian connotations aside, the word “hegemony”, by definition, correlates to “control by one country, organization, etc. over other countries, etc. within a particular group” (“Hegemony”), providing an apt explanation of why she chose this terminology in order to describe this undeniably superior position masculinity has attained in the Western world. If a hierarchy between gender politics exists, one can neither talk about a gender democracy nor an equality between sexes. Moreover, as she observes diverse groups within institutional settings, work

environments, different classes and sexual orientations, she arrives at the conclusion that we must also “recognize the relations between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance, and subordination” (Connell 37), exposing the notion that underneath masculinity’s favored status against femininity, lies a strict hierarchy among a myriad of masculinities that were once overlooked, and yet need to be subjected to close scrutiny as they are “liable to internal contradiction and historical disruption” (73).

Validating Beauvoir's aforementioned statement, Connell describes gender as a “social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body” (71). Gender is, in fact, “organized in symbolic practices that may continue much longer than the individual life” (72), which is exemplified by how institutions are seen through gendered scripts. For example, the state is undoubtedly masculine because it exists as a locus of “gender configuring of recruitment and promotion, a gender configuring of the internal division of labour and systems of control, a gender configuring of policymaking, practical routines, and ways of mobilizing pleasure and consent” (73), which only adds to its metaphorical masculine quality and legitimizes it through normalized everyday practices. Gender configuring in the state prioritizes men and assign them an unquestionable authorial power. In like manner, Kimmel explores the connection between masculinity and power that originates in individuals and then infiltrates into the institutions of any patriarchal society:

Manhood is equated with power-over women, over other men. Everywhere we look, we see the institutional expression of that power-in state and national legislatures, on the boards of directors of every major U.S. corporation or law firm, and in every school and hospital administration. (149)

In order to fully comprehend Connell’s and Kimmel’s viewpoints, one needs to separate the reproductive body from the social construct by placing gender inside the social realm, and see it “as a social pattern that requires us to see it as a product of

history, and also as a producer of history” (81). And when this social pattern is interrogated, Judith Butler’s idea of performativity needs to be addressed. In her article “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, Butler identifies gender as a stylized repetition of acts that are “instituted through a stylization of the body and hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute to the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (1988: 519). Therefore, masculinity emerges as a set of praxis that must be implemented and fulfilled, making it a performance. Appropriately, not unlike Erving Goffman in his aforementioned article, Butler postulates in **Gender Trouble** that “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (15).

Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe in "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts" contribute to the notion of masculinity as a performance, calling it a dramaturgical task that needs to be performed in front of others. This performance requires mastering “a set of conventional signifying practices” (279). These practices can differ from culture to culture, but as far as the patriarchal societies in the western world, they can be identified rather easily. According to them, having a male body definitely helps, yet it is a “symbolic asset” (279) which is neither necessary, nor sufficient as “males can fail to muster the other signifiers necessary to establish themselves as creditable men worthy of full manhood status” (279). Hence, it is impossible to confine masculinity within the scope of biological embodiment. For Schwalbe and Schrock, masculinity is closely affiliated with the inclination to:

enact the locally prevailing hegemonic ideal, thus making compensation and improvisation necessary. There remains, nonetheless, a common theme: the desire to claim an identity as a member of the privileged gender group, a desire that can be satisfied only by putting on a creditable manhood act. In competitive, hierarchical societies, especially those that are classically or vestigially patriarchal, this means signifying a capacity to exert control over one's self, the environment, and others. (286)

By examining the concept of “performativity” in the light of quantitative findings by Goffman, Schrock, Schwalbe, Butler and Kimmel, it becomes evident that performance might both refer to various forms of behavior that are revered in their respective cultures, and specific qualities that are attributed to the male body. For example, some specific body shapes, postures, mannerisms and “certain possibilities in sex” (Connell 53) can combine into what is deemed masculine or manly. More often than not, what is deemed masculine equals to what is deemed superior in patriarchal societies. Accordingly, in exploring the embodiment of masculinity in sports, Connell identifies sport as an open exhibition of masculinity since it “embeds definite social relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination of women” (54). As any form of performance assuredly requires an audience, the institutionalization of sports carefully subscribes to repeated public displays of the verification of one’s masculine worth. She notes that a man who displays a “greater sporting prowess” immediately contributes to a “symbolic proof of men’s superiority and right to rule” (54). On the other hand, this tenacious “constitution of masculinity through bodily performance means that gender is vulnerable when the performance cannot be sustained” (54). Due to its appointed invincibility, any hint of disability, inadequacy or defeat can lead to an outright failure as far as gender performance is concerned. Mark Breitenberg likens this phenomenon to the anxiety of losing the mother and calls it “anxious masculinity”:

Freud suggests as much in his claim that anxiety “protects its subject,” as if it were a kind of psychic armor intended to safeguard the vulnerable ego within. Freud is once again useful if we imagine his discussion of the child’s “fort/da” game as if it were a collective ritual played out among men. By pretending to lose and then find a given object, the child enacts a repetition of that most painful possibility - the loss of his mother. (6)

With Freud’s deep-seated conception of anxiety in mind, one may argue that the same anxiety both empowers the male figure and causes an intrinsic fear of losing it, latter of which might lead to certain behavior that would ensure what they have. According to Breitenberg, the “masculine subjectivity constructed and sustained by a

patriarchal culture - infused with patriarchal assumptions about power, privilege, sexual desire, the body - inevitably engenders varying degrees of anxiety in its male members" (1). This pressure that is created by patriarchal societies, conceptualized as anxious masculinity, manifests itself as the dominant culture that leads to an imbalance between genders and how they are perceived.

Likewise, sexual dysfunction cannot ever be accepted in patriarchal societies "where penis stands for masculinity" (Connell 54). After all, the word "manhood" both refers to masculinity and the phallus itself. And the phallus functions as "the point of intersection between patriarchal dominance of culture and the bodily experience of masculinity" (232). Therefore, it is no surprise that these anatomical and physiological issues related to health or human condition eventually expose the correlation between a male subject's embodiment and his fear of losing his privileged status.

Akin to how these socially accepted modes of male embodiment are complex and multifaceted, the challenges entailed in determining behavioral patterns are equally complex and multifaceted. Since western societies are based on binary oppositions, masculinity cannot exist without femininity. That being said, there needs to be perceptible characteristics that are utilized in order to define *difference* and separate the two genders from each other, revealing similarities between traits attributed to the female sex and the unmasculine ones. Connell observes some of these traits as "being peaceable rather than violent, conciliatory rather than dominating, hardly able to kick a football, uninterested in sexual conquest" (67). Consequently, all of these "unmasculine" characteristics add up to a universalized male stereotype when reversed; a man must be dominating, physically active, sexually aggressive and violent. Violence, as Connell puts, "can become a way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles" (83), drawing a parallel between manhood and display of violent behavior. Furthermore, it is the members of "the dominant gender who hold and use the means of violence" (83). This notion not only connects men to their naturalized historical and colonial roles in their possession of weaponry and implies armament as their innate right, but it also highlights numerous veiled reasonings behind women's exclusion from, or more recently, restricted access to the public sphere, sports and military. Apparently, the naturalization of male violence is a cultural

and social issue whose seeds are planted from an early age. Therefore, violence becomes gendered and earns a connotative status when the normative characteristics of male sex are contextualized.

It goes without saying that Connell does not suggest that men are inherently more prone to violence than women. Rather, she underlines the crucial role everyday practices, social environments and institutions play in molding biological men into a presupposed template of masculinity that requires regular showcases of palpably aggressive and violent tendencies. This mode of social-constructionist masculinity, through its implementation of violence, inevitably produces a subordinate object. Hence, it is always connected with the idea of hegemony. Considering the prevalence of domestic violence, femicide and rape, these gendered violence acts seem to target predominately women. In her afterword to Laura Lederer's essay collection *Take Back the Night*, Adrienne Rich argues that "the glorification of violence against women is not a surface growth which can be deftly excised, leaving the anatomy around it untouched, it is systemic" (Lederer 32). Therefore, perpetuation of this systemic cycle of violence must have been provided within the society from which the hegemonic rhetoric is spawned.

However, spotlighting women as the sole victims of excessively violent men can limit the scope of gendered violence. As Connell notes, we cannot categorize the victims of a male subject; they can be other males who threaten his manhood or reputation, various racial groups, women and individuals with marginalized sexual orientations. According to Thomas Winter, there seems to be a positive correlation between the consequences of urbanization, socio-economic changes, women's rights movements, and the advent of "crisis of masculinity" (117). Apparently, hegemonic masculinity attempts to shelter men by protecting the status quo, while feeling threatened whenever a social shift happens within the society. This might explain why Winter highlights Frederickson's concept of the so-called "strenuous life" modern man cannot cope with, as the latter dates the idea "after the Civil War" (117), suggesting that the abolishment of slavery plays a crucial role in the crisis of masculinity in the South. In a similar fashion, lgbtq people have the potential to endanger hegemonic

masculinity, which gives way to the stigmatization of homosexuality, especially male homosexuality.

In a similar vein, a key element, according to Thomas W. Reeser, “of power's normalizing effect is the constructing of an abnormal other. For in order to create a norm, discourse must create or invent an anti-norm, which implies that the norm is the norm by opposition” (31). Thus, marginalization of gay men begins and ends with omnipotence and omnipresence of heterosexual white man who constitutes the norm. The collective hatred for gay men among heterosexual men manifests itself in a myriad of ways. Some of them involve physical attacks, bullying or ostracism of gays from the community, but others, such as mockery in the guise of humour, despite being seemingly harmless, reveals how unconscious of a male subject associates phallus with power and renders homosexuality as a denial of the same power, as evidenced by how “homophobic humour among straight men still revolves around the limp wrist, the mincing walk and innuendo about castration” (Connell 219). Therefore, homophobia stems from the conviction that the male subject cannot possibly imagine a man who willingly gives up his supreme status in the social hierarchy, yet the rising visibility of gay men immediately brings about his castration anxiety. In a similar manner, Reeser also pays special attention to how homosexuality carries a threat to a stable masculine identity:

men's fear or avoidance of physical and emotional closeness with other men (e.g., shaking hands and not hugging, not talking about how they feel) could be taken as indicative of this homoerotic threat. One aspect of this anxiety is that, in certain circumstances, the borders of heterosexuality will actually be crossed and a same-sex act will take place, perhaps even accidentally. (58)

Therefore, the relationships among heterosexual men in homosocial environments are usually potentially dangerous to the self-perception of a heterosexual male, as any act of intimacy, rivalry, shared emotions or identification can transform into desire in a minute. Elaborating on Reeser's point also offers another angle to Brannan's third rule, “Be a Sturdy Oak”: Expressing emotions not only is detrimental to one's masculine identity, but it also has the potentiality to initiate a male-male

desire. Needless to say, both the display of emotions and homosexual relationships are looked down upon in patriarchal societies.

Likewise, Hacker argues that “men as the dominant group feel the strains of accommodating to the changing status of the minority group, and meeting the challenge presented by the sexual emancipation of women” (55). Thus, not unlike gay visibility, the increasing prominence of women outside domestic sphere poses similar threat for male hegemony. Consequently, the apparent otherization that eventually results in the victimization of both women and homosexuals suggests that in order for masculinity’s superiority to persevere, thickly-drawn lines between subject/object, male/female, masculine/feminine need to stay intact.

In this part, I have traced the roots of masculinity as a social theory. My findings suggest a slow but significant shift from an essentialist view of masculinity focused on discovering the essence of men to a collective acceptance of the gendered subject as a social construct. As noted above, the notion of masculinity as a construct that was conceptualized in the 1980s by R. W. Connell has been explored by the likes of Todd W. Reeser and Michael Kimmel, and now is considered to be the most influential theory of masculinity in the field. Although there have been many attempts at defining manhood, what the post-Connell studies of masculinity point to has consistently been related to the performative nature of gender, suggesting that coming up with a clear-cut definition of it is equivocal and arbitrary.

1.2. Masculinity Studies in USA Context

1.2.1. The Cavalier Myth and the Southern Masculine Identity

In this section, I track down the origins of the Southern masculine identity and pin down “the Cavalier” figure as the antebellum Southern men’s impossible regional quintessence that was instrumental in their efforts to differentiate themselves from Northerners. In order to understand the core of the mythical Cavalier, the socio-cultural context in which the said myth was forged has to be elaborated in detail. Therefore, by exemplifying the first settlers and several colonists such as John Smith, John Rolfe, and soldiers such as Robert E. Lee as prototypical cavaliers from whom regional masculine identity of the antebellum South was expropriated, I intend to particularize what “masculinity” meant for the antebellum Southerners and how essential it was for them to infiltrate a distinctive masculine model into their social doctrines.

America in the 1800s can best be summarized as a divided culture, according to historian William R. Taylor. His study, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* is centered upon the unique components of the Southern identity that immediately set it apart from its Northern counterpart. The clear-cut division between a democratic, industrial, exploitative and commercialized North, in other words “yankees”, and the so-called aristocratic, hierarchical and agrarian society of the South, addressing themselves as “cavaliers” seemingly brought forth numerous alterations and contradictions regarding values, customs, worldviews which inevitably led to harsh dualisms that are very much akin to binary oppositions in the way they give away the ideological systems of the culture they are spawned from. Needless to say, for Southern men, whose self-imposed image depends on the belief that they were vastly superior to the Northerners who were feminized, clinging to the adamant dichotomies was a way to create a distinct Southern identity that was in tune with their surface unity.

The Cavalier image, which Southern masculine identity is constructed upon, stems from the notion that Antebellum southerners are the descendants of King Charles I’s supporters who were called as “cavaliers” during the English Civil War. This

carefully-crafted image both pertains to the myth of the American Dream, Manifest Destiny and the aristocracy among the southerners, since not only does it promote physical strength and an individual's potential, but it also imposes honor and gentility, therefore, it is no wonder that the white Southern men accepted this facade with open arms. In *Away Down South: A History of South*, James C. Cobb identifies the ways Southern men disengage themselves from Northern men by mapping their internalized sense of superiority. For Southerners, their enemy, the disproportionally industrialized and commercialized North encapsulates "the combined forces of an intrusive, unsettling, faith-and-tradition-shaking modernity" (5). Hence, their irrational preoccupations related to modernity resulted in creation of the North as a boogeyman. However, in reality, the main issue was the anxiety of losing the plantation system and slave economy the South hinged on for a long time, especially when the North was rapidly growing commercially and culturally. When there was no indication of competing with the North, the South took refuge in a masculine ideal, the Cavalier figure. The construction of this ideal can be traced back to the first Southerners, or to be more specific, to Captain John Smith, who was one of the leaders of the first permanent English settlement in the new continent. According to Mary C Fuller, Smith "remobilized not only the forms of chivalry (weaponry, ritual, individual prowess) but also its subtext, that arms and ennoblement go together: he returned home with money, rank, and a coat of arms" (Gray 36). This neo-medieval chivalry that Smith begat kept snowballing over the years, thanks to the extraordinary stories such as how he singlehandedly "defeated three Turkish soldiers in single combat" (36).

However, the climax of his reputation occurred, inarguably, when Pocahontas, a Native American girl came into the picture, as apparently "in 1608, as every schoolchild knows, John Smith, the leader of the newly established first English colony in Virginia, when about to have his head chopped off by the powerful and 'savage' Chief Powhatan, was saved by the chief's daughter, Pocahontas" (171). The story of Pocahontas was undeniably romanticized and in time turned into a highly symbolic tale. Apparently, Smith's masculinity was tested with Pocahontas just like the way it was tested during fighting Turkish soldiers, to the point that even the Disney version of the tale that was released centuries later presents the idea as "courting a Pocahontas

who is virtually the spirit of the land" (30), evaluating Smith's masculine worth with his ability to conquer a woman and the land simultaneously. The pivotal role of this Indian princess for colonial discourse substantiates what Andrea Dworkin concludes in *Pornography*: "there are only the old values, women there for the taking, the means of taking is determined by the male" (29). Indeed, backgrounding of Pocahontas as the scene where colonial pursuits take place unravels how hegemonic discourse mythicize and glorify the heroic male.

Perhaps we can appropriate Sigmund Freud's infamous definition of female sexuality as the dark continent within the context of Jamestown colony where Native American Pocahontas resides at the center of contestation of male sexuality just like the new continent with its then thoroughly brand new and unknowable landscape. At the end of the day, since the expression "dark continent" was coined by a Welsh explorer Sir Henry Morton Stanley in an attempt to elucidate Africa. The term, not only is rife with opaque xenophobic and racist undertones, but considering Freud's use of it, also associates men's bafflement regarding female sexuality with their fear of the unknown. In many male-dominated cultures, female sexuality is unknowable the way Eleusinian rites are a mystery. The territory itself in Jamestown, not unlike Pocahontas who was at one point abducted, confined, and repeatedly used in strategic maneuvers, merely takes on a passive role in the way it is bound to be utilized by the hypermasculine colonizers.

In retrospect, the symbolic relevance attributed to Pocahontas as the virgin, feminized landscape willingly embracing intruders and serving for phallogocentric ideals of the dominant colonial ideology did not end with the apparent apotheosis of John Smith as the ultimate role model for later generations of the settlers, as she also played an instrumental part in yet another colonist's rise to power. John Rolfe, who was one of the passengers of Sea Venture, married her in 1914 in spite of the Puritan taboos of miscegenation of his time. Rolfe, who was unsuccessful in his ten-year tobacco enterprise due to the "intermittent tribal attacks" (35) as historian Kathleen Burk puts it, was able to placate the Indians and finally saw a financial growth. Once again, the daughter of the Indian Chief, the exotic other is commensurate with the land itself, this time, with tobacco plantation. Even his petition to Governor Dale in 1914,

Rolfe explained this union as “no way led (so far forth as man’s weakness may permit) with the unbridled desire of carnal affection: but for the good of this plantation” (27). Thus, one might argue that Rolfe was the first man among his peers who understood the necessity to follow the path John Smith paved, and apparently his recasting of himself as the second coming of John Smith paid off generously, considering by 1618 more than fifty thousand tobacco leaf had been shipped to England, and the success of the colony was assured (26), initiating what Burk calls Virginia’s “one-crop, slave-supported economy” (26). Ultimately, Rolfe’s rise gave way to what we call the plantation system of the South, placing the South’s aristocratic at the top of the social hierarchy. In other words, the plantation system created an all-powerful male figure that had the power to dominate, exploit and oppress the underprivileged.

Remarkably, Chaia Heller, draws attention to the impossibility of the Southern plantation owner to make a meaningful connection with what he accepts as inferior due to self-imposed and culturally-encouraged entitlement:

The romantic plantation owner in the South certainly never really loved or knew "his" slaves, although many men wrote sentimentally of their plantation memories. Romantic love conveniently blots out a recognition of the rage and resistance of oppressed peoples. When the southern master looked out over "his" plantation and romantically observed the "innocence" and "loyalty" of the "happy slave singing in the fields," he did not hear the messages of rage and resistance in the slave spirituals, nor did he taste the slave's spit in his soup. Instead, he knew his own desire for the slave to be docile and expedient. (230)

This emblematic image of the Southern white man watching over “his” plantation where “his” slaves work tirelessly and blissfully with the slaves’ anguish and hatred are lost in translation perfectly sketches a thoroughly androcentric portrait in which even a semblance of co-existence or reciprocation among those are divided by obstinate binary oppositions is out of the question. After all, in his almost omnipotent state that is very reminiscent of John Smith, John Rolfe, Robert E. Lee and many others. He commands over not only the plantation but African-American men and women. Indeed, he is god-like, as the word “innocence” recalls the state Adam and Eve were in before the Fall according to Christian theology, which makes the

plantation a substitute for the garden of Eden. Nature itself, is no longer part of the Southern landscape, but it is simply “his” plantation which he has absolute dominion, as the term “plantation-owner” suggests. Furthermore, the use of the word “innocence” is also curious, as Boles and Atkinson’s summary of the gendered script for the Southern women also define them “submissive, obedient, self-denying, innocent, and dependent and family-oriented” (Boles and Atkinson 129). Similarly, these innocent men and women are not “human” in a sense that they can exist in a homogenous category with him. If the aristocratic plantation owning white heterosexual man singlehandedly embodies masculinity, mind, culture, civilization, his subordinates must be relegated to varying states of femininity, body, ignorance, savagery.

Within this framework, the dualism of the male and the female that exalt the masculine and devalue the feminine needs to be examined as it constitutes the phallogocentric mindset of the Southern culture. However, this split only adds fuel to the fire of oppression the dominant patriarchal ideology tries to impose, and most likely enables one side to dominate the other.

The tale of Pocahontas "whose salvation of Captain John Smith and marriage to John Rolfe are used as mythic justifications of European colonization of the South" (Moreland 87) assigns a pivotal eminence to the role of the man, and creates pressure in terms of a self-appointed responsibility and entitlement. After all, we do not know whether there would have been novels and films about him, had Smith not been successful at courting Pocahontas, and it seems highly unlikely that Rolfe’s plantation would have prospered had he not formed a very strategic union with her. Therefore, the foundation of this masculine superiority that was spoon-fed to Southern children was undeniably on shaky grounds to begin with, which eventually led to the anxiety of losing it, and to complicate matters, resulted in the creation of a male figure who was desperate to retrieve his masculine worth through force, which can be associated with what Breitenberg calls anxious masculinity.

Seemingly, these early signs of anxious masculinity can be observed in the earliest settlers, as Craig Thompson Friend notes that white Southern men always "viewed themselves in opposition to what they described as urban, industrial, liberal,

corrupt, effeminate men of the North" (61) and drew upon "the old codes of honor and mastery. First evolved the Christian gentlemen, modeled largely upon the example of Robert E. Lee and in reaction to emasculation of being conquered" (11). Therefore, the anxiety of the white Southern male is centered around failing to live up to the ideals that are represented by the past heroes and the very act of "conquering", be it a landscape or a woman's body. Unsurprisingly, women, body and lastly the land belong to the same category in binary oppositions, and without a doubt, especially in the post-Cartesian, Baconian, and androcentric thinking, this is the category that is exclusively reserved for the inferior elements. Friend affixes Connell's masculinity theory to southern identity in order to explain the pathos of Southern man. He claims, as the patriarchal structures cannot effectively solidify their status "they always had to perform manhood" (22), leaving the concept of masculinity open to infinite interpretations.

As a result of their artificial superiority and the need to perform their gender apart from their Northern counterparts required southern men to embrace the mythical Cavalier figure as an embodiment of aristocratic, virile and strong manhood. This identification with the hegemonic masculinity represented by the earliest settlers recalls Connell's observation of normative masculinity, as it is based on futile attempts of meeting the "norm hardly anyone meets" (70).

1.2.2. The Lost Cause and the Idea of the Postbellum Southern Man

In this part, I identify the Civil War that took place between 1861 and 1865 as a turning point where Southern men had to face the hard truth about the unattainability of the mythologized Cavalier owing to their tragic defeat in battle. As I attest below, the postbellum South showcases a pathos that definitely pertains to the overhaul of its financial systems and social hierarchy. Notwithstanding the reality of their condition, white aristocratic males in the postbellum period chose to embrace a pretense that is aptly named “The Lost Cause”. In my argument, this fabrication of The Lost Cause transpires as a desperate venture to compensate for their indisputable loss of manhood while recuperating of their so-called noble collective identity.

To put it mildly, Southern men in the 19th century -and later- were obsessed with their position as the superior ones, and much to their horror, their already-fragile sense of superiority was challenged after they lost the Civil War alongside their African-American slaves and the plantation system in which they were at the top of the social hierarchy. However, it did not stop them from creating certain myths with the delusions of the persistence of their former glory. As the well-known emancipated slave Frederick Douglass, whose slave narratives shed light on the inhumane situation of African American slaves in the plantation system, satirically pointed out after soldier Robert E. Lee's death in 1870, that they could "scarcely take up a newspaper that was not filled with nauseating flatteries of Lee, from which it would seem that the soldier who kills the most men in battle, even in a bad cause, is the greatest Christian, and entitled to the highest place in heaven” (Blount Jr 1). It is apparent that the idealization of the Cavalier does not begin and end with the South's past heroes, and apparently Southern masculinity is always tied to the idea of measuring up to real or fictional men who are put on a pedestal. The term “Lost Cause” becomes crucial here, since it is the name of the negationist ideology that Confederates embrace that mistakenly advocates their reasons behind the Civil War as a noble one, and clutches on the nostalgic misrepresentation of the South as an old idyllic place. Not unlike the

mythical cavalier who has nothing to do with the actual chivalry of the middle ages, but is merely a projection of an impossible ideal that deliberately chooses not to acknowledge the ugly reality, in other words; colonialism, subjugation and slavery, the Lost Cause is a complete refutation of failure. Accordingly, Friend summarizes the Lost Cause as “the myth through which southern men could retain masculine dignity despite the Confederacy’s failure” (32), which equates the concept with postbellum man’s pathos and self-denial. No matter how much these white former plantation owners and slave masters refused to acknowledge it, after the Civil War “they lived in a region over which they no longer had control” (32).

In order to establish a solid connection between the Lost Cause of Confederacy and the dominant Southern culture that is detached from reality and more in line with misrepresentation, one should look no further than the myth of the South that was fabricated after the Civil War through various media outlets and literary texts. Undoubtedly, they were extraordinarily successful in conjuring up this false image, given that William R. Taylor uses the description, “a utopia set in the past” (82) in his contextualization of William Wirt’s biography of Patrick Henry of Second Virginia Convention. As apparently Wirt “constructed himself exactly the kind of legendary Southern past into which successive generations of Southerners were to retreat in full flight from the problems of the present” (92), which ultimately divulges the notion of the pastoral Old South as an imaginary place where only a homogeneous audience consisting of white, male, aristocratic plantation owners and their offspring would want to reminisce.

All things considered, even though several retellings Captain Smith’s conquest regarding the land of the new continent and the daughter of a Native American chief try to notoriously justify his and his men’s colonialist behavior, the reality of their encounter with the natives is definitely not as enticing, to say the least: there is no denying that Smith’s men were able to gain dominion over the land, with every creature living in and on it, and Pocahontas, who was not immune to smallpox, died at a very young age as a result of it three years after she married John Rolfe. Her last words, as Rolfe reiterates were “all must die, but tis enough that her child liveth” (Burk 59), emphasizing women’s passive roles in reproduction as empty vessels and men’s

self-appointed importance in terms of survival and continuation of humankind. Therefore, this so-called “romantic” tale of Native princess only succeeds in revealing the deadly consequences of the covetous pursuits of white Southern men, and displays a counternarrative regarding hegemonic masculinity that goes hand in hand with the way capitalism exploits the marginalized.

Thus, according to various historians who study the South during and after the Civil War such as Cobb, southern white men “felt their masculinity had been called into question on a number of fronts, not just by emancipation and black enfranchisement but by their own failures as providers that had toppled their families into tenancy and debt or forced them to leave the independence of the farm for the regimen of the textile mill” (174). Prior to the abolishment of slavery and catastrophic consequences of the absence of slave economy, plantation owning white men of the South were textbook definitions of the cavaliers in the way they possess power and status. Their wives, the so-called southern belles, *were* idealized by men as a ploy to take their agency and render them docile. The pastoral Old South, then, projects an illustration of a sterile environment where omnipotent white men are positioned above poor, dirty, dehumanized slaves and women.

Whereas the utopia of the mythical Old South remained as a fantasy among white, heterosexual, aristocratic men of the South as an immediate response to social, economic and moral downfall that evidently took place after the Civil War, those who were decentralized since perhaps the earliest settlers who arrived at the South had the chance to co-exist in a fully-functioning society devoid of the previously hostile patriarchal mindset with siege mentality whose rules only served to victimize the Other. However, this somewhat traumatic loss of superiority due to the termination of the slavery and the collapse of the plantation system, disturbed hegemonic masculinity and created an even more delusional anxious white male who was desperately, forcibly trying to hold on to his former position.

Although numerous social structures and institutional mechanics changed for good after the Civil War, the South’s idealization of the hegemonic masculinity and normative models remained unaltered. For the postbellum man, it is through the

nostalgia for the pastoral Old South, the mythical cavalier and so-called noble Lost Cause, he could recuperate his sense of masculinity. However, the apparent discrepancy between the ideal and the real tells another story.



1.3. Reflections on the Decline of Masculine Power in Southern Literature

The order of the literary texts in this chapter attempts to follow a chronological arrangement as each text provides some information essential to fully comprehend the subsequent chapters in their exploration of various forms of masculinities in the South. As seen in the discussions below, these texts are demonstrative of the South's pre-Civil War dependency on the status quo with the prevalence of a white aristocratic plantation owner, while postbellum texts never abstain from criticizing men, revealing their violent tendencies or creating a sense of displacement that lurks in their everyday practices.

In its broadest sense, the South's defeat in the Civil War completely disrupted socio-economic norms without a sign of return to their former prosperity. Southern economy, which was primarily based on large plantations that produce crops such as tobacco and cotton heavily relied on slave labor. Therefore, the livelihood of the white aristocrats that was mostly sustained by slaveholding shattered along with the plantation system. The aforementioned emblematic man who looked down over his fields as the master of the house, suddenly lost his Baconian task of utilizing nature for his own needs and purposes, and was brought down to his slaves' level which was lesser than a property. The spotlight thrown on the master of the plantation was no longer in place, which gave way to new, unpredictable, spontaneous and non-hierarchical ideologies through which the voices of liberated slaves could be heard, confined women could be emancipated, and the trees could finally take new roots and grow branches. Thus, within this power shift, postbellum literature can be categorized in two groups: Ones that are trying to perpetuate the so-called values of the idyllic Old South and the ones that demonstrate the tragedy –and sometimes comedy- of the new South whose men lost their positions through various metaphors and analogies.

As often as not, reflections of this apparent decline in the masculine power are utterly denied in “happy slave” narratives. When we look at Thomas Nelson Page's infamous text **Marse Chan** (1884), which is centered upon a slave's unbelievable devotion to his former master Chan, there is a great deal of emphasis on the attempted

masculine subordination that was faltered due to the initial rejection that comes from his love interest, Miss Anne. Unsurprisingly, it is only after Chan has gone to the war to prove his worth, Miss Anne confesses his love for him, which puts the man in question in a position to assert his masculinity to win the woman, in a way that is reminiscent of a knight's ennoblement through the love of a lady in the courtly love tradition that was prevalent in European culture during Middle Ages. Although his plans of winning the war, getting married and going home with a star on his collar fall through due to his untimely death in battle, at the end we learn that Miss Anne is buried next to him, and his story is evidently told by his former slave, suggesting a sense of wish-fulfillment pertaining to mastery and oppression on as far as his target audience—southern males—are concerned. Apparently, Chan's tale needs to feature both heroism and the love of a woman in order for him to keep his cavalier identity. Taken out of the historical context, **Marse Chan** can be read as a tale of selfless heroism of a soldier dying for an honorable cause or unbreakable respect a slave has for his white master. In Page's text, one would inevitably question the representation of the South as a pastoral paradise as it illustrates a manufactured version of South where love works just like it does in the courtly love tradition of the Middle Ages, slave masters supposedly die heroically in battle, and slaves such still have absolute loyalty to their masters' dogs.

On the other side of the spectrum, we have W. Gilmore Simms's plantation novel, **Woodcraft** (1854). This novel deals with the issue of blurring the tenacious male/female binary that ultimately creates anxiety for men, albeit in a more satirical manner, as heavily implied by its original title, *The Sword and the Distaff* which juxtaposes an object largely associated with the phallus and male potency with one that definitely recalls feminine power. The original title alone suggests through gender-specific items that binary oppositions strictly exist in society, however, the text itself illustrates a picture of southern femininity gaining dominance over the decline of masculinity. The sword, in a general sense, is a phallic weapon used mostly by men in order to destroy opponents in battle, while the distaff, made from wood, is a domestic tool used with natural fibers such as cotton and wool in order to spin a thread, in other words, to create. As *The Sword and the Distaff* is later replaced by the title *Woodcraft*,

one might entertain the idea that Simms sensed an undeniable subversion in the gender roles in his society. In the novel, Captain Porgy's attempts at marrying a wealthy widow, Mrs. Eveleigh to save himself from the dire straits he finds himself in are played for the comedic effect, belittling the masculine figure who is financially inferior to a female. Furthermore, the fact that Mrs. Eveleigh rejects him adds only to his emasculation, revealing the society's dominant outlook on men and masculinity that are apparently tied with economic power. Apparently, Porgy is one example of many male characters created during the second half of the 1800 who are unable to keep their superior status yet still in the delusion that they will be able to prove their masculine worth through questionable ways.

In regards to problematic and misleading texts, the traces of the South as a pastoral paradise can be found in plantation romances such as Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936). Second only to the Bible, Mitchell's novel earned the title of the biggest selling book in history in the 1930s and surprisingly is still popular today. The novel focuses on Scarlett O'Hara whose family is struggling financially due to the fact that their plantation was burnt down in Atlanta during Civil War. Notwithstanding having a female protagonist, it promotes dualistic thinking that glorifies men and victimizes women. For example, in a scene where Scarlett argues with her father, she says: "I don't want Tara or any old plantation. Plantation don't mean anything when-" (72). It is noteworthy that Scarlett does not finish her sentence, yet the authorial voice interferes to inform the reader that "She was going to say 'when you haven't the man you want', but Gerald got furious" (73). This scene alone is ubiquitous with elements that are relevant in constructing gender in the society. The plantation is no longer a piece of soil, and transforms into a passive feminine whose only mission is to carry whatever her male master decides to plant inside her. Not-so-subtly, their conversation continues with Gerald assuring Scarlett that whom she marries does not matter as long as he has a similar mindset as her and "is a gentleman and a Southerner. For a woman, life comes after marriage" (74), which is demonstrative of how men are thought to introduce meaning into women's lives in this culture.

It is no surprise then, just a quick glance at the first cover pictures of *Gone with the Wind* and William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, which were published in the same year, 1936, reveals Mitchell's desire to contribute to the utopia of the idyllic Old South. It is quite obvious that as opposed to its contemporary's unquestionably gothic and dark depiction of a blurry plantation house, *Gone With the Wind* is advertised using a picture of an enormous, white, aristocratic house that recalls richness, cleanliness, class, and an impossibly peaceful atmosphere. Without a question, Mitchell's novel that focuses on love life of a porcelain doll-esque Southern Belle, Scarlett O'Hara, and imposes sanctity of plantation that is at its core a property of men was much more well-received in the South during the decade it was released in than *Absalom! Absalom!* that handles controversial issues such as racism, homosexuality, which cannot help but remove the rose-tinted spectacles pertaining to the nostalgic view of the South in a manner similar to the way Edgar Allan Poe does in *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839). It is rather curious that despite never explicitly locating his writings below the south of the Mason-Dixon Line, Edgar Allan Poe is revered as the father of the Southern Gothic genre thanks to the themes and motifs used in *The Fall of the House of Usher* that translucently reveals prominent disquietudes and anxieties that trouble Southern culture overall in spite of the fact that "one would find little that is identifiably southern- no slaves, no crops, no sentimental tableau, only the house itself and its inhabitants, shut up, 'living in the tomb'" (14). The idea of an oblivious Southern aristocrat who is persistent to cling on to his glorious past that is long gone undoubtedly evokes the Lost Cause and the myth of the pastoral old South. In time, this image has turned into a trope from which numerous Southern writers borrow their ideas.

When it comes to exposing the Southern male in the post-bellum period, the mid-20th century sees a surge in terms of portraying different kinds of fragile, emasculated men ravenously longing to perform what they think their gender determines at the cost of the victimization of women. Tennessee Williams's Pulitzer Prize winning play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, dated 1955, comes to the forefront in this context, as it focuses on the battle of sexes between Brick and his wife, Maggie the Cat. The association between the woman and the wild cat is obvious. However, the

cat-woman of this old Mississippi plantation house is not alone in her captivation and domestication, as at one pivotal scene she admits to her husband that their marriage is like a “cage” that two only seem to occupy, bringing Brick down to the position of a domesticated animal with herself. Throughout the play, despite the man’s name recalls the components of the house that symbolically ought to create a sense of strength, security and dependability, Brick in his alcoholism, impotence and inability to move on from the suicide of his friend Skipper with whom a homosexual relationship -or at least homoerotic feelings- is heavily implied, embodies what Poe’s old decaying mansion represents: A distinctive Southern way of denial of the current situation with an unyielding sense of living in the past. This notion is further accentuated with Brick’s father, Big Daddy, who represents an older generation, is portrayed as a sick man rather than a commanding patriarch in his domain.

Prior to Williams, Carson McCullers tackled on the issue of self-alienated, emasculated Southern man being hopeless against empowered woman in the 1940s. Her *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941) depicts Captain Penderton, a bisexual man trying to escape from his culturally condemned sexuality within his heterosexual marriage to an adulterous wife. The novel, controversial for its time, questions the institution of marriage and gazes boldly at the Southern army in general in a critical lens, which could not even be thought of a few decades prior when one takes the Lost Cause, heroic portrayals of Robert E. Lee and neo-medieval chivalry that constituted a great chunk of Southern literature. One sees a convergence of this critical outlook yet again in McCullers's *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951) which disrupts traditional gender roles and stereotypes regarding the institution of family, and showcases a queer environment. The setting in McCullers's novella is illustrated as a small Southern town that indicates isolation, bleakness and stagnation since "not much is there except the cotton mill, the two-room houses where the workers live, a few peach trees, a church with two colored windows, and a miserable main street only a hundred yards long" (1), and through personification, it is described as "lonesome, sad, and like a place that is far off and estranged from all other places in the world" (2).

Correspondingly, the transformation of the café from a merry gathering place to the gothic house Miss Amelia solely occupies that "leans so much to the right that

it is now only a question of time when it will collapse" (McCullers 2) directly brings *The Fall of the House of Usher* to mind, but quite effortlessly contests this influential text's metaphorical meaning. No doubt, incest is a central theme in both houses mentioned, since we learn Lymon is Miss Amelia's cousin and the implication of an incestuous relationship is clear, but in McCullers's text, this relationship does not lead to a possible collapse, instead, an argument supporting the exact opposite can be made; as "the person most responsible for the success and gaiety of the place was a hunchback called Cousin Lymon" (2) and this collapse starts to take shape only after Lymon's rejection of Amelia in the favor of Marvin.

Throughout the novella, Miss Amelia is portrayed as someone who share many masculine qualities. A "dark, tall woman with bones and muscles like a man" (2), she comes across as an antithesis of the Southern Belle figure who is widely acknowledged as the epitome of the Southern ideal of femininity. In addition, considering her unusual height, short hair and "hairy thighs" (McCullers 44), Miss Amelia "impersonate and mock 'man' like a drag king" (Matlok-Ziemann 141), disrupting the social hierarchy blatantly. However, in the café she is accepted by the visitors for who and what she is, despite her defiance of gender roles and patriarchal social hierarchy, so much so that she can effectively play the role of a mother figure to the childish Cousin Lymon, cultivating an alternative microcosm that simultaneously both resembles and subverts the traditional model of family. Contrary to Amelia, Cousin Lymon's characterization reveals an unusually feminized man. Therefore, he also defies the so-called hierarchy between the genders.

The 1970s see a more commercial turn in Southern Gothic genre when Anne Rice published the first novel in her long-running *Vampire Chronicles* series, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). Set during the 18th century in a plantation house located in Louisiana, Rice's text not only draws a strong parallel between colonialism with vampirism in her depiction of Lestat de Lioncourt that showcases insatiable appetite and desire for control of a European aristocrat, but it also deals with the emasculation of the plantation master through the Byronic character of Louis de Pointe du Lac whose victimization at the hands of Lestat strips him away from his inherited and culturally attained role of the owner of a plantation with many slaves, and turns him into a passive

slave, which is almost reminiscent of McCullers' male characters in the way he visibly both "fails" his gender performance and socio-economic expectations of his society. Moreover, a greater case of victimization is illustrated in the demeaning of Claudia, a child turned into a vampire by Lestat and forced to dress like a doll to keep her identity as a would-be Southern Belle. Never given the chance to grow up thanks to her transformation, she, as far as Lestat is concerned, fulfills the role of a daughter for Lestat and Louis's caricature of the so-called nuclear family with two fathers.

What needs most to be noted, in the context of hegemonic masculinity, is made vibrant in not only Lestat's intervention with Claudia's body that without a doubt means she will never be a grown woman, and will exist bearing mental, physical and sexual limitations of being a child. Similarly, Lestat's hiring a painter "to make the walls of her room a magical forest of unicorns and golden birds and laden fruit trees over sparkling streams" (32) suggests that Claudia can only have access to this artificial reality of magical creatures and fruit trees as long as she is confined within the walls of her room, whereas chrysanthemums flowers which she has in her room merely "meant death" (117) for her, implying anything that cannot be replicated or confined by man is associated with mortal threat.

In addition, Dorothy Allison's semi-autobiographical novel *Bastard out of Carolina* (1992) depicts a late 20th century South that is still dealing with a crisis in masculinity. The 1950s' South as depicted in the novel emerges as a place where violence and victimization of women come naturally as a consequence of economic and social defeats white men encounter when their status as breadwinners is challenged. The text focuses on a victim of incestuous rape, Bone and her stepfather who is the perpetrator of the rape. Despite the female characters' insistence of revering male figures, the text makes it clear that these men experience a crisis in their manhood, which is reflected in their unstoppable tendency for violence. Unsurprisingly, the fact that the stepfather figure is shown as someone who cannot keep a job for more than a few months suggests that southern men's postbellum anxiety of inability to sustain a livelihood still lurks in the southern consciousness decades after the Civil War. As Hacker claims, "men in their traditional role of breadwinners have always encountered difficulties" (48), and in Allison's novel, their failure of

performing this social role leads to numerous problems. As a response to this failure, emasculated men try to reestablish traditional rules in order to assert their dominance whichever means necessary, in this case; through sexual abuse. In a contrived attempt to justify himself, the stepfather says to Bone that her "body, [...] was born to be worked to death, used up, and thrown away" (206), connecting the female body in the eyes of Southern men with traditional role of women as empty vessels and validating the masculine entitlement he embodies even in the absence of a high social status.

The past several decades has brought the Southern Gothic genre many entries most likely thanks to the popularity of Anne Rice. For example, Charlaine Harris's *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001 – 2013) and L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries* (1991 – 2012) delve into the South's traumatic past regarding discrimination, xenophobia, racism and homophobia through the use of supernatural stock characters. Both of the series focus on "cavalier" type white gentlemen in the guise of vampires whose supposedly noble actions bring suffering and destruction to those around them. Furthermore, in these texts, the boundaries between man/woman, nature/culture, human/animal, reason/emotion blur as they can afford to feature fairies who live harmoniously in the forest, shapeshifters who can change genders, and were-creatures that hunt as ferocious wolves in a minute, only to go on with their daily lives as ordinary-looking men in the next. Their use of supernatural culminates in the genesis of hybrid masculinities that is so far removed from the Cavalier figure despite its surface level indistinguishability. In other words, in these mid-20th century texts, non-hegemonic masculinities can not only exist but they can prosper.

Carrying the burden of the past accumulated by the consequences of the institution of slavery, the enmity towards the culturally and technologically superior North, the fear of female sexuality and the colonial history that was unjustly defined in patriarchal and financial terminology, the post-bellum Southern literature reflects a collective misapprehension that still clings to the white male entitlement against "the other", be it women, African-Americans, or queers. To a certain extent, the texts I singled out in this chapter expose the fault lies within the values related to the Old South, Lost Cause and the Cavalier myth: They demonstrate the issues in the South that treasure white, heterosexual men over any other element, and they emphasize the

improbability of a long-term survival for such characters with backwards thinking without giving up the dream of domination over underprivileged in the face of changing gender dynamics.



1.4. Masculinity Studies and Faulkner

This section will begin with highlighting William Faulkner's persona as an author who has a discernibly Southern voice, and move on to his handling of masculinity in his works. In my research, I have surveyed the broad spectrum of masculinity studies in relation to Faulkner's literary contributions. While it would be extremely easy to discard Faulkner as a masculinist author due to his admitted tendency to favor *man* and his problems first and foremost, as these scholarly works exhibit clearly, his texts embody an array of approaches to and depictions of masculinities that cannot be standardized and categorized.

Born in 1897 in Mississippi and died there in 1962, Nobel Prize-winning author William Faulkner is best known for his representation of the problems and dilemmas of the post-bellum South that he was a part of. His conception of Yoknapatawpha County, an imaginary place located in the South with its own brand of ugliness and recurring grotesque characters, is not a pastoral paradise to which even the most impassioned advocates of nostalgic view of the Old South would want to revert back. Instead, most of the time it is a hellish dimension where plantation houses decay, violence, murder, and rape are considered to be common occurrences and justice never prevails. What makes William Faulkner apt for a discussion regarding masculinity theory definitely resides within his ability to reflect the intense consciousness of these deeply flawed characters who are slaves to their primitive urges. Even though they sometimes can be classified as critical or even mocking, Faulkner's texts usually attempt to understand, explain, or simply capture the human condition of his time through a distinctly Southern and masculine lens. Unsurprisingly, when an audience member during a Q&A session in 1958 asks Faulkner why he writes, it becomes quite obvious that his subject is *man*. For Faulkner, *man* is fascinating because "he's outlasted dinosaurs. He's outlasted atom bombs. He'll outlast communism. Simply because there's some part in him that keeps him from ever knowing that he's whipped, I suppose; that as frail as he is, he lives up to his codes of behavior" (Railton 8:21-8:42). Admittedly, *man* as far as Faulkner is concerned, clearly refers to, or substitutes for *human* as opposed to signifying the male gender, however, the exclusion of *women*

from his discourse is enough to deduce his perhaps unconscious submission to the binary oppositions that inarguably prioritize men as “the subject” and women as “the object”. Hence, it is fathomable why his one and only subject, *man*, has been under scrutiny. From this point onwards, I will address some of the scholarly work that have tackled on the issue of masculinity and manhood in the works of William Faulkner.

In “Faulkner and Masculinity” Susan V. Donaldson puts the persona of William Faulkner under the scope by evaluating his numerous “poses” of manhood that can be found in his photographs. Comparing him to one of his contemporaries, Ernest Hemingway, she comments on the performative nature of Faulkner’s dramatic poses and how they are essential to the construction of his identity as a male writer thanks to their highly curated displays of Southern masculinity. Furthermore, taking Judith Butler’s gender performance theory into consideration, she calls Faulkner’s exhibitions of poses as stylized repetitions of acts. Undoubtedly, these stylized repetitions of performative masculinity leak into his writing as well, as she observes, from Horace Benbow to Quentin Compson, Faulkner’s men show instabilities and multiplicities of sexual identities that are stuck between the past and the present. Throughout the article, Donaldson gives examples that array Faulkner’s awareness regarding performativity of gender and discusses possible reflections of such awareness inside his texts.

Similarly, in “Weapons of Male Destruction: Traumatized Masculinity and the Instrumentation of Violence in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* and *Light in August*” Kristina C. Graham examines gender performance as one of the core elements in Faulkner’s traumatized male characters that bind them together. In her argument, performance is used by male characters in order to manipulate others, be accepted in the society or compensate for physical and/or mental inadequacies. Moreover, violence, she finds, emerges as a gendered act that completes performative masculinity, resulting in others’ victimization.

In “The ‘Masculinity’ of Faulkner’s Thought”, Gail L. Mortimer builds upon several discussions about *difference* by Chodorov, Bordo and Gilligan, and does not hesitate to call Faulkner’s writing masculine in the way that his characters have no

qualms when it comes to revealing their dichotomized way of thinking at any given opportunity. By providing many examples from Faulkner's novels, she analyzes how sexual difference is used to gender Faulkner's writing. This separation between the self and the other in the binary thinking, according to Mortimer, is without a doubt tenuous in the South, and symbolically its impact can be felt in the author's characters whose rigid separatist worldviews are revealed through their actions such as using their sense of sight to watch others from afar, yet showing reluctance to reaching out to any external source physically.

On the other hand, Robert Dale Parker, in "Sex, Gender, Feminine and Masculine: Faulkner and the Polymorphous Exchange of Cultural Binaries", reads William Faulkner as someone who oscillates between seeing male or feminine as fixed identities determined by anatomy, and someone who can recognize the unstable essence of gender. For example, he uses the depictions of Addie and Anse in *As I Lay Dying* in order to point out Faulkner's complicated approach to the issue of gender through symbolism. Parker notes, Addie's gender is biologically determined as it is derived from figures that are shaped like a womb, whereas Anse's masculinity is shown to be an empty space with no endpoint, symbolized by a hall of mirrors. Parker continues his argument with several examples from *Sanctuary* and *Absalom, Absalom!* that include Temple and Rose, female characters who defy binary oppositions regarding sexual identities at one point, and comments on the tendency of Faulkner's characters to switch their genders in their minds. Before concluding his article with the assertion that gender in Faulkner's novels is a performance, he, citing many male characters such as Benjy Compson, Joe Christmas, Donald Mahon and Popeye, admits that Faulkner seems to be much more concerned with weak, castrated, effeminized men, than he is with the reproductive biology of women.

Another critic, Jennie J. Joiner, in her dissertation "The Big House: Marriage and Masculinity in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha" challenges the culturally dictated connection domestic spheres have with women and the outdoor world with men, exemplifying Faulkner's male characters' curious domestic endeavors in *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Unvanquished*, *Go Down, Moses* and *Intruder in the Dust*. Commenting on the similarities between the institution of marriage and the system of slavery,

Joiner's reading of white husbands in Yoknapatawaha country demonstrates a form of "domestic masculinity" that is closely defined in relation to marriage and the domestic sphere, akin to a slaverholder's declaration of power in the plantation in the antebellum South. However, Joiner concludes that Faulkner's men who attempt at using marriage as a way to obtain mastery are eventually left disillusioned.

In "Privilege's Mausoleum: The Ruination of White Southern Manhood in *The Sound and the Fury*", Christopher Breu takes the gendered nature of writing history as a masculine act into account, yet shows the difficulty in placing the modern male subject in a historical context. In order to do so, Breu identifies the anachronism in Quentin's perspective which is tragically similar to that of his father's and by extension his grandfather's, which becomes an intergenerational issue these men are unable to deal with. As the postbellum Southern history-making has no apparent interest in a mythical construction of a privileged white Southern manhood of the pre-Civil-War society, Breu observes, what Faulkner offers instead in *The Sound and the Fury* functions as an alternative history that demonstrates a ruination of the male subject in the face of spatiotemporal dislocation.

Likewise, in her contributing chapter to Richard C. Moreland's *A Companion to William Faulkner*, called "A Loving Gentleman and Corncob Man: Faulkner, Gender, Sexuality, and *The Reivers*" Anne Goodwyn Jones refuses the quotidian and limiting categorizations of Faulkner either as a "loving gentleman" or the "corncob man", and explores multitudes of alternative and unconventional masculinities depicted in his novels and stories such as anxious white males, homosexuals, black men alongside tomboyish girls, prostitutes, questing mothers and spinsters. Thus, she argues that Faulkner is more than willing to disrupt traditional gender roles in his writing. To prove her point, she offers a thorough close reading of *The Reivers*, one of Faulkner's less ambitious and lighter novels that was written with marketability in his mind, and then she underlines that even an obviously commercial novel like *The Reivers*, the author hides some clues regarding the ambivalence and instability of masculinity in the South.

All these selected scholarly works seen above illustrate a rather intricate kaleidoscope of masculinities in William Faulkner's works. As seen in his texts' repeated emphasis on traditions and culturally dictated dichotomies, on one side of the spectrum we have a man of his time, certainly aware of traditional gender roles and the Southern ideals of manhood. And then on the other side, we have a writer who has definitely realized the performative aspect of genders, and aims to challenge whatever is accepted as gender norms by unconventional and sometimes shocking depictions of masculinities.



CHAPTER TWO

THE QUIXOTIC QUEST FOR THE LOST MANHOOD IN SANCTUARY

Released in 1931 amidst the Prohibition era, William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* carries the stigma of both its tumultuous reception upon release and being infamously labelled as a pot-boiler novel by Faulkner himself. Regardless of the author's admittance, his commercial pursuits in writing this text are rather opaque, as *Sanctuary* not only audaciously exploits the highly controversial subject matter of sexual abuse for shock value, but does so through framing the text with numerous elements lifted from pulp stories and the highly popular hard-boiled detective fiction of its time.

Before I proceed with the representation of masculinity in the novel, I will briefly summarize the plot: Set in Faulkner's infamous fictional town, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, *Sanctuary* focuses on Horace Benbow, a middle-aged lawyer who has left his wife and stepdaughter in order to go back to his sister's house in Jefferson. On his way, he encounters bootleggers Lee Goodwin, Ruby Lamar, Tommy and Popeye who occupy a decaying plantation house. After he goes to Jefferson, Horace meets Gowan Stevens, an alcoholic young man who shows romantic interest in his sister, Narcissa. Later, Gowan takes Temple Drake, a student from University of Mississippi with a reputation for being promiscuous out to dance. However, he crashes his car into a tree Popeye deliberately placed on the road, which inevitably forces them to stay with the bootleggers for a while. Abandoning Temple with this strange crew of criminals, Gowan flees from the place for good. Despite Tommy's best efforts to hide Temple, Popeye finds them in the barn, kills Tommy and then rapes Temple using a corncob. After this incident, Popeye compels Temple to work as a prostitute in a brothel in Memphis, and Lee Goodwin becomes the prime suspect for the former's crimes. Naively believing that he can prove his innocence, Horace willingly takes up Goodwin's case and provides shelter for Goodwin's common-law wife Ruby and their son. However, in the court Temple gives a false testimony that blames Goodwin for Tommy's murder and her rape, resulting in his lynching at the hands of the wrathful

mob of the town. At the end of the novel, Temple starts a new with her father, Judge Drake, in Paris while Horace returns to his wife without accomplishing neither an escape from his ill-adjusted marriage nor a satisfaction knowing that justice has prevailed.

As its straightforward story involving a scandalous crime exhibits, *Sanctuary* is very reminiscent of hard-boiled detective novels and pulp tales. Often intersecting, both genres are better known for their hypermasculine yet dazzled men, and vicious women, who led these men into their untimely demise than their actual literary value. Thus, it is understandable why *Sanctuary* is a neglected text especially in comparison to Faulkner's epics such as *Absalom, Absalom!* and *As I Lay Dying*, and why most scholars choose to dwell on the figure of Temple Drake and her fetishization for the male gaze as a fallen woman. However, close inspection of the male characters helps the text extend beyond the limits of the hard-boiled detective genre and provides the reader a multilayered outlook of postbellum Southern masculinity. Despite the obvious genre trappings, none of the men can fully embody normative masculine forms of behavior due to either physical or mental inability to perform what their gender assigns to them. Throughout the novel, the concepts of manhood, honor, strength, gentility and potency that are closely linked to the mythicized Southern cavalier figure are addressed or attempted by Horace Benbow and Popeye, but in the end, as far as gender performativity is concerned, these characters, who function as doubles of each other, emerge as either hopeless failures or grotesque deviants. In this chapter, I base my argument on the discussion of two central figures, Horace and Popeye, as doubles, viewing Popeye's affinity with black culture and the North as the core elements utilized to destabilize their positions as white Southern men. By likening them to hypermasculine stock characters from the hard-boiled detective stories at first glance only to deconstruct them later, Faulkner exposes his male characters' psyche to reveal a tragic lack of substance behind their Quixotic endeavors at re-claiming their manhood, which ultimately links their so-called idealism to the Lost Cause of Confederacy in the sense that they are both manufactured ideologies based on seemingly noble intentions. Furthermore, I explore Faulkner's re-imagining of the Demeter-Persephone myth to demonstrate that Horace's feminization does not allow

him to perform his masculinity the way the society he lives in expects him to. In addition to the study of the feminized and infantilized men, I also explore the shift in gender roles to mark women's rise in the social hierarchy through strong depictions of Narcissa and Temple.

A thorough analysis of masculinity in **Sanctuary** requires some contemplation on the hard-boiled and pulp fiction first, as Faulkner's subversion of his male heroes lies within certain expectations that come from these genres. Originated in the nineteenth century, hard-boiled fiction often refers to a low-brow type of literature that derives from the earlier dime-novels and British penny dreadfuls. These books often follow a crime narrative and are written with a fixed male audience in mind. In his study, Brennan Falker describes the readers of these books as "mostly white, working-class males occupied with keeping a job, earning a family wage, and asserting their manliness through physical strength, autonomous work, and the subordination of women" (6). It is no wonder a genre that was born during the industrial revolution, postbellum social shift and urbanization reflects escapist tendencies of its era. If the genre itself is intertwined with its homogenous readership, then, pandering to the audience becomes inevitable. Faulkner observes that in order to get a grasp of what a hard-boiled or pulp story is about, one does not even need to read it; their covers quite often convey the whole story. These covers illustrate "visibly masculine he-man. His shirt is torn and exposing his muscular forearms. He is fleeing one attacker as he approaches another who is wrestling the blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman from a red truck" (11). Apparently, pulp fiction sells an impossible masculine ideal and ultimately functions as a male wish-fulfillment fantasy. On one hand we have anxious, economically uncertain men, on the other, there is an accessible genre out there that promises an escape into a realm where they can project themselves into the hypermasculine heroes and feel catharsis as a result of their courageous actions.

Remarkably, although William Faulkner finds no fault in admitting to have written a commercial pulp novel, in closer examination, **Sanctuary**, perhaps surprisingly, proves to be a text that blatantly deconstructs and subverts what hard-boiled pulps stand for. Instead of showcasing hypermasculine he-men who prevail

against all odds, **Sanctuary** offers a handful of male characters whose masculinities are in indefinite crisis. Horace Benbow, the closest character this text has to a crime-fighting protagonist, is an aging lawyer whose beliefs in justice do not pay off in the end. Furthermore, his marriages are shown to be failures and his relationship with his stepdaughter Little Belle carries sexual undertones that complicate his seemingly idealistic maneuvers. Similarly, Popeye, the antagonist of the novel, is not a strong brute who represents an obstacle for Horace, but actually is an impotent short man who commits sexual abuse through instrumentalization of a cornucopia. Besides, Temple Drake is not a femme-fatale whose purpose is to evoke erotic feelings in the male characters, as her bleeding, drunkenness and profanity constitute to a less than desirable female figure that is almost abject. Overall, what **Sanctuary** presents can be summarized as corrupted versions of the stock characters from hard-boiled detective stories.

In terms of the form of masculinity represented in the genre, of course, Faulkner's choice of the cavalier as a figure to deconstruct is rather fitting. As mentioned in the first chapter, the cavalier, indeed, is an encapsulation of the masculine paragon in the South. Taking this Southernized neo-medieval gallantry and then completely overthrowing him places *Sanctuary* in close proximity to Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). As Montserrat Ginés in his article "Don Quixote in Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's Champions of Dames" points out, Faulkner on multiple occasions cites *Don Quixote* as one of his favorite novels ever since his formative years. Decorously, the influence of Cervantes's text can be observed in many of his works. Ginés detects the most notable similarities between Cervantes's and Faulkner's heroes in their "struggles to transcend their given circumstances" (24). Not unlike Cervantes, Faulkner seems to have a tendency to outline his male characters as "illusion-ridden, impractical, unheroic or self-defeated, but he also sees them dignified in their quest for virtue" (24). Particularly, men in *Sanctuary*, regardless of their class, age or social status, display at least one quality that resembles Don Quixote. Each of them has an equivalent of a windmill to fight against, and almost always this windmill is related to the concept of manhood. For example, Horace naively believes that saving Temple from the underworld of Memphis will atone for his failure in his performance as a husband and metaphorically consummate his feelings for his stepdaughter, while

Popeye, by raping and abducting Temple, attempts to crown his performance of masculinity he feebly believes to be unblemished. Ginés proposes the world of Faulkner in conjunction to the stark contrast between the patricians of earlier generations and their descendants who are “trapped in the myth of their forbearers and unable to accept their own present, strive in vain to transcend a world devoid of virtue and honor, a world all too made of matter” (25). For these younger generations, the preservation of the gallantry and all of its connotations represented by their ancestors is a key concern. However, it is also an impossible task. In a similar fashion, in “Don Quijote de Yoknapatawpha: Cervantine Comedy and the Bakhtinian Grotesque in William Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy” Brittany Powell comes to the conclusion that historical consciousness and philosophical thought drive Faulkner's works “whose characters' search for individuality and meaning in worlds rooted in their seemingly glorious pasts but are overwhelmed by an increasingly grim” (486) present day. Admittedly, there is nothing in Popeye's characterization that implies even an ounce of nobility in his intentions, but his fondness for weaponry and false machismo entails that he is striving to demonstrate what the mythical cavalier stood for by appropriating superficial qualities of the said figure, similar to Don Quixote's surface level likeness to a medieval knight. Even Horace, who is seemingly idealistic, does not actually carry any noble or heroic qualities under his facade. As Phillip Cohen deciphers that “Horace's sense of himself as a genteel, sexually inexperienced and timid” (66) is a social mask used to hide his inappropriate feelings to his stepdaughter. In this context, both of these men are revealed to be Quixotic in their lack of insight regarding their surroundings and inclination for self-delusion, as both are undoubtedly “spiritually estranged, a prey to anachronistic or ineffectual behavior, finding solace only in an illusory world” (25). Of course, one can argue that, Horace's actions can be labelled as idealistic, rather than Quixotic. However, as Joseph Urgo explains, the driving force behind his quest to save Temple is actually his desire to “regain his masculinity” (441), which I claim makes him Quixotic in his delusional approach.

Faulkner's deconstruction of the pulp male hero as a Quixotic knight begins as early as the first page of the text thanks to the opening scene that delicately places Horace and Popeye at the opposite sides of a spring. By exceeding boundaries between

the two figures at the spring, this scene provides a recognition of the convergence between the heroic protagonist and the grotesque antagonist and purposefully blurs the lines between these two Southern males who apparently come from completely different backgrounds and have contrasting personalities. As soon as Horace rises up after seeing a “broken and myriad reflection of his own drinking” (Faulkner 4), he faces “the shattered reflection of Popeye’s straw hat” (4), which turns the protagonist and the antagonist into unlikely doubles of each other. In *Doubling and Incest / Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner*, John T. Irwin notes “the presence of both images of the mirroring surface codes Horace and Popeye as mirror images of one another, antithetical doubles” (206). Apparently, this deliberate choice of doubling these characters sets the reader who seeks escapist male fantasy from this novel up for a disappointment from the start. If Popeye, whose face has a “queer, bloodless color, as though seen by electric light” (Faulkner 4), carries “that vicious depthless quality of stamped tin” (4), it is hard to imagine his double in a positive context. Hence, the text puts its so-called idealist hero and grotesque villain in an equal footing during their initial encounter in order to subvert traditional roles these stock characters usually play in pulp stories. This unexpected subversion results in a degradation of Horace’s character and points to a more critical observation of his actions. Despite their differences on the surface, the quixotic quests of Horace and Popeye complement each other. On a symbolic level, the scene where Popeye mistakes the bulge Horace’s book makes on his pants for a gun or his penis highlights these parallelisms between their quests: one’s quest is related to the desire to restore his masculine worth through law, the other’s quest is directly related to an active search for phallus. When Horace asks Ruby if she finds him “not lawyer enough” (123), the ability to restore justice as a lawyer merges with his performance as *a man*. Similarly, Popeye’s erectile dysfunction is ridiculed by Temple with the implication that he is not *man enough*. Thus, neither of these quests has a chance to be fulfilled. Horace does not realize that, even if justice prevails in the court, saving Temple will not bring the satisfaction to him like having sex with Little Belle surely would, whereas Popeye will never be able to have the use of his penis to be considered as a man in the eyes of his society.

Another critic, James Polchin, accentuates the scope of the apparent doubling of Horace and Popeye by drawing attention to the parallels between their methods and goals. How come a well-educated lawyer with good intentions can look into his broken reflection and find a dirty and animalistic rapist? Akin to how Popeye exploits Temple's body for financial gain and asserting dominance, Horace "also relies on Temple's body as a means to affirm his status as a successful lawyer" (153). After all, his sense of self is heavily dependent on obtaining a "certain male authoritative position both defender of justice and hero of the public good" (153). In this context, Temple Drake only sits at the center as a contest area on which both characters test their manhood. At first, Popeye seems to get a hold of her through abduction and sexual violence, yet towards the end of the novel he is ridiculed for his impotence by Temple. Horace, similarly, seems to take control of Temple at one point, but he eventually loses the case. Seemingly, Horace's "failure in the court case, his lack of masculine authority, connects his deviancy with that of the rapist" (156). In other words, their failures in gender performance equalize Horace and Popeye. Although their backgrounds and personalities are vastly different, they are two sides of the same coin when their attempts at proving their masculinity are juxtaposed. As far as Polchin is concerned, it is no wonder that Horace mentions that he would be scared of his shadow if Popeye's were his own, considering "Popeye is [Horace's] shadow, the darker side of his sexual self, -the feminized, unnatural man" (152).

Faulkner's mischievous insertion of the idiomatic "being afraid of one's own shadow" definitely leads to an urgent call towards a Jungian reading of the two, since the shadow archetype encapsulates Popeye's significance in relation to Horace in the text. According to Carl Gustav Jung the shadow "personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly - for instance, inferior traits of the character and other incompatible tendencies" (285). Therefore, close reading of Popeye should reveal Horace's fears, hidden desires and primitive impulses. On top of that, if we accept Horace as a stand-in for predominantly Southern male reader, Popeye as "the shadow" highlights the prevalent fears, doubts and anxieties of Southern society of its era.

What refused or denied aspects of Horace Popeye's characterization illustrates throughout the whole text can be examined in three subgroups: black men, northernization and emasculation. By attributing racial ambiguity, northernization and feminization to Horace's double, Popeye, the text affirms Horace's ineptitude in his performance of white Southern manhood.

Popeye's racial ambiguity has been a point of contention among scholars since *Sanctuary* was first published. It goes without saying that his race is not ambiguous, as Tommy calls him "the 'skeeriest durn white man I ever see'" (Faulkner 19). Yet, the most ubiquitous adjective that is used to describe him is 'black'. In the first scene he appears, his suit that is "black, with a tight, high-waisted coat" (4) almost reads like a second skin. His presence is evidently "black and nameless" (121) as if he were a slave. He is referred to as "that black man" (49), moreover he even "smells black" (7). Sandra Guttman underlines that Temple Drake "is not raped by a man who is literally black. Instead, she is raped by a white man described as black" (23). This distinction renders Popeye as a character who is not simply a coded black man, but a white man who has lost his position and devolved into an unacceptable state in the social hierarchy of the South. Conspicuously, his blackness goes beyond his choice of clothes; as John N. Duvall notes "rape in the southern imaginary of the 1920s and 1930s is a racialized crime committed almost exclusively by the Negro who lusts after white women" (44). Thus, one can argue that the primary action that defines his character in the text turns him into a black man. In addition, Horace realizes that Popeye is "barefoot" (Faulkner 10), and has "sunburned thatch of hair" (10). Both of these visible cues immediately remind the reader of the African-American slaves of the plantation system. However, since in the postbellum South, African-Americans no longer were subjected to slavery, which means Popeye must represent an anxiety that is far more recent; impurity, as "white Southerners were as haunted by the possibility that they were not racially 'pure' as they were by the prospect that their friends and lovers were only passing as white" (Guttman 25).

If Popeye is Horace's shadow, his dark double, then it becomes rather clear that Horace himself either holds back some deep fears regarding his own racial purity, or

losing his status as a privileged white man in the society. For that matter, Horace is likened to a black man two times in the text, both of which come from the words uttered by his sister, Narcissa as bitter remarks about his failed marriage. Leaving his responsibilities as a husband, for Narcissa, is nothing but “to walk out just like a nigger” (Faulkner 117). Although Horace does not show obvious racist tendencies in the novel except for commenting on how Popeye smells black, his being *just* like an African-American clearly functions as an accusation and is taken as one. In his sister’s words, blackness corresponds to not being able to sustain a heterosexual relationship and have a family. Therefore, it is not a big stretch to think he might have anxieties about miscegenation and his own racial identity, especially when he publicly fails at his performance of white Southern man who supports his family.

The second aspect of the shadow archetype Popeye represents for Horace is, the fear of turning into a Northern man. As I mentioned in the first chapter, the Agrarian South chooses to define itself in opposition to the North. For Southerners, they are natural, noble and masculine while Northerners are industrialized and feminine. When we look at Popeye as a whole, he becomes an embodiment of the northernized and industrialized male. His portrayal, indeed, exudes artificiality. Popeye’s rape of Temple Drake “is both a symbol of and the harbinger for what is perceived as the violation of the Old South by the industrialized North” (Guttman 32). If we accept the North as the perpetrator, then the South must be the victim of this abuse. As Guttman and Ransom argue, “figuring the South as the raped female body necessitates that the forces of industrialization take the masculine role. Masculinity is no longer figured in terms of the paternalistic white Southern gentleman. That gentleman, [...], has become impotent” (21). This idea of an industrialized North and a victimized South is seen through Faulkner’s use of conceits in Popeye’s depictions. In one occasion, he is described as having eyes that look like “rubber knobs” (Faulkner 6), in another carrying the hollowness of “stamped tin” (4). His fingers are like “steel, yet cold and light as aluminum” (234), he drives an automobile, his silhouette resembles a “modernist lampstand” (7), and while watching Temple, he is “moaning to himself like the wind in the chimney” (210). All these peculiar descriptions evoke an illustration of industrialism, mass-production, artificiality and do it with a

condescending attitude that is distinctively Southern. Undoubtedly, Popeye can only be a caricature of Northern manhood, but he is still a caricature that his readers still actively wish to see. This pandering to the audience can be regarded as audacious and contradictory to the novel's subversive quality, but ultimately, doubling Horace and Popeye gives Faulkner a vantage point from which he can dissect the mindset of a Southern male transparently. As Popeye represents what Horace willfully represses, in this context, Horace's anxieties of transforming into a Northerner by sheer force are revealed through Popeye's condescending portrayal. Needless to say, in its core, this industrial man who rapes a Southern woman in a field using a corn cob symbolizes the defeat of the South in the Civil War, but his purpose does not end there: His presence also encapsulates an assimilated Southern man who has lost contact with the natural and Agrarian society of the South and chosen to define himself with the codes of so-called inferior North.

The third and final aspect Horace Benbow's psyche that manifests itself through Popeye is, without a doubt, his fear of emasculation. As a man who is adamant on the rampancy of the moral values of the Old South and has strong opinions on how a gentleman must behave, Horace's most apparent anxiety is related to his loss of manhood. Indeed, some of the most pervasive fears of a postbellum Southern man are highlighted in Faulkner's portrayal of Popeye, namely; impotence, effeminacy, infantilization. Thus, Popeye's emasculation lies at the center of the text, perhaps even more so than his savagery, assimilation, and racial coding.

Despite his ostensible incorporations of several traits hegemonic masculinity that have no problems with gendering such as carrying guns, driving cars, wearing suits, and publicly asserting dominance in a homosocial environment, Popeye is, first and foremost, an effeminate male. Another scholar, Wainwright argues that "automobile and the gun become his phallic signaling tools of choice" (60), since he uses them in order to compensate for his lack of sexual prowess. "Excluded from the standard biological and patriarchal constructions of courtship, Popeye situates himself at the forefront of a culturally directed sexual selection" (60), which makes his masculinity a performative act littered with whatever is acceptable in his society.

However, this display of social masculinity does not reflect well, as other characters still describe him in ways that recall effeminacy. For instance, his hands, according to Horace, are “doll-like” (Faulkner 5) as opposed to big and capable. He has “no chin” (5), and his face is similar to a “wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten” (5). Likewise, Temple calls him “not even a man” (231) during their heated fight. All of these notions accumulate into a figure that is rather visibly feminine. Perhaps this is to be expected, as the South’s binary thinking accepts Northerners as feminine in contrast to their self-proclaimed masculinity. Hence, assimilated Popeye cannot carry masculine characteristics in this context. Additionally, his scent reminds Horace of “that black stuff that ran out of Bovary’s mouth and down upon her bridal veil” (7). Interestingly, this parallel is one of the rare times in *Sanctuary* where Faulkner used a direct intertextual link to another well-known text, Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*. Popeye here is not only associated with a female character, but he is also associated with a female character who is unfaithful to her husband. If we accept Emma Bovary’s vomit as a marker of her corruption in the eyes of her own society, Popeye’s scent easily becomes his. Another scholar, Julianna Leachman connects Popeye to Emma Bovary in relation to their marginalization and comments on the fact that despite his efforts to blend in in homosocial environments by possessing culturally-accepted markers of masculinity, eventually “industrial, womanish, black body, [...], betrays his secret” (16).

Thanks to this allusion to Emma Bovary, the transparency of Popeye’s effeminacy becomes evident. Apparently, his effeminacy is just as obvious to Horace, a man whom he has just met, as it is to the reader at the beginning of the novel. Underneath his masculine bravado, Popeye is no less marginalized than an ostracized female. Therefore, his performance of masculinity emerges as something flawed as his Southern identity. Moreover, the fact that Popeye is impotent only adds to his already established emasculation. Akin to his failure of performing his manhood in a social context, his performance of manhood in an intimate context seems to be dysfunctional. In the court scene, we learn that he actually raped Temple using a corncob. Notably, the way Popeye overcompensates his lack of masculinity with his preference to carry a pistol and driving cars correlates to his substitution for his penis. Similarly, in the

infamous rape scene, the corn cob becomes a prosthetic with which Popeye finally gains the temporal ability to complete his performance as a man.

When it comes down to surrogating missing or nonexistent phallus with other objects, the novel is notorious with its symbolizations that go beyond its prominent characters. Even minor characters seem to carry a phallic symbol or an object that makes up for their lost sense of manhood. For example, at one point Lee Goodwin's father, blind and deaf old man is seen "tapping ahead with the stick" (Faulkner 45), at another, the same stick clatters "again" (87). Being the support that helps him find his direction, his stick enables him to function in the way corn cob does for Popeye during his faux sexual intercourse. Interestingly, in her account of her sexual assault, Temple reveals that she desires to have "her own phallus in the form of spikes on a chastity belt, which she wants to thrust into Popeye to make him bleed" (Leachman 17), associating phallus with power. In a similar manner, the final page of the novel illustrates Temple Drake's father as sitting with "his hands crossed on the head of his stick" (317). Adding to his role as a representative of the Old South, he takes his daughter under his wings at the end, which suggests his dominance over postbellum masculinity embodied by those of Horace and Popeye. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that his masculine authority in even this victorious state needs to be underscored by a phallic symbol to be complete.

Curiously, the character of Red himself is a substitute phallus, since he is "hired to facilitate Popeye's continued sexual encounters with Temple" (Wainwright 33). His arrival at the Memphis underworld shocks Miss Reba to her core, because he is utilized by Popeye the same way Reba thought Popeye utilizes his phallus in the sexual intercourses with Temple. Apparently, his virility in contrast to sexually inadequate men reduces Red to his phallus. Upon reflection, the text clearly states that, the phallus, be it real or a prosthetic, constitutes masculine identity. Discussing these examples, the implication becomes apparent: for a complete performance of masculinity, sexual potency should be perpetuated or overcompensated by any means, and *man* equals the phallus or any apparatus that replaces it.

Masculinity, however, is not *only* defined by its opposition to femininity in the novel. Horace's infantilization both in terms of his characterization and through the physical features of his double, Popeye also equates lack of masculinity with being a child. Throughout the novel, Popeye's short height is observed by many characters. As soon as Horace sees Popeye, he describes him as "a man of under size" (4). Rather ostensibly "puny and ill as a child, Popeye is marked by syphilis, contracted from his mother, that stunted the growth of his genitalia" (Guttman 22). The flashback scene where the doctor who says Popeye "will 'never be a man properly speaking. With care, he will live some time longer. But he will never be older than he is now'" (Faulkner 308) portrays an image of Popeye that almost invokes pity. His status as a weak, perpetual child mirrors Ruby Lamar's son, as Popeye, just like the helpless infant who might probably not live long enough to become an adult man, symbolizes the stunted growth of Southern manhood. Symmetrically, the text also infantilizes Horace when it comes to his relationship with his sister. The fact that the house he is most frequently seen is "his sister's home" (Faulkner 106) creates a power dynamic between the two that favors Narcissa over him. As a man on a quest who is trying to flee from his marriage, Horace shrinks into a boy in a matriarchal house there. One such example is when he sits "with something of the air of a guilty small boy" (107) against Narcissa when he is trying to explain his reasonings behind taking on Goowdin's case. Later, Narcissa reprimands Horace because of his attitude towards his marriages, which once again grants Narcissa a higher position in their relationship. Clearly, in the presence of his sister, he is a mere boy whose own wishes and desires are castrated by a more female figure. As it can be seen, in *Sanctuary*'s world, being a man equals to being an ill child who must return to go a place "where his women folks can take care of him" (13). To explore infantilization of Horace even further, the text makes him return to his wife after his vanquishment in the court, as if to imply that in his powerless state, he needs to take refuge in the domain of a female caretaker.

Revolving around the notion of justice, the court scene works as a process of deconstruction for the Southern values of masculinity in its absurd overthrow of *phallogocentrism*. A term coined by Jacques Derrida, phallogocentrism borrows Lacan's notion of *phallus* as our "privileged signifier" (287) and *logos* as the absolute

truth, and thus, presents the masculine as the ultimate measure in construction of meaning. When Horace's concern to be a *lawyer enough* overlaps with his sense of manhood, it is inevitable that with Temple's testimony his masculine identity rapidly dissolves. Temple's perjury that pins Goodwin as her rapist and Tommy's killer instead of Popeye, once again, reveals the Quixotic nature of Horace's intentions, as neither his logos, nor his phallus has the ability to establish true justice. Even the Judge finds Horace's silence during Temple's perjury surprising, yet for the reader, the full picture must be crystal clear: Taken as the absolute truth, Temple's word contravenes Horace's and detains him from his phallogocentric privilege as a man and a prosecutor of written law. Such an elucidation, expectedly, synchronizes with the reveal of the corn cob as Popeye's prosthetic phallus to the audience, shattering the centrality of phallus and logos at the same time. With the angry mob of this Jefferson town lynching and sodomizing Goodwin after the trial, Horace's skill as a lawyer fails against hegemonic masculinity. Boasting about their sexual prowess, the mob feels the need to mention that they "made [Goodwin] wish they used a cob" (296). However, they are completely unaware of the fact that they actually punished an innocent man. Therefore, the restoration of harmony by masculine subjugation in this society force remains illusory.

By the same token, Horace's measure of masculinity lies at the heart of his Quixotic journey and his ascription of meaning to his capabilities as a lawyer. In my view, both the book Horace is carrying with him and his persistence to rescue Temple are closely linked to his desperate efforts to compensate for his lack of a unified masculine identity, which is, as I discussed earlier, reflected in Popeye's instrumentalization of phallic objects in the place of a functional penis. Even if we do not have enough information about Horace's sexuality to make bold claims, he is also rendered impotent through his inability to actualize his sexual desires. Considering Horace equates his masculinity with his qualification as a lawyer to bring justice by the book and to abide by the law, the book he carries on him becomes his surrogate phallus. However, the aforementioned scene where Popeye mistakes the book for a marker of his gender –either a pistol or his reproductive organ–, effectively mirrors how Temple confesses that she mistook corn cob as Popeye's penis at first. Similar to

Popeye's dysfunctional and flaccid phallus, the actual lack of utility the book possesses in the face of danger as a way to assert dominance delineates Horace as impotent. That is why Popeye laughs at the possibility of Horace attacking him with "the book or something" (Faulkner 96). Accordingly, Irwin calls Horace "spiritually impotent" (558). Not unlike Popeye who cannot perform the penetrative act, and thus only can satisfy himself while watching Temple in a voyeuristic endeavor, Horace listens to Temple's story and recreates the rape scene in his head, positioning himself as both the perpetrator and the victim. In his fantasy, his stepdaughter, Little Belle plays the role of Temple. In this instance, he identifies with Popeye at own will and substitutes fantasy for the actual act of sex, which, without doubt, brings him yet closer to the impotent Popeye. However, the realization of what this identification means makes him vomit.

This climactic scene is pivotal in the sense that it finally merges Horace with his dark double, Popeye. Evidently, his reaction to seeing Little Belle's photograph after having listened to Temple unearths his lustful feelings towards his stepdaughter. However, he finds these thoughts and feelings vomit inducing, as they can only belong to a radicalized figure, à la Popeye. In a way, now it becomes his turn to be Emma Bovary, throwing up black vomit under her bridal veil. Juxtaposed with their meeting at the spring, this scene brings together Horace and his unwanted shadow from his shattered reflection at the spring. It is also this particular scene where he finally comes to the realization that his seemingly noble cause of rescuing Temple is in fact a Lost Cause, as he only wishes to reclaim his lost manhood through juridical application of law. In other words, he believes that putting a claim on Temple whose body is commodified will substitute for his inability to put a claim on Little Belle due to societal restrictions. Conversely, as the use of both gender pronouns suggests, during his fantasy Horace identifies with Temple as well, taking on the female role during violent sexual intercourse. This fantasy scenario is perfect in its depiction of postbellum Southern masculinity, since it conveys Horace's pathos transparently: Horace, an educated white man who is holding on to gentility and all of its associations is now occupies a position completely in contrast with his centrality: A de-territorialized white male plays a submissive sexual role against a coded black rapist.

What should not be overlooked is that Horace can empathize and identify with Temple only after he has merged with his black and feminized double, Popeye. Reversing the traditional hegemonic associations of his race and socially constructed gender, this scene supremely forecasts the Quixotic quality of Horace's journey even before his utter defeat in the court scene.

By the same token, it should be mentioned that Faulkner bases his novel on the Demeter-Persephone myth from the classical mythology, which plays an instrumental role in feminizing Horace even further. The kidnapping of Temple Drake mirrors the abduction and rape of Persephone by the god of the underworld and death, Hades. Likewise, Horace Benbow's quest to find Temple and bring justice is very reminiscent of Persephone's mother, Demeter/Ceres's subsequent search and mourning. In the myth, when Hades sees Persephone picking flowers in a field, he instantly falls in love with her, akin to Popeye's violent sexual attack that takes place in the corn field. Unable to contain his desires, he kidnaps her, and brings her into his realm, the underworld. The underworld in *Sanctuary* corresponds to the brothel in Memphis where Popeye has dominion. It is also significant that in some versions of the myth, it is Zeus who gives Hades the consent for Persephone's abduction, which, taking numerous myths into account, falls completely in line with his lustful depiction and polyamorous characterization, and demonstrate the presence of an alliance between these two male gods. Apparently, hegemonic masculinity protects its persistency at any cost. Even the ending where Zeus saves Persephone and restores the order is revised at the final pages of the novel, as Temple Drake is last seen with her father in France. However, the fact that she gives a false testimony at the court and is rescued by a powerful male figure indicates no real restoration of order. M. Jewett reads the ending as a make-believe version of justice: "There is no actual restoration; what is renewed is not some spring, but rather the fantasy of men like Judge Drake, once again able to make believe an Arcadian South free of the violence, which they must abscond to Europe to avoid" (85).

Perhaps quite expectedly, it is Judge Drake who comes out on top and becomes the only male character in the novel who succeeds in his goal, as he embodies the Old

South as opposed to mimic the values associated with the Old South such as chivalry and nobility. Thus, he is clearly exempt from the postbellum psyche that haunts men like Horace and Popeye and renders them impotent. He is the Zeus equivalent of the text whose omnipotence is accentuated by his firmly holding on to his stick, an obvious phallic symbol.

Rewriting this myth enables Faulkner to highlight the disturbance in the gender roles within his society in a playful manner, as his equivalents of these mythical deities tend to differ from the originals in terms of biological sex and gender performance. Although some critics read Miss Reba as the Demeter figure of the novel due to her maternal characteristics, others such as Walter Brylowski in *Faulkner's Olympian Laugh* entertain the idea that Horace Benbow embodies the motherly role of Demeter. Beyond doubt, if we think Horace as the one who embarks on a journey to retrieve Temple from the underworld, we have to conceive him as this novel's Demeter figure. Furthermore, echoing Demeter's changing of the seasons due to her grief, Horace is the agent through which the reader observes the changing of the seasons:

So, each spring I could watch the reaffirmation of the old ferment hiding the hammock; the green-snared promise of unease. What blossoms grapes have; this is. It's not much: a wild and waxlike bleeding less of bloom than leaf, hiding and hiding the hammock, until along in late May. (Faulkner 13)

This early scene telegraphs his function as the Demeter analogue of *Sanctuary*. As a matter of fact, he might not be responsible for altering the seasons, but his repeated comments about the weather and nature throughout the novel ostensibly mark the seasons. For instance, the way he talks about how spring lasts that makes one think as if "there was some purpose to it" (292) comes across a coy remark of someone who actually has control over the spring. Likewise, his telephone conversation with his stepdaughter where he utters "summer nights are hard on them. Something should be done about it. A law" (300) reads almost like an exclamation that acknowledges an alteration of summer nights' effects on individuals. Accordingly, it is

from his “window” (13) the reader witnesses the hammock, and again, it is through his perception of “the green sneared promise of unease” (13) is conveyed. Furthermore, just like Demeter does in the myth, he fails as his self-designated mission to rescue Temple from the underworld. From this point of view, Horace emerges as Demeter, which complicates his overall performance of masculinity and highlights his emasculated self. Here, despite his yearnings to be a chivalric hero who seeks ennoblement through his achievements, he can only fulfill the role of a mourning mother who is eventually unable to save her daughter against higher forces.

Apart from its depictions of infantilized and feminized men, the text also acknowledges the shift in the gender roles in the postbellum South by underlining women’s apparent rise in the social hierarchy beyond the character of Narcissa. Upon close appraisal, none of the women in *Sanctuary* can be defined as a traditional meek and passive southern belle, as they at least try to defy hegemonic masculinity even as abductees, prostitutes or servants. As Miss Reba notices when they first meet, Temple has a boy’s name, which, by default bestows her a masculine trait. Although Leachman reads her power as an “incomplete imitation, of the masculine power to which she has been subjected” (17), her display of resistance given her situation as a victim is rather extraordinary. Contrary to Leachman, Arnett argues that Temple takes back the power Popeye took from her, as “doesn’t just wish for the masculine characteristics that accompany manhood, like the ability to fight off her attacker with brute strength. She actually envisions the phallus itself taking shape on her body” (7). Also, her subjugation to masculine authority does not happen until Judge Drake finally rescues her. Up until that point, Temple shows that she can poke fun at Popeye’s sexual inadequacy, express her sexuality despite her confinement, and in contrast to Gowan Stevens, she has more stamina when it comes to alcohol consumption. If drinking, according to Horace, counts as a skill to be acquired by “a gentleman” (Faulkner 57), Temple evidently possesses this skill more than Gowan ever does.

To be precise, through his doubling Horace with Popeye, Faulkner successfully deconstructs his cavalier figure and highlights white Southern men’s loss of position in the social hierarchy. By this attribution of numerous socially unacceptable qualities

—blackness, criminality, impotence— to Popeye, Horace’s essential status for the hard-boiled genre novel as the stand-in for the audience remains somewhat intact. Leachman remarks that even though “all the men in the novel are portrayed as impotent in some way, and all of them may implicitly be responsible for Temple’s violation, only Popeye is actually both impotent and a rapist” (15). Therefore, we can argue that Popeye can be anything Horace is not overtly allowed to be. However, the text also leaves enough room for Horace to be seen as a corrupted and delusional version of the Southern manhood. In this sense, rather than being an intertextual link, the Quixotic aspect of the men of Faulkner, particularly in Horace, serves as a commentary on Southern men’s postbellum condition, and directly correlates with the idea of the Lost Cause that feeds upon the Southerners’ futile attempt to reclaim their masculinity as a reaction to their defeat in the Civil War. Ultimately, here in *Sanctuary*, these Quixotic quests of Horace and Popeye for their lost manhood possess the exact same level of gravitas. Alongside his being deluded, Horace is anachronistic in his approach because his “sense of justice is rooted ideologically in Southern codes of honor that prove hopelessly outmoded” (Atkinson 228), while Popeye can adopt masculine decorations for public exhibition, but his erectile dysfunction will never give him the opportunity to be accepted as a *man*. Thus, what we are left with is masculinity crushed under societal collapse. Although he embarks on his ostensibly gallant quest, in his failure the text connects Horace’s wish to end his “apprenticeship” (Faulkner 280) which is akin to a squire’s desire to rise to knighthood of the courtly romance, to the idea of the Lost Cause. Due to the fact that he is too deeply rooted in the postbellum manhood, he can neither embody medieval chivalry nor Southern cavalier. In summary, white Southern masculinity undoubtedly depends on the function of the phallus, repeated social performances of heterosexuality and chivalric pretenses. Yet, alongside the persistence of his anxieties in relation to his race, status and gender accentuated by the presence of his irredeemable dark double, Horace’s catastrophic failure of conforming to what is deemed to be normative masculinity in the South define his identity as a man. From this perspective, Horace Benbow, at best, transforms into a mockery, a Quixotic re-appropriation of the likes of historicized Southern cavaliers such as Robert E. Lee and John Smith.

CHAPTER THREE

DEPATRIARCHALIZING OF THE SOUTHERN FAMILY IN THE SOUND AND THE FURY

William Faulkner's fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, was published in 1929. Although Modern Library ranked it sixth on its list of the 100 best novels of the 20th century in 1998, it was not an immediate success, and recognition only came retroactively. Known for its distinguishing stream of consciousness technique, the novel is divided into four sections, the three of which are presented from the perspectives of Jason Compson III's sons; Benjy, Quentin and Jason. In 1945, Faulkner famously added "Compson Appendix" to the novel chronicling the history of the Compson family from 1699 to 1945. Before I provide my close reading of the novel, I will briefly summarize the plot: The first section, set in the 7th of April, 1928 is narrated by the mentally challenged son of the Compson family, Benjy. Although it is hard to decipher Benjy's nonlinear narration due to his distorted sense of time, it is understood that he narrates a 30-year-old period as his 'present day'. Triggered by his search for a quarter with his caretaker Luster, Benjy goes through motions that eventually lead him to several memories of his sister, Caddy. The most commonly stated detail in his narration becomes Caddy's sexuality, as he first mentions her wedding, then the day she left home, and finally, when he sees her muddy underwear. When he returns home with Luster, he recalls his castration. The second part takes place in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the 2nd of June, 1910. Now, Quentin, the oldest and arguably the wisest son of the Compson family, takes on the role of the narrator. Oddly similar to Benjy's, Quentin's narration also goes back and forth between their childhood and the present day on which he is slowly preparing to kill himself, albeit he recounts these events in a considerably more organized manner. Again, just like Benjy's memories, Quentin's recollection of events seems to be centered solely on Caddy and her sexuality. Despite his suicide scene is never depicted in the text itself, by assembling together what Quentin and other characters have to say about his untimely demise, the reader understands that Quentin has committed suicide by drowning himself. The third section, narrated by Jason, is set on the 6th of April, 1928.

Unlike his brothers, Jason does not have an unyielding obsession related to the past or with Caddy, rather, his problems stem from either his inability to sustain his family economically or Caddy's daughter, Miss Quentin with whom he has a tempestuous relationship. It is understood that Jason manages to cash Caddy's monthly checks sent for her daughter by giving false checks to Mrs. Compson. Apparently, he continues to commit forgery until Mrs. Compson finally burns the checks. In the fourth and the last section which is set on the 8th of April, 1928, Faulkner remarkably switches to a third-person narrative mode and instead of the members of Compson family, focuses on their black servant Dilsey's mundane activities such as dealing with the household and going to the church. In this portion, we learn that upon discovering what Jason has done, Miss Quentin breaks into her uncle's room, steals her money back from him, and finally flees from the house for good.

Consistent with its subject matter and what was prevalent in an early 20th century Southern novel, one might argue that on the surface, *The Sound and the Fury* appears to possess many key characteristics that constitute what Southern historians call "plantation fiction". It is for this reason that I feel the need to turn to plantation tradition in the introductory statements of this chapter prior to my discussion of depatriarchalizing in the novel. According to John M. Grammer, who in "Plantation Fiction" lays out the basic elements of this genre, plantation tradition can be identified by its use of "the hills and fields, the columned mansion, the courtly master and his family taking their ease on the veranda, their contented black retainers filling the evening air with song" (58). In light of these unequivocal definitions, *The Sound and the Fury* certainly seems to fit into this category. The text includes a formerly aristocratic family living in a big house, a black Mammy figure who looks after her masters with no sign of animosity, constant reiterations of chivalric ideas, obvious nostalgic yearnings for the Old South and every outdated notion it proudly represents. However, it should not be a surprise to figure out that Faulkner rather glaringly deconstructs this genre by criticizing the men of the Compson family from a critical vantage that attacks their centrality against women and their servants repeatedly.

Throughout this chapter, I take the view that the three prospective patriarchs of the Compson family; Benjy, Quentin and Jason are three distinctly dissimilar failed

performers of normative Southern masculinity who have struggled to maintain momentum in their respective attempts to forge an identity on the chivalric model their grandfather, General Compson and their father, Jason Compson III put forth previously. Alluding to General Compson's broken watch that encapsulates the connection shared by many generations of this family and the continuation of the family as a patriarchal institution, I make a case for depatriarchalizing of the Compsons. The text exhibits this dissolution of patriarchy that happened during the shift from the Old South to the New South through three separate lenses: Firstly, Benjy's chapter echoes complete bafflement without any hints of comprehension regarding their situation. Secondly, Quentin's part deals with the utter denial of the present and an uncontrollable desire to go back. Finally, Jason's part shows acceptance and inevitability to adapt to the rules of the new society before switching to a third person narrator that privileges Dilsey, a black servant over them. Given the incompatibility of the Compson men's gender performances to both the plantation genre they dwell in and the postbellum Southern society they represent, I demonstrate numerous obstacles each Compson man has that prevent them from fulfilling their role as the patriarch of their family: For Benjy, it is his mental disability and castration, for Quentin, it is his symbolic hermaphroditism, homosexuality, virginity, and for Jason, it is his avarice that ultimately lead to depatriarchalizing of the Compson family.

A by-product of evaluating the Compson boys' gender performativity in *The Sound and the Fury* is the necessity to assess Jason Compson III and his eminence first, as a critical analysis on the relation between Southern masculinity and patriarchy cannot be complete without a relevant discussion of the institution of marriage and Southern fatherhood. In *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation*, Lorri Glover notes that "Southerners envisioned marriage as essential to the accomplishment of manhood" (115). By implication, Southern society does not consider getting married as a personal choice, but a rite of passage that needs to take place no matter what. Building on such perception, it is not hard to see marriage as a fixed element in the performance of masculinity. Furthermore, unlike the North whose "evolution toward first a market economy and then an industrialized, urban society altered family relations in general and mate selection" (121), which gave way to their freedom to

change their own partners, the South took what Glover calls a more “crooked path” (121). Apparently, for the South where preserving the status quo triumphs over individualism, marriage works as a way to promote “family interests through strategic matches” (121). Since marriage is directly connected to manhood and an unmistakably Southern quality, it makes Jason Compson Sr, a white aristocrat who is married with four children, a normative figure of traditional Southern masculinity. Referred to almost exclusively as “Father” with a capital F in the novel by other characters, his entire characterization is framed within his status as a patriarch.

Seemingly aware of the rapid transition from the Old South to the New South, Mr. Compson serves as a commentator who has ultimately developed a cynical attitude towards life as a result of the vaporization of the Southern ideals such as gentility, honor and morality. In fact, he is situated betwixt and between the Old South, represented by his own father, General Compson, and the New South where Southern codes of behavior no longer apply, represented by not only his physically and mentally inadequate sons Quentin and Benjy, but also his morally corrupt son, Jason. While stacking his books, Quentin remembers one of their conversations with his father in which Mr. Compson says “gentleman was known by his books; nowadays he is known by the ones he has not returned” (Faulkner, 1929: 99). This weary remark demonstrates Mr. Compson’s observatory skills related to his society clearly. Without a doubt, he knows what being a gentleman means, and yet, notices that these chivalric aspirations belong to a bygone era when the likes of General Compson reigned supreme. In that sense, his warning when he is handing over General Compson’s watch to Quentin gains a symbolic meaning:

When the shadow of the sash appeared on the curtains it was between seven and eight o clock and then I was in time again, hearing the watch. It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire; it's rather excruciatingly apt that you will use it to gain the reducto absurdum of all human experience which can fit your individual needs no better than it fitted his or his father's. I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and

then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. (Faulkner, 1929: 76)

Ironically, despite Mr. Compson's warnings, trying to conquer time turns into a compulsion for Quentin later on, as evidenced by his futile efforts to reignite the Old South and live by the rules of a cavalier. However, as an old man, Mr. Compson seems to either have passed the phase where he tried to recuperate the Old South himself, or has seen others fail to do so. Such sentiment is clearly reflected in his words where he says "mausoleum of all hope and desire". Since mausoleums are monuments and burial chambers of deceased people, symbolically, any hope or desire associated with reverting back to the Old South can no longer thrive. This is particularly bleak, given this watch is the only connective tissue among the three generations of men in this family, and it certainly points to death and moving on.

Self-aware about his place to the point of cynicism in an unhappy marriage, Mr. Compson is emblematic of the change felt in the postbellum South. If being a patriarch is a form of performative masculinity for white aristocrats in the South, then ideally, his sons should be expected to follow suit and take over the role of the patriarch. However, foreshadowed by the symbol of this pocket watch that is likened to a mausoleum, the text demonstrates that none of the three prospective patriarchs of this family is capable of fulfilling the role when Mr. Compson eventually dies. In this part, I intend to explicate how Benjy, Quentin and Jason are unfit for the role of the patriarch by scrutinizing the shortcomings in their respective gender performances.

Faulkner's deconstruction of the Compson men begins with Benjy's placement in the text as the first narrator. Considering in the plantation fiction, it is usually a former slave or a black servant of the aristocratic white family who narrates the events while reminiscing about the past, Benjy serves as an indicative of how far white masculinity has been degraded. In spite of his potential as a future patriarch, the genre enables him to adopt the role that is traditionally expected a black servant to play. Furthermore, it is understood from early on that he has a mental disability that prevents him from processing time and events around him beyond the capabilities of a three-

year-old. Hence, the title of the text, referencing the titular character from *Macbeth* who defines life as a "a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (Shakespeare 5.5.19-28) gains a meaning relevant to the plantation fiction and the novel itself. Apparently, Benjy Compson is the "idiot" whose words signify nothing of importance.

Despite being the sole narrator of the first portion of his family's story, it is evident that Benjy is not located "at a point far above the object(s) of (his) perception. This is the classical position of a narrator-focalizer, yielding either a panoramic view or a 'simultaneous focalization of things happening 5 different places" (Rimmon-Kenan 77). Rather, he serves as an internal focalizer who has limited knowledge, as "being a part of the represented world, he cannot know everything about it" (Rimmon-Kenan 79), which explains his confusion and repetitive questioning regarding his whereabouts and time. For example, owing to Benjy's mixing Caddy with Miss Quentin, the text immediately suggests that there might be some margin of error in his thinking from time to time, a notion that separates him from an authoritative narrator. After all, the perceptual facet of his mental condition indicates that Benjy can only know as much as his senses of sight, smell, hearing allow him to. Hence, his point of view usually carries an air of myopic limitation. This shocking take on a white Southern male as an idiot and unreliable narrator also harkens back to subverting what is expected from the genre, as it once again equalizes Benjy with the uneducated black narrators who speak with a dialect and defies grammar rules in the plantation tradition such as Sam from *Marse Chan* that I covered in the first chapter. Lori Glover associates speech with a man's worth in the Southern society, and postulates artful conversation as something "vital to genteel status, and it facilitated the political power of southern men" (101). Therefore, Benjy's speech patterns that include often switching from the present to the past, confusing his immediate family members with each other, howling like a dog, and depending on senses such as smell most of the time, contribute to the text's disempowering him in terms of his gender performance.

Benjy's nonlinear, fragmented, inconsistent and frequently outright unintelligible speech patterns are of course symptoms of a larger issue. Due to his mental disability, there is an absence of coherence in his train of thought, which can

be disentangled as a lack of reason. The binary oppositions of male / female, culture / nature, mind / body, and reason / emotion directly or indirectly adhere to social hierarchy that favors one side and subjugates the other. And Benji's mental condition apparently is a stark contrast to what binary thinking that plagues Southern thought expects a white male to display. Accordingly, with no indication of *reason* in sight, Benji's responses always pertain to *emotion* as his exaggerated reactions and constant crying suggest. Shoving Benji to the inferior column does not, in fact, begin and end with the reason/emotion dichotomy. As seen in various scenes where he is constantly depicted as spending his time in *nature*, he is simultaneously shown to be deprived of *culture*. In a similar vein, he cannot communicate well using his *mind*, but he can use his *body* in order to express himself. It is not hard to realize that once he falls into the inferior side, he cannot reclaim his superiority. In other words, if Benji lacks reason, he is in harmony with nature, he uses body language instead of logos, then his de-facto status as a white male at the top of social hierarchy cannot be acquired, as he aligns himself with the inferior side as far as the binary oppositions are concerned.

With his claim for superiority as an adult white man blemished, Benji is positioned as a mere child in need of protection throughout the text. The first scene Benji narrates clearly introduces this pathetic quality. It is Luster, a black servant boy who takes care of him during the play of golf. Furthermore, it is through Luster's words the reader realizes that these events are not observations made by a small child, but a 33-year-old man. In the following portions of his narration and the others, he is repeatedly shown to be alongside a caretaker, which creates a strong sense of neediness. Sometimes Caddy is able to calm him down when he cries, sometimes it is Dilsey, a motherly black servant who dedicates her time to him, and finally Jason, his legal guardian who is adamant on sending him to an asylum. However, one thing remains constant: As opposed to showing promise of inheriting the Compsons name and property as a patriarch, Benji with his stilted intelligence descends into a stratum where he is not only inferior to, but also dependent on females, servants and blacks.

Since the gendered ideal for the Southern society is spawned from combative and genteel cavaliers of the earliest settlers who helped create culture, traditions, systems, morals and institutions, Benji's perpetual childhood functions as a reminder

of the impossibility to re-establish this model of masculinity for future generations. In “Disabled Male: The Legacy of Faulkner’s Benjy in 20th Century American Literature”, Jessica Gicking suggests that by creating this model of the “eternal boy” Faulkner criticizes immobilizing effects of deviating from earlier models of heroism which requires letting go of individualism and selflessly aid others.

Without doubt, Benjy’s gender performance is not only hindered by his cognitive disability, rather, his disability comprises only the basis of his failure to perform his gender. One fateful incident when he finds the gates open and runs after girls leads to his castration as a punishment, yet his growth as an individual has already been obstructed by his family multiple times before that event. In his usual dismissive manner, Jason summarizes Benjy’s sexual urges as “trying to want something he couldn’t even remember he didn’t and couldn’t want any longer” (Faulkner, 1929: 270) as if to comprehend his brother’s sexuality after his castration. On the other hand, Benjy seems to realize the fact that his body went through some sort of a mutilation, as evidenced by his saying “I got undressed and I looked at myself, and I began to cry. Hush, Luster said. Looking for them ain’t going to do no good” (73).

Another critic, Emmeline Gros notes that Benjy’s “genitals will no longer be the source of identification in the institutional site of this section of the novel. As a result, Benjy’s characterization is based on the absence of the ultimate phallic signifier” (155). This mentioned weeping scene is one of the rare incidents where Benjy actually shows hints of insight, and the act of crying connects his castration with his “howling” for a flower. Having depicted as a boy who looks through the fence “curling flower spaces” (71) and his remarks about Caddy’s scent that reminds him of “trees” (23), plants and vegetation become a metaphor for Benjy’s sexuality. Although he howls and begs for a flower, Mrs. Compson refuses to give him one. In the final scene, when Jason attacks Benjy and Luster, he breaks his flower, similar to how his decision castrated Benjy earlier. The flower as a metaphor for male sexuality is rather unconventional, however, Faulkner is known to use certain types of flowers in a sexual context, as seen in *Sanctuary* where a honeysuckle draws attention as a prominent feature in the room while Horace Benbow is fantasizing about having a sexual intercourse with his stepdaughter. Here, flowers represent confined and castrated male

sexuality. In a similar manner, Jennifer Strawser comments on the absurdity found in Benjy's confinement by linking his situation to the postbellum Southern trauma. This depiction of Benjy as "a bellowing, castrated, white man who clings to a fence and lacks even the power of his own language" (36) blatantly dismantles the power the white Southern man used to have in the past.

Furthermore, this expository image of a powerless and confined man looking through flowers evokes the damsel in distress figures in courtly love romances, as opposed to heroic knights on whom the mythical cavalier figure of the South was based. As it is known that Southern families "tried their best to teach their sons an exhaustive list of activities required to act the part of gentlemen" (Glover 98) that would include public displays of vigor and vitality, it is safe to say that bellowing behind fences among flowers falls outside of the normative masculinity. From a gendered perspective, these systemic prohibitions have symbolically castrating effects on his performance of masculinity.

Likewise, it is mentioned several times in the novel that Benjy was originally named after his mother's brother, Maury, but when his disability was noticed, Mrs. Compson changed it to Benjamin in fear of disgracing her family name. In a way, her mother decided that Benjy is not worthy of carrying his uncle's name. Combined with the selling of the land which was also Benjy's birthright for Quentin's expensive higher education, Jason's cutting of his paper dolls, changing of his name from Maury to Benjamin, and then shortening it to Benjy exhibit the symbolic castrations that the Compsons have perpetrated on their son's identity. Overall, Benjy might be a perpetual child who will forever be dependent on others to survive, however, it is clear from his family members' restrictions, regardless of his disability, he has never been given any chance to grow into a man.

The second section is narrated by the oldest son of Mr. And Mrs. Compson, Quentin. Contrary to Benjy's tangled up accounts of their lives, Quentin is extremely articulate, and his train of thought immediately reveals how far his cultural coding infiltrates his psyche and how expectations related to masculinity lead to a gloomy and destructive outlook on life. As the oldest and arguably the most intelligent son of the

Compson family, Quentin is shown to be aware of the collapse of the South, along with the ideas that are associated with the Old South such as the mythical cavalier figure and certain cultural signs of masculine power including prosperity, heterosexuality and the codes of honor. However, his denial of what is happening around his own family, and by extension, his society fosters his fabrication of a false identity that does not belong to the postbellum South. In this aspect, he somewhat echoes *Sanctuary*'s Horace Benbow in his anachronistic dreams of establishing old moral values that are doomed from the start. Quentin's sense of masculinity, in his deeply flawed mind that borders on pathology, depends on arming himself with as many signifiers of antebellum masculinity as he can in response to his fluctuating sexual identity.

In order to explore the gap between Quentin's own masculinity and what Southern society expect it to be, one needs to look no further than other characters' descriptions of him and how he sees himself. Quentin's name is first mentioned in the novel by Benjy, however, Benjy's tendency to oscillate between the past and the present results in sketching an ambiguous figure whose biological sex cannot be defined. Needless to say, when Benjy says "Quentin", he actually refers to both his brother and his niece, Miss Quentin. Especially with no authorial intervention that clarifies this ambiguity, the name Quentin that is sometimes referred to as a "he" and sometimes a "she", materializes as both male and female. In "Reading Red: The Man with the (Gay) Red Tie in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*" Michelle Ann Abate asserts that this very "confusion that arises from this blurred distinction implies that there is one hermaphroditic Quentin" (188). And this misreading of the two sets the sense of ambiguity in Quentin's sexuality in motion.

Thus, even in retrospect, it is paradoxical to read Quentin as a figure of normative masculinity. Intriguingly, even after Benjy's narration comes to an end, Quentin's coding as a hermaphrodite or a gay man continues to haunt his characterization. Following Bing Shao's argument, Abate asserts that he "is often framed as a homosexual or, at least, a feminine man" (188) even in his own narration. Although Quentin himself does not express any homosexual desires blatantly, his friends at Harvard jokingly liken the closeness between him and his roommate Shreve

to a marriage, and call Shreve Quentin's "husband" (Faulkner 123). These teases and rumors about his sexuality aside, the fact that Shreve is the one that gets to be the husband challenges Quentin's fragile masculinity, since in this context Quentin embodies the feminized role of 'wife'. That other people are aware of these homosexual undertones that his relationship with Shreve makes him feel uneasy, and shows his utmost concern about his perceived masculinity. Similarly, his hermaphroditic quality also calls his gender performativity into question, considering his performance of heteronormative masculinity that must, in theory, conform to societal pressures is hardly believable to his fellow students at campus and perhaps to his "idiotic" brother.

In the absence of a fixed masculine identity, Quentin's obsession with Caddy emerges as a way to publicly compensate for his non-heteronormative sexuality. While Caddy's sexual escapades are looked down on by her brothers, Quentin seems to showcase jealousy rather than contempt. He seems jealous, because Caddy is able to perform her sexuality in a way Quentin never publicly can. Therefore, he tries to use his predestined position as the future patriarch of the Compsons and contain Caddy within the restrictions of an incestuous marriage. By marrying her and taking on the responsibility as the father of her child, in his mind, he can put his questionable heterosexuality and virility for public display. Fixated on reenacting the cavalier figure of a bygone frame of mind, he only uses concepts such as family honor, virginity, morality as contrived excuses to complete his gender performance. In reality, however, Quentin fits Mark Breitenberg's idea of masculinity in patriarchal hegemonies as something "inherently anxious, extremely preoccupied with female chastity and "always its own worst enemy" (128). This seemingly insincere devotion to the values of the Old South, yet again, brings *The Lost Cause* to mind, as his longing for the return of these obsolete ideas serves to make himself look masculine and has nothing to do with the nobility of his character.

The deficiencies in Quentin's gender performance are not limited to his sexual orientation. Throughout the text, there are numerous instances that portray him as someone who repeatedly fails as a man within the rules of his patriarchal society. For instance, his confrontation with Dalton Ames to protect his sister's "honor" and the

guilt he feels afterwards due to his failure never cease to plague his thoughts. Breitenberg, argues that "honor (in men) and chastity (in women) are the most definitive attributes of identity. But it is also true - and herein lies one potential source of anxiety - that both attributes are assigned by others rather than inherent, matters of public opinion rather than intrinsic possessions" (98). For Quentin, the fact that Caddy has had sex outside of marriage, while he is still presumed a virgin creates a great deal of anxiety. Therefore, it is his public performance, rather than her so-called ruining the family reputation that disturbs him. Similar to the effects of his metaphorical hermaphroditism and implied homosexuality, her sister's being sexually active upsets his sense of identity that he tries desperately to maintain under the guise of 'family honor'. Given that honor and chastity are attributes assigned by others, Quentin, in accordance with this Southern society where the siege mentality is prevalent and every outsider is seen as a threat, finds an incestuous relationship between a brother and a sister more socially acceptable than being a homosexual. Similarly, a sexual woman or a man who cannot pull the trigger to protect his sister's honor when the pistol is in his hands can be condemned since they pose a threat to his performance as a heterosexual white man who will one day be the patriarch of his family. This distorted way of thinking explains the motivations behind his false confession that declares himself as the father of Caddy's child.

In a similar vein, in his article, Christopher Breu connects Quentin's internalization of the imaginary ideal of antebellum manhood with his "fantasized and material loss of cultural privilege as a symbolic loss of manhood and the categories of honor and mastery with which it was associated" (112). Hence, he comes across as a man trying to fight his way through the disgust and the despair that his postbellum culture engenders. Quentin "as the eldest son in a family with aristocratic traditions, he thinks that he ought to possess chivalric courage and exercise active leadership, when he fails to demonstrate such qualities, he is consistently discouraged and baffled" (Thickstun 150). Similarly, when Dalton Ames holds his wrists, Quentin passes out "like a girl" (Faulkner, 1929: 201), again failing to do what is expected of his performance of masculinity. Given guns are obvious phallic symbols, Quentin's incapacity to use a gun in order to kill a rival male symbolically castrates him. It is

worth noting that John T. Irwin makes use of Freud's infamous Oedipal complex in order to explain the incestuous tendencies of Quentin, and appropriates the Oedipal triangle between mother/father/son to brother/sister/brother, doubling Quentin in process:

Quentin, tormented by his virginity, by his impotence ("poor Quentin youve never done that have you"), can only reply to Candace's sexual death by offering a real liebestod. He puts his knife to his sister's throat and proposes that they be joined forever in a murder/suicide -a double killing that represents the equivalent, on the level of brother/sister incest, of the suicidal murder of the brother seducer by the brother avenger. For if the brother-seducer/brother-avenger relationship represents doubling and the brother/sister relationship incest, then the brother/brother relationship is also a kind of incest and the brother/sister relationship a kind of doubling. (Irwin 41)

This doubling ideally should enable Quentin to validate his masculinity, yet conversely, it gives away the hidden homosexual desire in him at the same time. Clearly, it exposes his concerns regarding the affirmation of his masculinity by illustrating the notion that he is able to court a woman and fight to save her honor like a true cavalier. However, his failure to seduce Caddy and avenge her reveals that he is only trying to play the role that the society expects him to, and is indeed unable to escape his homosexuality even if the object of desire is himself. Furthermore, this doubling also associates Quentin's identity with that of Caddy, creating yet another hermaphroditic figure that undoubtedly threatens Quentin's fragile masculinity.

When Quentin's ostensibly chivalric ventures are relegated to anxieties of a homosexual man living in self-denial, General Compson's watch gains an ironic meaning. Of course, Mr. Compson gives the watch to his oldest son as part of their family tradition. However, he apparently is not fit for the role of a Southern patriarch given that it is highly unlikely for him to get married and have children and then pass their bloodline to the next generation. Thanks to its strong reliance on a gay man's reproductive options for its time, the text albeit almost homophobically implies that

the Compson family will not sustain itself in the long run. Quentin's efforts to break the watch indicates his desire to have mastery over time, but the watch continues to tick, which shows this family's hopelessness against the changing of times. Since the watch encapsulates a control over time exclusive to be inherited by men in this family, the fact that the watch never stops ticking even after it is broken shows that depatriarchalizing of the family is taking place. Accordingly, knowing that the Compsons' future patriarch commits suicide nullifies any probability of their survival.

The third portion of the novel, dated the 6th of April, 1928, is told from Jason's point of view. Alongside the narrator change, a tonal shift takes place as the text moves away from its tragic accounts of disabled and suicidal members of the Compson family, to a significantly more comedic adventures of their designated patriarch. Notably, the novel approaches Benjy and Quentin with sympathy, yet makes a complete fool of Jason. Although Jason eventually replaces Mr. Compson's position in the family, the juxtaposition between his perception and that of his father is transparent. Unlike Mr. Compson and Quentin, Jason does not seem to any nostalgic yearning for the Old South, chivalry or morality. Instead, his entire characterization is centered around his extremely greedy materialism that points to frightening possibilities of modernity the New South embodies.

Ironically, Jason IV is the only able-bodied and undisputedly heterosexual son of the family, which, in his society would automatically privilege him over others. Alluding primarily to Benjy's mental disability and Quentin's suicide, he calls himself as the only sane member in the family, and displays a strong sense of hegemonic entitlement in his role as the patriarch. Therefore, it is not surprising that he starts his narration by saying "Once a bitch always a bitch" (Faulkner, 1929: 153) only to put an end to it with the repetition of the same sentiment. Without a doubt, he has misogynistic tendencies that he is not afraid to show. Apparently, his masculine entitlement prompts him to hold firmly on his often-self-centered and narrow-minded opinions that effect people around him without allowing him to change or grow. Encapsulated by the fact that Quentin was the recipient of the watch that represents a connective link among the men in this family, Jason delineates what happens after the link dissolves. In a way, he is excluded from a long line of Southern men by his own

father despite Jason's suitability for such position especially compared to Quentin and Benjy. Underlining the differences between him and the other males in the Compson family, Gros describes Jason as someone who "attaches himself to the present and the emerging southern liberalism that framed the rise of the New South" (65). Hence, he is stripped of what makes the mythical cavalier figure an ideal. It is worth noting that, even after his seizure of his family as Mr. Compson's successor, his oppressive and violent actions come across as absurd and almost cartoony. Despite his gendered advantages, he fails in performance of Southern manhood, as he is equipped by the text with various thematic assemblages that are frequently utilized to criticize postbellum men who can actually adapt to the New South after the collapse of the plantation economy: immorality and avarice.

Astonishingly, by analyzing Jason's personality alone, one might realize the plurality and erraticism of masculinities represented by Faulkner's men, since it is clear that being a white aristocratic heterosexual man in a family with full of so-called dysfunctional sons does not equate to a fulfillment of one's gender performance. Indeed, Jason's masculinity is questionable at best according to his proximity of the criteria required by his own society. Therefore, even in absolute control of his entire family, the text does not take him seriously as a patriarch. For instance, the act of penetrative sex, which is generally associated masculine prowess, does not create a strong masculine image of Jason. On the contrary, in the post-coital scene where he is seen with Lorraine, he is rendered impotent by spotlighting work as only thing he can think of. In his state, "his being in bed with her—which should be the symbol of masculine assertion— becomes closely intertwined here with Jason's ineffectual attempt at asserting his own masculinity" (Gros 152-153). His unyielding preoccupation with money and materialism degrades him by transforming him into a stereotypical greedy modern man who is definitely looked down upon by the dominant Southern culture at the time. Likewise, during his unfruitful conversation with the sheriff while he is searching for his stolen money, the text outright comments on "his sense of injury and impotence" (Faulkner, 1929: 257). That said, money and power, inarguably, are interconnected when it comes to today's standards of masculinity in the western world. However, for aristocratic postbellum Southerners whose

plantations were easy ways of stable income before the Civil War disrupted their economic endeavors, having anxieties related to money and work must be alien concepts that bring them dangerously closer to the self-made men of the industrial North. It is rather ironic that “New York Jew” is used as a derogatory term that sketches an image of a stereotypical greedy and immoral Jewish in Jason’s narration, Jason himself is the embodiment of such avarice and indecency. Questionable modes of behavior such as blackmail, stealing and forgery as means to earn money stand in direct contrast to Mr. Compson’s definition of “man”, and show that Jason falls in line with the aforementioned new breed of the gentleman who is known for the books he has not returned. In contrast to honor, or morality, Jason’s perception of the world is limited to materialism which is revealed through his repeated and sometimes peculiar uses of only monetary terms. For example, when Jason mentions Quentin’s suicide, there is not an implication of grief over his brother’s demise, his only concern seems to be the latter’s expensive education at Harvard and how terrible it is as an investment. Even his name, echoing that of the legendary leader of the Argonauts from Greek mythology, overtly contributes to cauterization of his masculinity as a negative consequence of his avarice. Similar to the mythological Jason, Faulkner’s Jason is after the Golden Fleece in the form of material gain, yet his methods are far from brave or heroic.

Jason’s obsession with his niece, Miss Quentin, might resemble Benjy’s and Quentin’s obsession with Caddy at first. But the more Jason narrates his side of the story, the more perspicuous it becomes that his is a different kind of obsession. While Benjy and Quentin are at odds with Caddy’s sexuality and infatuated with the freedom she nonchalantly expresses, Jason wants to control Miss Quentin because he can only steal her money as long as she is around. However, by entering his uncle’s room and taking what was supposed to be hers in the first place, Miss Quentin outsmarts Jason without much effort. Her ultimate victory over Jason, accompanied by Jason’s hopeless attempts to chase after her that the text handles in a humorous way, renders him as an ‘idiot’ and places him next to Benjy. Just before his journey to take his Golden Fleece back from his niece begins, an old black man, Job tells him: “You’s too smart fer me. Ain’t a man in dis town kin keep up wid you fer smartness” (Faulkner,

1929: 212), which adds to the sum total of the times Jason has been ridiculed. If *Marse Chan*, one of the most famous examples of the plantation fiction, idealizes the “Southern man” as an exemplary gentleman revered by his black slaves even after death, Faulkner’s novel humiliates him by elevating women and black men regardless of their social status.

While his lack of a solid connection with his father symbolized by General Compson’s watch haunts Jason’s narration, his relationship with his mother is also problematic in its entirety. Their closeness can be observed in Quentin’s and even Benjy’s portions of the text and firmly establishes it as an unhealthy relationship based on unjustified and delusionary beliefs. Going to another place where nobody can find them, according to Mrs. Compson, is the only way Jason “will have a chance to grow up” (Faulkner, 1929: 85). Therefore, she admits that Quentin, Benjy and Caddy do not have any potential to survive. As far as Mrs. Compson is concerned, Jason is devoid of the “the streak of Compson selfishness and false pride” (85) her other children possess. Thanks to this belief, she considers Jason part of her own bloodline, Bascomb family. This very notion of preserving her family name is hinted when her naming of Benjy after her own brother, only to change it after Benjy’s mental disability has been noticed. Hence, if we take Benjy as a flawed and discarded early model of Bascomb manhood, Jason emerges as the perfected form of her blood whose potential points to the future. While her justifications for favoring Jason are based on her narcissism, Jason seems to have internalized this sense of superiority to his siblings due to his mother’s tenets. Similarly, Ralph E. Hitt notes Jason’s willingness “to listen to his mother extoll him for the sacrifices he has made in order to be the breadwinner for the Compson house” (128). Thus, Jason comes across as someone who would rather receive pampering and unearned praise than facing reality, which suggests that her mother’s influence is what hinders his self-actualization as a man.

On another note, given that Jason has been conditioned to be successor for the Boscomb bloodline instead of the Compson bloodline ever since his birth, his taking over Mr. Compson’s role also denotes to the end of the patriarchal domination in this family. With Quentin dead, Benjy institutionalized, Caddy and Miss Quentin gone away, Jason remains as the sole member of this family whose survival is crucial for

further generations. However, in spite of Jason's actual belief of superiority, which emanates from his gender, his own baseless claims regarding being the sanest member of his family and Mrs. Compson's favoritism, his performance as a patriarch cannot save his family from their catastrophic collapse.

The fourth and the final section of the novel is noteworthy due to the shift that occurs in the narrative technique. Instead of tapping into the characters' consciousness, Faulkner switches to a third person narration which offers a panoramic view of the Compson household. As opposed to going back and forth among countless mutterings of an 'idiot', the text chooses to focus on a black servant, Dilsey and her role as the motherly caretaker of the Compson family. This way, a broader perspective related to the decline in this Southern patriarchal family is presented, as Dilsey's sudden rise to prominence crushes any semblance of superiority Jason still has. Cobb observes this decentralization by commenting on how "the once patrician Compsons have reached the point of seemingly irreversible degeneration and decay and the entire clan is dwarfed in courage, wisdom, and integrity by their black servant Dilsey" (601). In this sense, Mrs. Compson's ordering Dilsey to "go on and fix Jason to something" (Faulkner, 1929: 255) feels more like a declaration of dependency on this black woman rather than a typical master-servant relationship. We know that she is responsible for feeding the family, she takes care of the children, she goes to church and practices her religious beliefs unlike Mrs. Compson who wants to have a Bible nearby for comfort without any intention for reading it. Therefore, Dilsey is, inarguably, placed on a moral-high ground compared to her white employers. At one point, she puts her own hat on Benjy's head, which yet again, showcases the role reversal between the white aristocracy and the black people who used to be regarded less valuable than their commodities. One might argue that, her weeping after thinking "I've seed de first en de last.... I seed de beginnin, en now I sees de endin" (Faulkner, 1929: 263) resembles happy slave figures from plantation novels, but from her explanation it is understood that she merely strengthens the postbellum tragedy that downfall of the Compson family represents. No matter how hard Quentin tries to stop time and revert back to a time where they were at the top of the social hierarchy, at the end, it is Dilsey who has

some sort of an agency to comment on the beginning and the end merely by staying alive.

Throughout this chapter, my intention has been to analyze the three prospective patriarchs of the Southern family depicted in *The Sound and the Fury*. I have introduced my motivations based on the antebellum concept of fatherhood as an ultimate destination for a Southern man, which have enabled me to comment on the dramatic societal shift in gender norms that happened during the postbellum period. Using Faulkner's subversion of the plantation fiction as an entry point, I have discussed the degradation of the emblematic white Southern patriarch. As opposed to conventional plantation novels, Faulkner's text does not, apparently, aim to re-establish the Old South as a pastoral paradise where even the black slaves want to be restored. Instead, what Faulkner proposes is a bleak portrait of a family that cannot break their own delusional cycles to reach the present world. In this sense, I have spotlighted upon Benjy, Quentin and Jason in order to show how each of these future patriarchs are destined to fail. Regarded as a child who will never grow up to be a man, Benjy cannot be a patriarch due to his mental disability alongside his literal and metaphorical castration. On the other hand, Quentin, despite his intelligence and promising education cannot come to terms with his homosexuality and then commits suicide, crushing any hopes for the future of his family. Finally, Jason IV replaces Mr. Compson as the patriarch. However, that is not to say he can actually perform this role. With his obvious corruption and comical materialism, Jason is so far removed from the Southern ideal of manhood that he holds no authority over his subordinates such as Miss Quentin or Dilsey even in his privileged position as the head of his family. As representatives of postbellum Southern men who are symbolically castrated, all three of these men point to depatriarchalizing of the Southern family in their respective failures to fulfill their gender performance when they face a crisis that prompts them to take action.

CHAPTER FOUR

MYTHOLOGIZING THE CAVALIER IN ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

William Faulkner published his sixth novel *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1936, the very same year Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* was published. As I alluded in the first chapter, the themes and issues handled in these two unmistakably Southern novels reflect two exact opposite spectrums of the postbellum Southern ethos, therefore, it is not far-fetched to liken them to a photograph and its negative. While Mitchell's text draws its strength from an undying nostalgia for a ravishingly beautiful, yet completely manufactured pastoral Old South that shows no awareness of the tainted history of colonialism, white supremacy and racism, *Absalom, Absalom!* purports to be exploring different manifestations of the flawed Southern psyche by offering a rotten world whose inhabitants are haunted by their own ghosts. As the text covers almost a century from 1807 to 1910, it definitely provides a far-reaching observation on the South's transformation and its devastating effects on many individuals who once occupied positions of power in the antebellum South. Prior to my analysis of the novel, I find it absolutely necessary to summarize its intricate plot: The novel focuses on Thomas Sutpen's life story. Rosa Coldfield, one of the several people Sutpen hurt in his lifetime, sets the events in motion by summoning Quentin Compson in order to talk about the glorious rise and fall of the man she now calls a "demon". It is revealed through her narration, born as a poor white boy in West Virginia in 1807, Sutpen quickly rose into wealth and power upon his arrival with a group of slaves and a French architect to Mississippi, which has created an enigmatic figure who can be described as the talk of the town. Thanks to his inclination to use brute force when he deems necessary, and strategic financial maneuvers, Sutpen manages to establish a large plantation called Sutpen's Hundred in 1833. Shortly after, he marries Rosa's older sister Ellen Coldfield. Although Rosa was only a small child when Ellen and Thomas got married, she seems to think of their matrimony as the beginning of the end for her own family. Several years later, Ellen gives birth to two children, Judith and Henry who are central to Sutpen's tragic fall. When they grow up,

both siblings become entranced by Charles Bon, an older college student in the University of Mississippi. Amid this love triangle that culminates in sexual confusion, Charles and Judith get engaged. However, Thomas soon realizes that Charles is actually his son from an earlier marriage which he renounced after discovering that his wife was a mixed race. Even though he informs Henry about Charles's status as his son, Henry chooses to repudiate his father and follow Charles to New Orleans. During the Civil War, which both Charles and Henry join forces as soldiers of the Confederate Army, Henry gives permission to Charles' and Judith's marriage, but his outlook on their union goes awry when his father reveals Charles's miscegenation. After they return from the war, Henry kills Charles at the gates of Sutpen's Hundred, and escapes to live in seclusion for a long time. Later, Thomas marries Rosa in an attempt to improve his financial situation, but she leaves her due to his pressuring her to bear him a son. After a while, Thomas remarries a 15-year-old girl called Milly, but gets killed by his spouse's grandfather, Wash Jones. After Rosa finishes telling Thomas's story, she requests Quentin to take her to Sutpen's Hundred. Surprisingly, they go to the premises only to find Henry and Thomas's daughter from a slave, Clytie dwelling there. Three months later, Rosa yet again goes back to Sutpen's Hundred in order to fetch Henry to town, but Clytie sets a fire that ultimately costs her and Henry their lives. In 1881, Charles Bon returns with his black wife and the following year they welcome a black and cognitively disabled son, Jim Bond. All through the text, Quentin collects various bits of information on Thomas Sutpen from Rosa, yet sometimes he compares notes with his father Mr. Compson and his grandfather, General Compson who used to be the only person Sutpen called a friend back in the day. With all of its thematic connections to the Civil War, incest, racial discrimination, patriarchy and manhood, Sutpen's story, for Quentin, becomes indistinguishable with the South itself. Therefore, in last quarter of the novel, Quentin recounts what he has learnt about Thomas Sutpen's life from others when his roommate Shreve wants to know about the South.

If one skims through blurbs that can be found on the back of any edition of **Absalom, Absalom!** they might most likely get a wrong impression about not only the subject matter, but also the genre of the novel. After all, Faulkner's text can be

perceived as an epic tale of rags-to-riches, a biography of a self-made Southern man who invades Yoknapatawpha, or a parable about a white man whose legacy still continues even after his death. Taken without a proper context, *Absalom, Absalom!* is evocative of the propaganda-filled biographies of the Southern heroes that I mentioned in the first chapter such as multiple books written on Thomas Jefferson, John Smith or Robert E. Lee that not only idealize but also deify these men. Indeed, the text goes out of its way to create a mythical Southern man whose story is analogous to what the South went through in the 19th century. However, in contrast to those biographies of real men that are so blurred with fabrication they border on fiction, Faulkner creates a fictional man whose story reflects real issues with no indication of sugarcoating, denial or euphemisms. Therefore, what we have in the novel emerges as a satire on how the South constructs a fabricated myth out of completely ordinary and often problematic males. In doing so, Faulkner draws from the Southern Gothic genre and immerses his characters in a world that is very reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's from the first page. As Tom F. Wright notes, Poe's gothic is a genre filled with "agonised introspection, dramatising the fragility of personality and sanity, obsessively preoccupied with the ways in which the mind betrays itself and its capacity for evil" (9). Here, in Faulkner's text, the shadow of Poe's gothic feels almost tangible in the way Rosa Coldfield's introspection is unraveled. In fact, Rosa's narration leans into dark and primitive obsessions of the South's shameful history, masculine trauma, racial discrimination, anxiety of miscegenation and one man's capacity to commit murder. Similar to how Poe's works "offer a powerful gothic critique of nineteenth-century society, its values, contradictions and myths" (10), *Absalom, Absalom!* interrogates perhaps the oldest Southern myth, the Cavalier, and each contradiction, denial and delusion it connotes. Furthermore, the myth of Sutpen is filtered through a borderline supernatural layer, as Sutpen is called "a demon" by Rosa and later interpreted as one by Shreve. Likewise, the novel's focal character, Quentin Compson can be considered as a ghost, due to the fact that he is known to have killed himself in *Sound and the Fury* that was published years earlier. Quentin's meeting with Rosa Coldfield in "the eternal black" (Faulkner, 1936: 7) she had worn for more than four decades in a room that has a "coffin-smelling gloom" (8) illustrates a disturbing atmosphere that is infused with several gothic tropes as she reveals her metaphorical skeletons in her closet. Thus, in creating a mock-

biography for a mythical Southern man, Thomas Sutpen, the main genre codes and conventions of the Southern Gothic become instrumental.

In this chapter, I argue that Faulkner exposes the flawed mindset behind the South's fabrication of the Cavalier myth from colonizers and soldiers by mythologizing a hypermasculine cavalier out of the deeply controversial figure of Thomas Sutpen. By giving multiple conflicting definitions, Faulkner attacks the biography genre, and demonstrates the impossibility of capturing one definitive version of a historical figure. Moreover, I note that, Quentin Compson, who is desperate to associate himself with the values that are related to the Old South such as the Lost Cause and chivalry, once again turns into an embodiment of self-denial in his obsession with Sutpen's legend that creates a normative masculine ideal. While the process of construction of this masculine figure reflects fault lines within the South's centuries-long admiration for colonizers, slaveholders and soldiers, the apparent discrepancies found in different versions of the same tale distinguish masculinity as a summation of societal and cultural indoctrinations rather than biological make-up of the male sex. In contrast to the fictional biographies that aim to apotheosize these men, Faulkner demonizes his emblematic white male by using Poe's Southern Gothic as a template with which he makes a spectacle of him. Henceforth, in this novel, storytelling becomes an active propaganda instrument that is utilized by men to reconstruct the antebellum Southern manhood. However, Rosa's position as the first narrator prevents Sutpen's tale from functioning as a masculinist propaganda by disrupting the construction site of the South's normative masculine identity.

Throughout the novel, Thomas Sutpen's tale is told by multiple commentators: Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, General Compson and Quentin Compson. I refrain from calling any of them "narrators", as none of them serves as a fully-fledged narrator in a literary sense. The text has a third person narrator, but it focalizes on several characters, and taps into their consciousness whenever necessary, which creates an undeniable polyphonic quality. Since all of the characters who are given agency to narrate effectively provide unique perspectives on this distinctly Southern phenomenon that is Sutpen, it is uncertain as to whether he is a self-made man destroyed by his own hubris or an irredeemable embodiment of evil. As Cobb

observes, the Confederacy utilized history as a propaganda agent: “Former Confederate Robert L. Dabney believed that history should serve not just as justification, but also as propaganda, designed to stir the emotions of succeeding generations of white southerners and even secure the sympathies of white northerners as well” (100). Thus, it is hardly surprising that the men in the Compson family provide an alternative history for Sutpen. Although there are certain facts one cannot sweep under the rug such as his childhood poverty or racial anxieties, one cannot visualize a definitive version of Sutpen. On the contrary, his characterization, in fact, seems to be in a constant flux that involves creation, deconstruction and re-creation of his identity based on both the storyteller and the recipient. When Rosa recollects her memories about Sutpen, it is impossible to deny her aggressive tone and feelings of hatred found between her words. Conversely, when General Compson talks about him, there seems to be a level of respect and admiration. When Quentin reconstructs what he has learnt from Rosa and General Compson, Sutpen emerges as an allegory about the South, rather than an actual human being. Apparently, the myth of Thomas Sutpen only functions if the recipient is willing to be indoctrinated, as evidenced by Quentin’s and Shreve’s vastly different reactions of this tale. Richard Forrer notes that these characters “gain access to the reality of the past only through the imaginative re-creation of events” (23). Therefore, their narrations are prone to be biased. Given the past depicted in these characters’ memories and accounts only is an interpretation of events, it “becomes a series of often conflicting imaginative constructs which the narrators themselves accept as truthful visions of reality” (24). As Quentin presents Sutpen’s story in response to Shreve’s request for a tale of South, the text interrogates the authenticity of the Cavalier myth through creating multiple versions of this emblematic Southern man.

This process of mythologizing Thomas Sutpen begins with Rosa’s version of his life story. She might have a personal connection to Sutpen, yet, being described as “the county’s poetess laurate” (Faulkner, 1936: 11) establishes her as a one-woman Greek chorus that narrates a tragedy. When we examine the characterization of Thomas Sutpen found in her narration, he comes to the forefront as a figure who shares several qualities similar to the mythical cavaliers that I mentioned in the first chapter.

After all, his mysterious appearance is very reminiscent of Captain John Smith's establishing himself with "money, rank, and a coat of arms" (Gray 36). As the "biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the country" (Faulkner, 1946: 56), Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber claims that Sutpen achieves a sense of completeness in his copying of "patriarchal models, supporting the dominant culture by doing so" (59). As a consequence, he becomes an object of gossip among men and women during his lifetime and even after his tragic death. Due to his sudden emergence and climbing up the social ladder, Sutpen seems to have already forged his own myth to a certain extent during his lifetime. Synthesizing normative masculine models of the South, this entirely constructed masculine identity is never questioned by his contemporaries such as General Compson or Rosa Coldfield. Admittedly, Rosa's take on Thomas Sutpen's story casts Sutpen in an unfavorable light, yet it is obvious from her narration that he meets the socio-cultural criteria of what makes a man masculine:

He wasn't a gentleman. He wasn't even a gentleman. He came here with a horse and two pistols and a name which nobody ever heard before, knew for certain was his own anymore than the horse was his own or even the pistols, seeking some place to hide himself, and Yoknapatawpha County supplied him with it. He sought the guarantee of reputable men to barricade him from the other and later strangers who might come seeking him in turn, and Jefferson gave him that. (Faulkner, 1936: 14-15)

Rosa emphasizes the fact that Sutpen was not a "gentleman" before his arrival, but it is transparent that after completing necessary social tasks such as gaining respectability, owning slaves and carrying pistols, Sutpen's manhood never begs a question. According to Rosa, "marrying ten thousand Ellens could not have made him" (16) a gentleman, but he seems to possess all components required for his ultimate gender performance. The South's culturally coded masculine symbols, then, enable one to perform as a man rather than his biological sex or bloodline. Curiously, Rosa has a tendency to dehumanize Sutpen by calling him a demon, and imply that he is innately evil beyond redemption. However, even this blatant dehumanization does not interfere with Sutpen's normative masculine performance. Apparently, his status as a human is questionable, his status as a "man" is not.

That said, it is too restrictive to accept Thomas Sutpen only as an individual man. Rosa's take reveals his position as an emblem long before Quentin's interpretation turns him into one. In her description of Southern males as "men with valor and strength but without pity and honor" (20), the difference between Southern men in general and Thomas Sutpen becomes blurred. In that sense, Sutpen's mythification as an allegory for the South plants its roots as early as Rosa's testimony even though her intentions are the opposite of immortalizing this man who destroyed her family. As she asks "Is it any wonder that Heaven saw fit to let us lose?" (20), the cruelty of these Southern men represented by Sutpen becomes a possible reason for the South's defeat in the Civil War. No doubt there is specific rationale for this. By including this generalization about men and their connection to the Civil War, the text deciphers a critical female-based outlook on the South that cannot be shared by its male characters. As the South's failure in battle hits too close to home for General Compson, and that Quentin's defining trait in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury* is his blind obsession with the Old South and its chivalric ideas, such observations can only be made by Rosa who is impartial to both outlooks due to her exclusion from the South's collective masculine conceptions and idealizations.

Rosa can be defined as a one-woman Greek chorus because this newfound role in the postbellum period grants her the ability to comment on her society. Despite her being the only female anchor from which Quentin learns Sutpen's tale, Rosa, as the first person who can speak of her version, locates herself above Mr. Compson, General Compson and Quentin. In her article, Olivia Carr Edenfield draws attention to her lack of a proper position in her society. She begins her argument by exemplifying General Compson's emphasis on how they, as *men* "made women into ladies", but the Civil War "came and made ladies into ghosts" (Faulkner, 1936: 12). His entire viewpoint, without a doubt, shows his white male entitlement and hegemonic masculinity in his taking responsibility for bestowing social roles for women, and the pressures placed upon them merely by taking credit for their positionality. However, it is not difficult to see this act of telling the story of Sutpen as an opportunity for Rosa through which she liberates herself from her prescribed gendered role. Since Rosa was a part of Sutpen's story, she gains authority over other commentators. Another scholar, Jenny

Jennings Foerst sees her actual presence in this tale as what “confers validity only on her version of Thomas Sutpen's patrimonial design and only on her focus for the story— namely, her refusal to become Sutpen's third wife, the third passive vehicle for his realization of such a patrimony” (38). Therefore, storytelling becomes a tool for female empowerment for Rosa who was cast aside by Sutpen for her inability to conform to what her society dictates. It is hardly surprising that Rosa, who used to be silent about Sutpen back when he was alive, can claim a voice when he is gone, long after the Civil War, and against someone like Quentin who is devoid of the patriarchal power his ancestors from the antebellum era had. Hence, this transition of authority definitely capitalizes on the decline of masculine power in the postbellum South. In other words, just by living to tell Sutpen’s story, Rosa disrupts hegemonic masculinity.

In a similar vein, Erica Plouffe Lazure defines Rosa’s narration as “the engine” of *Absalom, Absalom!* due to its function as a catalyst that begets a whole new discussion of Thomas Sutpen. Lazure also identifies Rosa’s motivation in narrating this story as an effort to reclaim her “legitimacy, belonging, and a voice in her community” (479). This interpretation works remarkably well in terms of explaining Rosa as a character. Given that she is constantly depicted in wearing black garments in a death-like environment, it is Rosa who is positioned as a liminal figure between life and death. During my close reading of the novel, I cannot help but compare her to Charles Dickens’s Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* (1861), who is in a state of decomposing in her rotten wedding dress. Akin to Miss Havisham, Rosa embodies the gothic trope of a scorned woman who cannot pass into the afterlife. It is as if Rosa died when Sutpen abandoned her and is still occupying the earthly plane because of her unfinished business with Sutpen. As an ostracized woman who does not have a husband or children, Rosa does not conform to the Southern standards of female identity. However, by narrating what Sutpen did to her in great detail, she “achieves motherhood in the only way she can, which is literary motherhood” (479). Accordingly, even though the rest of *Absalom, Absalom!* deals with how several men try to take and mold Sutpen’s story for their liking in order to turn it into a masculinist propaganda, it definitely “is her imprint, her version of events, that takes form and regenerates in the minds and memories of those in Yoknapatawpha County” (494). In

that sense, Sutpen's myth becomes a mode of representation with which Rosa can transform herself from a ghost-like figure to an emancipated woman "who crosses the threshold of her sister's house on the arm of a proper young gentleman" (494).

Similarly, in "Sub Rosa: Voice, Body, and History in *Absalom, Absalom!*", Patrick O'Donnell comments on how Rosa is seen as abject in the eyes of her society and how storytelling serves as a method for her to escape from her marginalized status. When she begins to narrate her own version of Sutpen's tale, "she triggers the apocalypse which signals the end of the world which has abjected her" (33). Hence, Rosa's narrating Sutpen's legend to someone like Quentin, who still clings to obsolete masculine concepts such as chivalry, implies a sense of deliberation and calculation on her part. Apparently, through birthing a tale where a well-known Southern man is exposed to be a monster, Rosa manages to rumble some of the firmest masculine institutions in her culture.

When we compare Rosa's interpretation to that of General Compson, many discrepancies between the perspectives of a Southern man and a Southern woman are highlighted. Even though they both talk about the same man, it is visible that General Compson's version of Thomas Sutpen is tonally much more neutral than Rosa's. While Rosa illustrates Sutpen as a destructive figure, General Compson notices Sutpen's impatience to climb up the social ladder. For General Compson, Sutpen is a "slave of his secret and furious impatience, his conviction gained from whatever that recent experience had been—that fever mental or physical—of a need for haste, of time fleeing beneath him" (Faulkner, 1936: 35).

It is no wonder that the fever/sickness analogy General Compson peculiarly uses in order to define Thomas Sutpen's condition is unmistakably absent from Rosa's rendition that consciously dehumanizes Sutpen. As this uncontrollable desire for pursuit and prize recalls the mythical cavaliers of the South, Compson's resilient and reserved comments on it does not indicate any hints of bewilderment in him. If anything, Sutpen's behavior is what the South expects from a performance of masculine identity. In addition, being a white male who also displays public signs of sexual potency, landowning and having male heirs, General Compson himself is too

preoccupied with his gender performativity to be critical of Sutpen. Instead, as contemporaries who were the last representatives of the Old South in its full masculine glory, there seems to be an unspoken alliance between these two men. As "anxiety is largely a discourse articulated and played out between men, a way for men to confirm their identity through a shared language of suffering and distress" (Breitenberg 13), it is definitely within the realm of possibility that Compson is able to grasp Sutpen's feelings, due to the fact that as a man, there is a strong chance that he has dealt with a similar distress in his life. Nevertheless, the more we learn about Sutpen, the clearer it becomes that he is just another example of the anxious male, in spite of his having common traits with the mythicized cavalier figure. At the end of the day, he turns out to be a man trying to define himself with his big house and worrying about the sex of his unborn child. Hence, due to his gender, General Compson is able to recognize this masculine anxiety in Sutpen. Since General Compson is responsible for, and also an ignorant victim of the reproduction and continuation of this patriarchal system, there are no attempts to marginalize Sutpen such as calling a demon in his interpretation.

Whereas we can identify the inherent need to preserve the Cavalier myth in General Compson's version, Mr. Compson's take also reveals his subconscious anxieties regarding fatherhood and gender performativity. In terms of authorial agency, Mr. Compson is considerably less reliable than both Rosa and his father. First of all, he was not one of the actors of Sutpen's life. Additionally, all he has, in relation to Thomas Sutpen is a scrap of Charles Bon's letter and second-hand knowledge he has collected from others. Thus, his interpretation of events functions as a filler rather than representing the truth as it is. Another scholar, Peter Brooks calls him "a rich scenarist" (255). This is a particularly apt analogy, as his version is ubiquitous with some details he cannot know, which leads one to question his validity. Within the scope of his limited approach, Mr. Compson, "for all his evident will to construct a hermeneutically powerful plot" (255), cannot produce a definitive take on the legend of Sutpen.

It is worth noting that Mr. Compson's take is blind to the details of what is happening in Sutpen's Hundred simply because he was not present. Similarly, actual details regarding Sutpen's Haitian wife are not elaborated. Instead, there are several

“moments of radical doubt” (255) in his recount in the place of the absolute certainty conveyed in Rosa’s narrative. Mr. Compson’s narration is littered with deductions and speculations. As Foerst observes, in his “replacing female performative agency with static tropes that, paradoxically, represent female agency, Mr. Compson creates a mad, deconstructing rhetorical text without, of course, realizing that it is such” (Foerst 38).

Thus, as opposed to Rosa’s biased, yet reflective tale, Mr. Compson’s interpretation is indicative of how the process of mythologizing a semi-public figure shapes up. Still, he tries to discard and refute Rosa by mentioning how she “did not see any of them; she had never seen (and was never to see alive) Charles Bon at all” (Faulkner, 1936: 74), or catching some elements which Rosa left out such as “two female niggers in the wagon” (61). In his calculated focusing on what cannot have been *experienced* by Rosa and whatever meaning he can extract from the letter, Mr. Compson tries to hold on to his masculine authority through Sutpen’s tale. As the core of his interpretation is mostly originated in the letter, he intentionally frames his narration around Sutpen’s children: Henry, Judith and Charles. Remarkably, one of the focal points found in his version is the sexually ambiguous relationship between Henry and Charles. This homosexual subtext is rather strange for a middle-aged heterosexual Southern man to mention or even notice, but Mr. Compson dwells on this issue for a long time owing to the fact that it is one of the only components of the story which he can include without making his story a contrived attempt. Matthew R. Vaughn analyzes Mr. Compson’s portrayal of this relationship and shows to what extent Mr. Compson’s conceptualization of homosexuality must have been shaped by a particularly Southern apprehension of homosexual relationships by Bon is portrayed as an effeminate man and how Henry’s fascination with him leads him “to imitate Bon’s clothing and manner” (524).

The first encounter between Charles and Henry as narrated by Mr. Compson is an entirely artificial one. Thus, it is reflective of how someone like Mr. Compson, a heterosexual patriarch of an aristocratic Southern family, can envisage homosexuality. Unsurprisingly, he chooses to depict Charles as an effeminate man wearing a flowered, almost feminised gown, which is approximately how one would expect a heterosexual man to sketch a fictional gay male. From his perspective, effeminacy must be a key

aspect in male homosexual identity. Thus, it becomes rather transparent that in his narration he makes use of a persistent stereotype about homosexuality found in western societies that erroneously connects the lack of masculine markers with homosexual orientation. Seemingly, this can be qualified as one of his methods to enhance his narration in terms of credibility. Moreover, he does not stop there, and adds another stereotype regarding homosexuality by making Henry imitate Charles's appearance and mannerisms. According to Mr. Compson, homosexual traits can be adopted through imitation of an older role model. Needless to say, this is an extremely reductive proposal that does not have a basis in science, yet it is also a projection of how a Southern man perceives homosexuality to be. Similarly, the fact that Charles Bon is a mixed race also contributes to his role as a corrupting influence. Precisely, Mr. Compson's own anxieties about miscegenation and sexuality are revealed through his description of Charles as an effeminate man with mixed blood who corrupts an innocent white boy. Given that Henry begins to resemble Charles in time, they become analogous to the equalization of whites and blacks in the post-Civil War South. That said, this anxiety of assimilation lurks in each narrative, especially in the way relationships are depicted.

Thus, the union between Henry and Charles disrupts the social order in Yoknapatawpha. However, on a large scale, Mr. Compson's tone in his depiction of this homoerotic relationship does not seem to be entirely disapproving. Rather, it carries a transcendent value that contradicts how the South perceives any possibility outside of heteronormativity. As "Southern elites refused to tolerate certain behaviors, including homosexuality and incest, once they came to light and threatened reputations" (Glover 126), one might argue that acknowledging these aspects in Henry and Charles's relationship must contrast what Mr. Compson is trying to accomplish in his narration. That said, the presentation of this relationship actually serves to add a mythic value to the tale even further. It is clear in Mr. Compson's underlining of how Henry "repudiated blood birth right and material security for his sake" (Faulkner, 1936: 89), the love between two men becomes both pivotal and inevitable. Remarkably, although Mr. Compson marginalizes Charles, he underlines several instances where Henry makes sacrifices in order to be with Charles, creating a

sympathetic figure in Henry. In that sense, Charles once again reads like a mixed-race opportunist who seduces Henry. As far as Mr. Compson is concerned, despite its destructiveness, Henry's love for Charles evokes the relationships between legendary heroes such as that of Achilles and Patroclus and that of Zeus and Ganymede, or star-crossed lovers who are destined to be apart as seen in Greek tragedies, instead of a forbidden notion of homosexuality in the patriarchal South. Again, this unorthodox approach results in showcasing the extent of mythologizing Sutpen's story when it is forged by a Southern man. Even a man like Mr. Compson, who has no delusions of reverting back the Old South, resurrecting the Cavalier figure, or nostalgic outlook, is more than willing to edit a life story of a Southern man by adding mythical elements or polishing socially unacceptable aspects. Accordingly, Lynn Gartrell Levins likens Mr. Compson's narration as a whole to a Greek tragedy and renders Sutpen as a tragic hero. Apparently, despite his inevitable demise in every narrative, "it is only in Mr. Compson's section that he is ennobled after his fall because of the magnitude of what he has tried to do" (41).

As seen above, this cross-generational appeal of the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen is proved by many young and old characters who are in one way or another obsessed with him. Repeated constructions and reconstructions of this tale, then, must signify either the need in these Southern men to come to terms with their own anxieties, or embracing nostalgic views of the Old South that is picturesque and ripe with possibilities. However, out of all male characters, Quentin Compson is perhaps given the most palpable reasons to use this particular story to evaluate his status within his society. From the beginning of *The Sound and the Fury*, questioning of Quentin's masculinity has been a crucial element, as we know that his mentally-challenged brother Benjy's narrative fails to differentiate between Quentin and his niece Miss Quentin. Hence, mythologizing the Cavalier figure enables Quentin to prove to himself that such antiquated ideals of masculinity can still survive. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Mr. Compson is far too cynical and realistic for Quentin to be idealized as a father figure. Thus, as an inevitable consequence of Mr. Compson's reduction in his status, Thomas Sutpen replaces him as an ultimate patriarch and masculine role model for Quentin. Despite his dark portrayal and tragic ending, Mr.

Sutpen is useful for Quentin thanks to his undeniable subscription to normative Southern models. According to Irwin, Quentin's interest in this story derives from his inheritance of "impotence" (110) from his father. As Sutpen is unable to provide a normative masculine role model for his son, Quentin chooses Sutpen as a surrogate father.

Apparently, Quentin projects his own life onto Sutpen's story and attempts to purge himself of the masculine anxiety that is caused by his inefficacy as a man in the eyes of his society. If a man like Sutpen who did not have a privileged background can prosper and be respected, so can Quentin establish himself as a "man". In other words, this tale is significant for Quentin on a deeper level than just the sense that it presents a chivalric paragon from the Old South in the form of Thomas Sutpen. Likewise, and perhaps more crucially, Quentin's obsession with this legend eventually becomes essential for his goals, as it produces new doubles who help him to redeem himself as a man: Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon. Irwin comments on Faulkner's distinctive use of the Oedipal triangle and how he, through his depiction of family romance, replaces the triangle of mother, father and son with "the figures of brother avenger (Henry Sutpen), sister (Judith), and brother seducer (Charles Bon)" (181).

Irwin does not abstain from calling this relations "a family romance" but he refers to, inarguably, is the ménage à trois among Quentin/Caddy/Dalton Ames that is repeated in *Absalom, Absalom!* by the trio of Henry/Judith/Charles. Therefore, this brother-avenger/sister/brother-seducer pattern in the Sutpen story reveals why Quentin has a fascination with these people. Unsurprisingly, Quentin has no trouble identifying with Henry, as he is also the intellectual one among his family and seems to have latent homosexual desires. Judith, Caddy's counterpart, represents the object of the incestuous affection on the surface, while in reality she is the one upon whom masculinity is contested. Finally, there is the half-black brother Charles who represents Quentin's shadow that follows him wherever he goes in *The Sound and the Fury*. What makes this identification useful for Quentin is that, through identifying with Henry and Charles, he gains the ability to see through a path different than the one he has taken, a path that is definitely more in line with what is acceptable as far as the gender

performance in the patriarchal South of his time. There is no denying that Charles Bon's racial otherness is not a situation a white Southern man would want to find himself in, but if there is one area that he is more accomplished than Quentin, it is without a doubt, his seduction of a female. On the other hand, Henry becomes an avenger who is able to kill Charles, unlike Quentin himself who could not kill Dalton Ames. Since Quentin has not been able to do so for Caddy's "honor", and more significantly, his own masculine worth in the eyes of his society, Henry Sutpen emerges as the heroic ideal he aspires to be.

However, when we contextualize Quentin's death in the light of what is given in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Charles's death at the hands of Henry adds another layer to Quentin's suicide, as it both reflects Quentin's desire to punish his unwanted, shadow self who has homosexual desires, and acknowledges the act of murdering someone as a display of his manhood. Likewise, Vaughn makes a connection between Quentin's suicide and his internalized homophobia. He claims that Quentin suffers from a homophobic contempt for his own sexual identity that culminates in his "destruction of his literal self through suicide" (523). In other words, Quentin may not have succeeded in killing Dalton Ames, yet Henry's murdering of Charles in cold blood makes him realize that one can get rid of his shadow. This sudden realization, however, results in Quentin's ultimate act of killing himself.

Several scholars such as Vaughn and Norman W. Jones draw attention to an ever-increasing homoerotic tension between Quentin and Shreve as they fanatically try to find the actual motive behind Henry's murder of Charles. In this junction, another triangle emerges: "If Henry and Bon triangulated their homosexual desire through Judith, then Quentin and Shreve must locate an equally viable 'woman vessel' with which to consummate their love" (Vaughn 526). Indeed, the tale of Sutpen replaces Caddy and Judith from their respective triangles and positions itself right in the middle of two men as a contestation area on which masculine desire is projected. This notion is not surprising, considering the original version of tale belongs to Rosa Coldfield. Therefore, regardless of its main character's gender, the story has, in its core, a feminine quality. Despite all the other storytellers' attempts to insert a masculine voice into it, only Rosa's version governs the conversation between Shreve

and Quentin. Inarguably, the whole feminization of Sutpen's tale dissipates Quentin's intention to preserve Sutpen as a masculine Cavalier.

On another note, Sutpen's tale has a larger importance for Quentin, as it not only exposes his own individual concerns related to masculinity, but it also encapsulates what the South experienced during the transition from the plantation system to the postbellum collapse of each institution the South was originally founded on. The fact that Quentin starts narrating Sutpen's tragedy to Shreve when the latter wants to know about "the South" speaks volumes. For Quentin, what Thomas Sutpen went through is an allegory of the South's downfall. That is also why, when the tale is finished, Shreve asks Quentin why he hates the South. From this perspective, Thomas Sutpen embodies the South and what it stood for. In that sense, narrating Sutpen's tale is also related to the notion of the Lost Cause, as what Quentin wants to do is to extract a number of meanings in this story to validate his masculine worth.

Quentin's intention to mythologize Thomas Sutpen as a legendary cavalier demonstrates both his adherence to the Old South and his subconscious disdain for it in his conversations with his roommate Shreve. To a certain extent, the evolution of Quentin from a passive listener to an active storyteller marks a point in the South when younger generations gained responsibilities for perpetuating certain antebellum traditions and ideologies. However, Quentin's take appears to be an abortive attempt to propose an apotheosis for Sutpen. Akin to any other storyteller who came before him, Quentin definitely produces "his own" version of Sutpen's life. Despite his efforts to be as inclusive as he can be, it is actually beyond Quentin's power to present an objective story due to his life-long indoctrinations and personal beliefs. As a result of his constant wrestles with what he wishes the South to be and what the South actually is, Quentin sketches an ambivalent image of Sutpen that is neither a legendary man nor a demon, but fluctuates between both of these figures. Consequently, what could have been an allegory for the Old South, turns into a mere cautionary tale. In a similar vein, Faulkner's choice of Shreve as the final recipient in the text strengthens this notion. Upon Shreve's request, Quentin invites his friend into a version of the South in which he can navigate freely between numerous meanings. Shreve's enthusiasm and tendency to subscribe to new ideas are apparent in his attitude throughout Sutpen's

tale, as he cannot wait to learn more about this enigmatic tale and begs for further information whenever Quentin pauses. However, the fact that Shreve is Canadian prevents him from embracing the masculine role model of Sutpen unlike Quentin whose regional affiliation with Sutpen makes him an accomplice. In contrast, Shreve is quick to adapt to the dehumanizing elements that Quentin transferred from Rosa's narration. Every time Quentin calls Sutpen a "man" or "he", Shreve eagerly interrupts his narration to rectify his friend, and uses the term "demon" instead. Hence, it becomes obvious that Quentin's efforts to mythologize Sutpen as a Cavalier cannot find a reflection in Shreve. Furthermore, Shreve seems to espouse Rosa's version of the tale although Quentin presents him an amalgamation of a variety of interpretations.

We may infer that when it is removed from its cultural context, Thomas Sutpen's tale as the rise and fall of a Southern Cavalier gets lost in translation and dissolves completely. This notion is accentuated through Shreve's reactions to the story that does not show a great deal of sympathy or respect for him. It is also worth noting that this Canadian man comes to the conclusion that posits Jim Bonds are the future of the South. Since Jim Bond is the mentally challenged and mixed-race son of the man Shreve prefers to call a "demon", the South at the end of Quentin's tale emerges as a freak show. Thus, it becomes apparent that as far as Shreve is concerned, this Southern man is not a self-made masculine hero, he is a demon who has a grotesque hulking for a son. That is to say, in the gaze of someone who did not grow up in the South and are unfamiliar with the South's measures of masculinity, Thomas Sutpen is nothing but a spectacle.

Interestingly enough, no matter how much Mr. Compson tries to reframe Sutpen's legend as Greek tragedy, or Quentin attempts to contextualize it as a romance from which chivalry can enjoy a resurgence, they cannot remove all the gothic elements derived from Rosa's rendition. Since various anxieties about racial purity, masculinity and murder lie at the center of the tale, it constantly reverts back to Rosa's original version, which is symbolized by the way Rosa's "ever-looming wistaria" (Lazure 480) pervades the chapters that belong to Mr. Compson and Quentin. Indeed, Shreve's presence only adds to the pervasive nature of Rosa's narration, as he provides an affirmation for the feminine fabrication of the legend in his rejection of this

hypermasculine “man” created by the dominant discourse, for a subversive rendition of the same man as a “demon”.

Another scholar, Steve Price comments on the shift in focus that seems to occur when Shreve enters the picture. He offers a reading of Shreve as an “active listener” (325) who refuses to be spoon-fed and wants to construct a meaning of his own. In that sense, he is juxtaposed with Quentin who is desperately searching for a version of the story that aligns with what he believes in. Price also mentions that it is undoubtedly Henry’s murder of Charles Bon that fascinates him, which definitely decentralizes Thomas in his own story. Since Shreve approaches this tale as a murder mystery, as opposed to an actual life story, he can, without a doubt, find his catharsis in it. Furthermore, as a Northerner, Shreve does not need an artificial validation for his masculinity that can be derived from Sutpen’s life, which is also why he shows a keen interest in the love triangle, as through “universal love and youth's passion that the Canadian can suspend the skepticism of a non-Southern, and hence ‘alien,’ consciousness in order to be able to finish Quentin's thoughts and sound like Mr. Compson” (Levins 44). However, the moment in which Quentin remarks on Shreve’s voice’s sudden convergence with that of Mr. Compson does not indicate that Shreve’s initiation to the South has been completed. Because that moment proves to be a fleeting one. Later, Shreve morphs into his former self that questions Quentin’s motives. It is to be expected, as Shreve is “the Canadian, the child of blizzards and of cold” whereas Quentin “the Southerner, the morose and delicate offspring of rain and steamy heat” (Faulkner, 1936: 346). On the other hand, Quentin’s obsession with Sutpen and his legacy as a Southern man stems from his regional, cultural, gendered anxieties that he cannot resolve. Even at the end of his narration, he repeats to himself: “I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!” (378). This declaration not only demonstrates Quentin’s irrationality and immaturity in a vivid manner, but it also explains his inability to have a closure due to his reluctance to confront his dilemmas or accept his pretenses and inconsistent rationalizations as such. As he notices the brief convergence of Shreve with Mr. Compson, Quentin realizes, as men, they are all connected:

Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripplespace, to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (261)

This realization marks a point in the text where every male character merges into one another using the fabric of Sutpen's story. Fabrication of a myth then, with all of its connotations, is responsible for creating a unifying pool of meaning in which one transgresses from an individual to a collective. In the case of Sutpen legend, it is a masculinist propaganda whose target audience is the Southern men who are longing for mythical heroes that might validate their impaired manhood. Even Shreve, despite his lack of connection to these values and models briefly becomes adherent to what Sutpen's legend is supposed to represent. However, he notices the cracks in Quentin's interpretation of events and interrogates his friend in order to confront him on his apparent contradictions. Since the "narrow umbilical water-cord" originates in Rosa's narration, she has the ultimate authority over this myth. In the end, perhaps Thomas Sutpen's mythologization process can be considered as a success, but it eventually fails to promote a definitive take on masculinity that might live on for generations.

In this chapter, I have elaborated on the notion of storytelling in *Absalom, Absalom!* as an instrument of mythologizing a hypermasculine ideal. As an analogue of the mythical Cavalier figure of the Southern collective consciousness, Thomas Sutpen emerges as an equivocal figure that morphs into various contrasting representations of masculinity depending on the narrator's and the listener's gender identity, cultural indoctrinations, individual anxieties and ideological affiliations. By juxtaposing each version of Sutpen's tale, I explore this act of mythologizing as a gendered exertion which reveals more about the narrator and the listener than the actual figure whose life is storified. Hence, I have noted that Rosa's version renders Sutpen as an irredeemable demon that is devoid of any human characteristics.

Therefore, for a Southern female who was victimized by Sutpen, all of the hegemonic qualities Sutpen demonstrates lead to an eventual dehumanization of him. Conversely, the collaborative effort between the men in the Sutpen family that aims to elevate Sutpen as a Cavalier regardless of his wrongdoings and questionable endeavors registers as desperate attempts at preserving the South's, and by extension, their own regional masculine identity. I have then observed Shreve's reactions to the same tale when it is narrated by Quentin, and identified a visible change of perspective. As a Canadian man who does not carry the cultural baggage of the South's history, Shreve approaches this myth as a murder mystery, and by embracing Rosa's discourse, he constitutes an objective meaning from the components that are given in the tale that is devoid of the South's anxieties regarding masculinity. In considering how Thomas Sutpen's tale has evolved and how it might continue to evolve, I perceive *Absalom, Absalom!* as a work of fiction that satirizes the process of mythologizing the South's masculine heroes went through in their respective biographies.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated the ways that the postbellum South conceptualized and practiced masculinity by providing William Faulkner's novels as a template on which several notions of masculinity are appropriated. As scrutinized in "Introduction", masculinity has an irresolute quality that might spawn an indefinite number of meanings and applications depending on many variables. Innumerable arrays of masculine identities from hypermasculinity to effeminacy can be observed all through history, making any attempts to reach a conclusive notion of masculinity futile. Since masculinity, akin to femininity, is a social construct, how it is constituted and performed vary with time, society, culture. In my study, I have limited the scope of masculinity theory to the postbellum representations of the Southern masculine performativity in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* in order to delve into the postbellum psyche that problematize his emasculated male characters.

In the first chapter, I have tried to track down the origins of masculinity as a social theory. In my findings, I have noted a gradual, yet salient change from an essentialist outlook on manhood that was engrossed with finding the core of men, to an acceptance of the gendered subject as a product of various societal expectations and pressures. Initiated by R. W. Connell in the 1980s, this discourse on masculinity as a social construct has proved to be the most widely-accepted theory on masculinity. Scholars such as Todd W. Reeser, Mark Breitenberg, Douglas Schrock, Michael Schwalbe, Erving Goffman and Michael Kimmel have all made vital contributions to this social theory, thus I have called attention to their studies as an initiatory point.

Later, I have moved on to explore what masculinity in general meant in the South. In this section, I have noted on the pivotal role the earliest settlers, colonizers and soldiers played in regards to the South's unique genesis of an aristocratic and virile masculine ideal that directly opposes the North's industrial and feminized male: The Cavalier. However, I have observed the Cavalier's degradation after the South's cataclysmic loss in the Civil War, followed by a complete inversion of traditional

gender roles in the postbellum period. In the same context, I have also discussed the Lost Cause as an extension of this emasculation in the sense that it serves as a coping mechanism for those who failed in their expected gender performances. As Southern literature is reflective of each change that occurred during this period, I have also highlighted several literary texts that are key to observing how these aristocratic plantation owners lost their privileged status in the social hierarchy. It is rather significant that, within a span of less than 100 years, Southern literature transitioned from many depictions of happy slaves who are loyal to their honorable masters who were killed in the Civil War to peculiar portrayals of these formerly aristocratic white men who can barely fulfill their roles as breadwinners and are often feminine criminals.

Approaching my close readings of his novels, I have also briefly discussed William Faulkner's undeniably crucial place in the context of Southern literature, and focused on only a handful of the scholarly work that came before mine which helped me delineate his various characterizations of masculinity. In this part, I have come to the conclusion that feeble, weak and feminized men are extremely prevalent in Faulkner's works, but each character displays a unique form of displaying his failure in gender performativity, making generalizations about Faulkner's interpretation of the postbellum Southern masculinity is an impossible task. There are however, compelling individual representations of manhood that have constituted the basis of my argument.

In the second chapter, I turn to *Sanctuary* by offering a comparative reading of Horace Benbow and Popeye. These characters, taken as doubles, echo the sense of impotence Southern men felt after their defeat in the Civil War. In Popeye's case, it is a physical impotence that he tries to overcompensate by carrying the South's normative masculine markers such as pistols, cars, public exhibits of violence, and then instrumentalizing a corn cob in his sexual abuse of Temple. Whereas, Horace suffers from a metaphorical impotence stemming from his failure of self-actualization and subdued sexual feelings for his stepdaughter, Little Belle. A discussion of the genre of **Sanctuary** is also essential for my reading because by mimicking the hard-boiled detective genre in which hypermasculine men triumph over all difficulties, it

deconstructs this exaggerated portrayal of masculinity through its depiction of feminized and infantilized men who fail at the end.

In the third chapter, *The Sound and the Fury* is discussed in regards to its ostensibly gloomy illustration of an emblematic Southern family. As a subversive entry to the plantation tradition, the novel reveals how the members of a formerly aristocratic family are helpless against the postbellum shift in the South. In my analysis, I make use of Lorri Glover's influential book, *Southern Sons: Becoming Men in the New Nation* in order to have a grasp of the patriarchal norms in this society and discuss the symbolic meaning of General Compson's watch that connects many generations of men in this family. Overall, the notion of depatriarchalizing of the Compson family constitutes the basis of my reading. By providing many explanations on why none of the three sons of the Compsons can have a future, I assert that perishing is inevitable for a patriarchal family based on the values of the Old South.

In the fourth chapter, I have focused on mythologizing the Cavalier figure in *Absalom, Absalom!*. In this text Faulkner meditates between several conflicting interpretations of Thomas Sutpen's life story in order to satirize the ways the South apotheosized its masculine heroes in the past. In accordance, my argument is centered on the difficulty of having a narration devoid of an agenda, as with each character who tries to interpret his story, a new version of Thomas Sutpen is born. In this chapter I have explored how certain notions such as class, regional affinity and gender play in terms of writing history. When he is rendered through Southern men, Sutpen benefits from this constant change of perspectives. At other times, when a woman or an indifferent Canadian interprets his story, he can easily morph into an embodiment of evil. Through these abstract depictions of Sutpen, Faulkner invites his reader to question how much of the biography genre can be objective and how much of it can be discarded as masculinist propaganda.

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