

Burning Down the House:
Racial and Architectural Deterioration of the Southern
Plantation Home in Works by William Faulkner

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing husband, Kevin, who has always supported me in accomplishing my goals, listened to my literary ramblings, and taken over my share of parental duties during crunch time.

It is also dedicated to Dr. Will Brantley, who has been the best source of encouragement and patience, has been an exceptional editor, and has continued to spark my interest in the literature of the Southern Renaissance for many years.

ABSTRACT

William Faulkner found it necessary to destroy his fictional plantation homes, and their destruction mirrors that of the many grand homes in the South that have come to the same fate, whether by fire or deterioration.

Built with chattel slavery, these ornate plantation homes, constructed in the Palladian style after Greek architecture, do not represent democratic ideals. In Faulkner's works, the plantation home and its master are anything but magnificent: they are dark and monstrous. The beautiful fronts are facades that mask the horrors of the South.

Faulkner's biographical connection to grand homes and their history offered him insight into the past that he resurrects in his fiction. As his own home of Rowan Oak attests, Faulkner admired southern architecture, but he used its decay and destruction to expose the absence of true grandeur behind its walls, or in its past. Through the antebellum homes of his fictional Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner captures the angst that stems from the South's faulty ideals, its legacy of slavery, and its fear of miscegenation.

In what has become his most celebrated novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*, Clytemnestra, the bi-racial daughter of Thomas Sutpen, sets fire to Sutpen's Hundred, abolishing the grand home along with nostalgia for the antebellum era and its strictures against a mixed-race society. Faulkner's most glorious example of eradicating the oppression and repression of the past is by burning down the house.

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Chapter One

The Southern Plantation Home

The architecture of the grand plantation home is important in William Faulkner's fiction. The structural design of the southern plantation home was influenced by the Palladian and Grecian styles of architecture which linked southern democracy with that of the Greeks. Yet, this style also facilitated grand verandas that housed the coolness desired in the hot South. The southern plantation owners were often their own architects, crafting their own luxuries. However, the Civil War's effect on the grand homes lent nostalgia for the past and the glory days even though this reminiscence often glazed over the oppression of slavery. This chapter will feature the plantation home's architectural history, and it will showcase the chronological change from nostalgic writers of the antebellum Old South to those who exposed the fissures in the plantation home through its foundation of slavery. Furthermore, the analogous relationship with the plantation home and the South and southern ideals will be uncovered. The southern plantation home is important for its architecture, relevance throughout history, and symbolism for the southern ideal; and, it is necessary to closely examine the plantation home in order to reveal its purpose in Faulkner's canon.

Reminiscing about the lively past of the southern plantation home brought an idealized nostalgia for some readers around the publication time of *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) as they longed for days gone by; however, the people who were oppressed during the era of slavery in the antebellum South have a different experience with the plantation home, whether they lived during that time or were descendants of the oppressed. An

article published in 1937 in *The Atlanta Constitution*, “Gaiety of Other Days Is Recalled As Rose Hill Plantation Is Sold: Home of Former Governor, Favorite Gathering Place of Society, in New Hands; Rolling Acres Divided Among Several Buyers,” gives an account of a plantation home in Georgia, describing it as “a favorite gathering place for the elite of Georgia and the Carolinas” (3B). Rose Hill Plantation is the focus of the article because it had been sold and divided at auction for less than \$15,000. As Faulkner wrote of the demise and fall of the plantation home in his fiction, the breaking up and dividing of antebellum plantation homes was occurring historically as the South and the southern economy changed. The article includes such nostalgia for the past:

Rose Hill, in days gone by, was noted throughout the south, and in the north as well, for its gaiety and its hospitality. The mansion and its sloping grounds dotted with boxwood, roses and other garden flowers, became famous for its house parties and for its special entertainment in ante-bellum style for distinguished visitors—singing and dancing by cottonfield hands, square dances, and even quilting parties. (3B)

The home was of course known for being cheerful and hospitable, but only to the white elite “distinguished visitors.” Furthermore, the special entertainment would have been forced theatrics performed by slaves (before the Civil War) or black servants (afterward). This melancholy over the loss of a great home differs significantly from the downfall of the plantation home in Faulkner’s novel. In this article, the idealized past is longed for, but Faulkner has different intentions when characterizing the southern plantation home during the antebellum South—he aims to reveal the disgrace performed by that of the plantation owner and southern society, and he does so with the tyrannical rise and ultimate fall of Sutpen’s Hundred and other grand homes.

The architectural style of the plantation home can be traced back to the Greek era. The prominent Greek trends were the Palladian and Grecian styles of architecture. In his article “Architecture” in *The Companion to Southern Literature: Themes, Genres, Places, People, Movements, and Motifs*, Brian Carpenter details the historical progression of southern architecture commencing with the Greek era. He compares the structure of a large plantation home to that of a Greek building: “The great icon of southern architecture is the ‘Big House,’ traditionally a rectangular, gabled façade with the porticos, plasters, and capitals of a Greek temple” (Carpenter 49). This southern, aristocratic style originates from the pattern books, including the English publication in 1715 of *The Four Books of Architecture*, by an Italian architect named Andrea Palladio (1508-1581) “whose drawings of piazzas, basilicas, temples, and villas profoundly influenced the shape of European architecture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Carpenter 49). The Palladian style could be seen in American houses by the mid-eighteenth century; however, by the Revolution, the “classic three-part Palladian form—a triangular gable supported by four columns—[became] the fashion” (Carpenter 49). Henry Wiencek also accounts for the plantation home’s architectural history in *Great American Homes: Plantations of the Old South* and stresses that the Greek Revival was first known as the “Grecian” style of architecture. Wiencek notes that numerous plantation owners

chose the then-fashionable Greek Revival style because its symmetrical qualities conferred dignity and symbolically linked the new democracy of the United States with its spiritual forbear, the Athenian democracy of the fifth century B.C. Not unimportantly, the tall columns of the Greek Revival architecture accommodated that desirable subtropical feature, the shaded veranda or porch, which helped to keep the interior cool while providing a protected exterior living space. (4)

Here, the Grecian style of home takes shape to add prominence to the plantation owner while fulfilling the function and luxury of a cool retreat from the southern heat. Wienczek adds that southerners built their homes to catch the breeze and “could tell you exactly where the evening breeze came from—down that hill, off the bayou, there” (7). Wienczek illuminates the seemingly mystical transformation that can occur to these stately homes: “And in a riverfront house at night, when the breeze brings into the house the coolness, the scent, and the sound of the river, the river itself comes into the house. The house loses its substance and becomes an ethereal thing” (7). The sense that the grand plantation home can house an unearthly transformation adds to its splendid form. This ethereal and often gothic setting is a well-designed backdrop for Faulkner to utilize while uncovering the events of the past.

Ironically, the prominent elite of the South during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries drew on democratic ideals as they drew up architectural plans for their homes. Interest in the Palladian and Grecian styles was linked to an interest in and an identification with Greek democracy. Revolutionists looked to the Greeks to form their new government and their new homes. For example, Thomas Jefferson’s construction of the Virginia State Capitol using his own sketches of a “ruined Roman temple in the south of France” and his design of the University of Virginia using both Palladian and Pantheon-inspired forms, launched the classical tradition in the South (Carpenter 49). Coincidentally, Faulkner’s collection is housed at the University of Virginia among these architectural beauties. Furthermore, Southerners gravitated toward this Founding Father’s use of Greek styles and modeled them to craft their own classical homes.

However, the construction of these beautiful plantation homes was faulty because it was centered on slavery. As Carpenter observes:

The white columns of the classical revival rose with King Cotton's ascendancy in the antebellum South. . . . Heeding Jefferson's lesson, southern architects wrote into their temple-fronted statehouses, churches, and plantation manors a language of classical form and beauty, of democracy and the heroic ideal, newly translated and appended with a justification of the "peculiar institution" that between the South and antiquity was a shared tradition. The same slave labor that had built Greece and Rome now built the new temples of the South, though many more generations of southerners would live and work and die in those same proud but defeated structures before their children would begin at last to reexamine the foundations left exposed by war and reconstruction. (49)

The southern ruling class not only modeled after the Greeks to create governmental institutions and classical homes, it also modeled the Greeks by using slaves to increase and boost their own prosperity. Slavery does not accommodate democracy, yet southerners used the ancient Greeks' tyrannical use of slavery to justify their own exploitation. In fact, Thomas Jefferson relied on slavery to build his own plantation home, Monticello. With a construction time of forty years, this Palladian style home features a triangle gable supported by four columns for both the East and West fronts of the home and a large dome room visible from the West front. Long terraces outstretch from both sides of the house, with the North terrace allowing for a miniscule view for Jefferson of the construction of the Rotunda at the University of Virginia. But these terraces have another great significance: they were raised walkways that housed many workspaces underneath where enslaved workers kept the house and plantation running. As a result, there were fewer visible outbuildings on the property, allowing for a less-obstructed view of the plantation grounds and valley below. The convenience of slave quarters and other necessary operational buildings below kept many of Jefferson's two

hundred slaves out of sight with the remaining buildings being tucked away in a line of trees known as Mulberry Row. This extraordinarily intelligent Founding Father hung a copy of The Declaration of Independence inside Monticello, and his literate enslaved household workers could routinely pass the words: “all men are created equal.” With Jefferson serving as a major architectural influence for the plantation home, it is fascinating to address the ways in which his slaves were hidden: keeping “the hands” invisible kept the inequality concealed (*Monticello*).

In addition to being linked to foundations of Greek democracy, Wiencek acknowledges that the southern architects used Greek styles because they contained “the promise of permanence” (10). Southerners desired to establish themselves in their new country and to leave a legacy as long standing as that of the Greeks; therefore, the notion of permanence was vital, especially when their system of slavery on the plantation was under attack by abolitionists. Wiencek writes, “[T]he South drew comfort from its architectural association with an ancient and enduring civilization. And did not the Greeks keep slaves as well? An architectural style that began as a progressive, libertarian, and democratic movement on all levels of society became tinged with upper-class conservatism in the South” (10). Even though plantation owners attempted to create a permanent legacy for their descendants by way of grand homes, massive amounts of land, and southern ideals, their use of slavery squelched an enduring legacy. Carpenter points out that it would take many generations for southerners to realize the tremendous faults on which their inherited homes stood (49). As we will see, Faulkner utilizes characters such as Clytemnestra, who kindles the fire, and Jim Bond, who howls into the night, in order to illumine the cracks in the foundations of the southern ideal.

For ambitious plantation pioneers, there was much promise of wealth and growth in the lush South, and newcomers seeking fame and fortune were often their own architects. The southern boom in the economy and springing up of plantation homes in the Deep South was facilitated by the invention of the cotton gin. Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793, the cotton boom began later around 1830, and as Wiencek writes, “an increasing number of settlers from Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia migrated to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee. With cotton selling for higher and higher prices every year, it was easy to buy land and slaves on credit—a plantation often paid for itself in just a few years” (8). Newcomers sought the American dream of establishing fortune with their own plantations and plantation homes. King Cotton could rule while rocking on his porch or swinging from his hammock: “With its sumptuous furnishings, shady verandas, and fragrant gardens, the plantation fostered a life of ease” (Wiencek 13). Nonetheless, this life was the result of hard work: many plantation owners were their own architects who used the materials they had to fashion their idyllic homes to suit their luxurious desires. In *Plantation Houses and Mansions of the Old South*, J. Frazer Smith discusses the southern architect. Smith notes that the southerner’s “plantation, plantation housing, and big house plan were unmistakably products of his way of living. We are also cognizant of the fact that his materials of construction were definitely local and his craftsmen were trained to know and respect the use and limitations of these materials” (214). The southerner used materials on hand or fashioned them to suit his purpose. While Smith acknowledges that the craftsmen were trained to understand the resources used, it is important to add that many craftsmen were slaves who were taught how to make materials such as bricks or pieces of lumber. Wealthy and

influential men who appreciated fine elegance and sophistication were those drawn to the possibilities in the South:

The climate taught him the value of shade, and his great verandahs were the resultant original motif and his crowning achievement. During the formative periods of Southern architecture, his house façades took on forms reflecting these plans, materials and craftsmanship. It is significant that at this very crucial moment (about 1820) the apparent opportunities in the Southland attracted men of great wealth, intelligence and influence. (Smith 214)

The southern architect utilized these grand porches to create both shade and the image of stateliness. Since many plantation owners who settled in cotton country were affluent, they aimed to continue their sense of grandeur and showcase their new fortunes with the grand and ornate details of their imperial mansions. Smith continues, “The Southerner at once recognized in the orders of ancient Greece and Rome: columns to support his verandahs, entablatures to span spaces and support roofs, refined mouldings to frame his fenestration, crown his mantels and glorify his interiors. As if by magic, his crude forms took on refinement and his white-pillared house was rapidly developed” (215). The intricate and elaborate features of the big house quickly manifested, almost magically, giving the grand home a supernatural air. Furthermore, the southerner greatly contributed to the evolution of southern architecture as he obtained the sought after style through “his own materials and adjusted their parts to function properly and to appeal aesthetically under their use. The mouldings and lesser forms of the classical styles he applied in wood and plaster to suit his own requirements, and emerged with forms definitely different” (Smith 215). The plantation owner as his own architect crafted unique features using various materials that set his grand home apart from the rest. Ultimately, the majority of these matchless homes were not to last.

During the Civil War, numerous plantation homes were destroyed by fire from Union troops, or they were left to rot in decay because they could not be maintained. Southerners who remained longed for the thriving days of the past; they clung to the nostalgic memories of the lively and prosperous plantations before the war. Wiencek describes the feelings surrounding the South's defeat: "The Civil War both destroyed plantation society and shrouded it in the romance of the permanently lost past. The Confederate dead became the ghosts of the South and part of the lore of the mansions they died to defend" (15). After the Civil War, the painful memories and those lost became imbedded in any remaining plantation homes. Those still standing, grand homes now symbolized much more than the bustling past—they housed the ghostly reminders of slavery and war. These gothic spaces were sites of deep sadness: "The war, and the economic hardships that ensued, destroyed many Southern houses, leaving them in the lonely ruin that symbolized the sufferings of the South. A ruin is always evocative, but in the South the shells of the old houses touched a deep strain of melancholy" (Wiencek 15). The melancholy existed due to the breakdown and loss of the plantation society, the knowledge that many aristocratic legacies were now eradicated, the tremendous pain associated with the war, and, possibly, the understanding of the true evil and brutality of slavery. For those southerners who survived the war,

[i]t is ironic that the plantation should have been so thoroughly discredited and then so thoroughly romanticized. Its continuing appeal can be traced, in part, to the beauty of its architecture. It was an architecture of graciousness, practicality, pride, and sometimes grandeur. It was the architecture of great wealth suddenly acquired, "as if by magic," by men and women who then raised stately columns to demonstrate that they were the true heirs of an ancient ideal of freedom; and that made it the architecture of illusion. (Wiencek 15)

The whole façade of the plantation home lent a pretense of honor, virtue, and freedom. The beautiful and decorative effrontery of the grand home masked the fact that all was built on slave labor. Faulkner uncovers the illusion of the plantation home in several of his works, and he offers a recollection that opposes that of nostalgic reminiscence.

Wiencek addresses the perverse vision of the South:

No architectural type is more quintessentially Southern than a plantation house. The antebellum home with white columns framed by lush plantings of trees and shrubs has become the staple image of gracious living in a bygone era. Nostalgia has distorted the vision, conveniently overlooking the unjust social system that made possible luxurious existence for a few; slave quarters do not figure prominently in the idealized plantation picture. (4)

Here, Wiencek acknowledges that slavery does not provide a picturesque vision of the South. Faulkner's use of slavery and miscegenation undermines the quintessential plantation portrait of courteous southern belles and hospitable southern gentlemen. The nostalgia for an illusory and faulty idealized past is as pretentious as the concealing past on which those southern homes were built.

Memories of the stately homes and lives of grandeur allowed some to view Reconstruction as a lost cause because the recognition that slavery was a major component of the South's past was taboo. Jessica Adams, in *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation*, reveals the corrupt nostalgia for the plantation home as southerners clung to the hope of reconstructing the past during what she terms the "lost cause." Withholding the plantation's entire story creates racial tension because it does not allow the truth of the past to surface:

During the Lost Cause, the “white home” became a symbol that connected antebellum racial hierarchies with postbellum society. As Grace Hale¹ writes, it “served as a major site in the production of racial identity precisely because there . . . racial interdependence was both visible and denied.” It is a very powerful thing to deny something obvious and have that denial accepted as truth. The white home as symbol reached its apex in the plantation house, and plantation houses and their tourist apparatus still call imaginary worlds into being. (Adams 54)

Rewriting southern history without an accurate depiction of slavery is a flawed construction of the past. Some literature after the Civil War romanticized antebellum life on the plantation, not allowing the story of slavery to be told. Much later, as remaining plantation homes transitioned into magnificent landmarks, slavery and slave quarters were not recognized, creating a past of fantasy. Adams’ discussion of the “white home as symbol” emphasizes that it can be an icon of white power, and eliminating the story of slavery is a true injustice. In contemporary society, as well as in Faulkner’s time as noted with Rose Hill, the plantation home is memorialized for its misconstrued past:

“Plantations have become popular tourist destinations among whites because ‘historic house’ or ‘unique architecture’ or ‘romantic’ comes to mind before the image of slavery does. And when it does, it will have been filtered through architecture and romance and perhaps not seem so disturbing anymore” (Adams 55). What is unique here is that the same ornate details and effrontery that masked slavery during the antebellum days are the same architectural decorations that hide slavery’s past today. The plantation home figuratively (and sometimes literally through reenactments) is part of an inaccurate, yet beautiful, historical performance: “Plantations, as what we might call theaters of memory,

¹ Hale, Grace. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*. Vintage Books, 1999.

present corrective counterparts to the image of a malformed, backward, or just eccentric South” (Adams 56). While some writers and historians take part in the façade, others have offered more of the entire narrative. For example, contrary to the preservation of a plantation home solely for its beauty and romance, Faulkner showcases the grandeur and architecture of the plantation home but also allows that home to be destroyed because of its haunted, racist past. In addition, he successfully annihilates the home that preservationists view through rose colored lenses.

Numerous writers have utilized the setting of the grand plantation home, and some works even centered on it. Carpenter states, “Even before war reduced many of the South’s great mansions to ruins, southern writers were already lamenting their passing, much as their English cousins had a generation before indulged in a precious nostalgia for the English country house and old John Bull” (49). Similar to English country houses, southern plantation homes are architectural depictions of their region, representing the lives, customs, climate, and attitude of an area. Writing about architectural homes brings forth these representations. In “The Plantation House: An Analogical Image,” Guy A. Cardwell discusses writers’ connections with these grand homes, and he uncovers analogies for the homes within their written works. Cardwell points out the various associations of the house as symbol in literature:

The image of the house has appeared so variously and so conspicuously over so many centuries that we may hardly think of it as less than archetypal. The house is associated with cults, temples, and tombs, with large ideas about man’s fate, the wrath and jealousy of the gods, and tradition and change. Although there is about images of houses a presumption of permanence—of dynastic families—by a shocking reversal houses may be compelled to suggest transience and doom. (3)

This iconic view of the house relays the diverse connotations and events associated with houses from rituals and stability to anger and destruction. Furthermore, Cardwell states that “[l]ike the attributive possessions of a god or hero, [houses] regularly suggest traits of the master” (3). The embodiment of a home as an extension of its owner crafts an eerie and powerful incarnation onto the grand space. In literature, using the image of the house to illustrate a character’s fate and allowing the home to act as an extension of the character can be quite ominous, as one readily observes in a text such as *Absalom, Absalom!*

However, the traditional use of the home to represent the master of the house often portrays the master in a positive light since several of these plantation novels were written to honor the homeowner and reveal his courtly ideals. Cardwell discusses authors who praise houses in their poems or works as tribute to the home’s master, and these early works set the template for future authors. Cardwell suggests that Alexander Pope’s use of “measure” or “good sense” and “usefulness” in his Epistle IV, “Of the Use of Riches,” lends way to “the eighteenth-century squirearchical ideal which served as the nearest model for plantation owners and for writers who tried to give written expression to the ideals of the Old South” (3-4). Here, the way of life by a government of landowners is portrayed as sensible and purposeful. Cardwell adds that Ben Jonson’s “To Penshurst” allows for the prototype of the southern ideal: “The moderation, the relationship of the house to nature, the chaste and noble lady, the chivalric lord, and the religious seriousness all reappear as aspects of the Southern image. In these emphases Penshurst could be the epitome of the Southern plantation home” (4). If the southern image and southern plantation represent the ideal model within these poems, then anti-

mimesis could be at play—plantation life is misconstrued as an imitation of idyllic art.

Cardwell acknowledges that literature is an artistic component of plantation homes in the

South:

Behind the plantation house as a metaphor were actual Southern mansions as well as English houses and European houses, a literary tradition, and an ideal of a way of life. These actual mansions, like the houses in Southern fiction, occupied a central position in a series of linked analogies. Before 1861 the South had become a world in itself. Each plantation aimed at being a more-or-less self-supporting little world modeled after some ideal on the order of Plato's republic. The plantation house was a dramatic center; it brought everything to a focus. (5)

Centered around the grand home, the plantation itself existed as a self-sustaining world while its small society of landed gentry ordered their peasant slaves, thus producing a fractured utopia. Nevertheless, writers sought to capture the purity and natural beauty of the plantation. The plantation home could be viewed as an extension of its geographical setting since “[t]he early presentation of the plantation house in Southern literature suggests the intimate, intricate relationship that was assumed to exist between house and Nature” (Cardwell 6). This early depiction of the symbiotic bond between the grand home and its surroundings offers the suggestion of the plantation home as a womb-like space, creating, flourishing, nourishing, and nurturing all the intricacies and happenings within its walls as well as encompassing its grounds. In addition, the efficiency of the streamlined plantation life offered a haven for later writers who sought to honor its order: “The later literature of the Old South concentrates more emphatically on this idea of agrarian orderliness and the redemption of a turbulent society” (Cardwell 6-7). Much literature from this time of the Old South tends to house a nostalgic mood for the plantation home, and Faulkner could be righting/writing against such deceptive works.

Conversely, writers after the Civil War marked a change in the glorification of the plantation home within southern literature. Some writers chose to use a stronger, nostalgic emphasis for the plantation home and the past it represents, while other writers sought to expose the faulty foundations on which the grand home was built. Many authors romanticized the South's past by producing depictions of the warm, hospitable nature of the grand home and all people associated with it. The servants and their masters are portrayed as having an agreeable and pleasant relationship. Cardwell writes,

The image of the house remained focal for post-war Southern writers, whether they were glorifying the Old South or marking the transition to the new. . . . Nostalgic idealizations of the plantation in all its connotations form an extensive literature after 1865. Ex-Confederate ladies and gentlemen wrote reminiscently of kindly masters and devoted servants, of charming, talkative courtships conducted on broad verandas, of long, drowsy summer days, of glorious frosty Christmases warmed by roaring fires while grinning Negroes vied to be first with "Crismus gif!" (10)

These southern writers who offered a peaceful and dream-like view of the Old South were writing a fantasy full of nostalgia. Yes, there were quite certainly numerous courtships and languorous summer days, but the characterization of extreme elation from the servants for their masters could rarely, if ever, have occurred. As Cardwell makes clear, Faulkner can be viewed as writing against these arrogant concoctions of nostalgia with his use of the grand home:

Somewhere close to the heart of William Faulkner's ambiguous vision of the South stands a metaphoric mansion. In Faulkner the house may be expressive of dignity, peace, comfort, and power, as it usually was to the propagandists of the Old South. But even in its youth—or especially in its youth—the Mississippi mansion may instead be expressive of a hard-driving ungentlemanly builder who . . . improved on the Virginia original by elaborating the ideal into a hypertrophied fiction of perfumed grace, harmony, and grandeur. (13)

Here Cardwell notes that Faulkner often includes the metaphorical elements of distinction and influence associated with the plantation home in his works; however, Faulkner's mansion shows the overzealous attempt at recreating the graceful and grand ideal home. By using a "hard-driving ungentlemanly builder" who strives for the extreme, such as Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner's mansions create obvious caricatures of the original plantation homes. Cardwell continues to highlight the flaws that Faulkner brings to light: "The system that supported the house is, in Faulkner, stained by craft, arrogance, hypocrisy, and force: and the history of the house is marred by evidences of cupidity, pride, miscegenation, incestuous love, and bloodshed. The slave system works more against the land than for it, is more hostile to the Negro and to the poor white than it is understanding and friendly" (13). A plantation past full of joy and harmony is eradicated, and a point of view of the plantation home as a representation of greed and turbulence is offered. Of course, Cardwell is contributing a synopsis of Thomas Sutpen and Sutpen's Hundred as evidence that Faulkner's mansions can house a less glamorized and detrimental vision of life in the Old South. Faulkner uses the plantation home setting to show the painful divide between races and classes. For example, "In 'Barn Burning' the plantation house seems to little poor-white Sarty to be inviolably peaceful and strong, big as a courthouse; but an imported rug 'made white with the sweat of Negroes' is in fact dirtied and the house violated by the boy's implacably mechanical, two-dimensional, barn burning father" (Cardwell 13). The pure white and genteel home is stained and tarnished by the suffering of the servants and the pain of the poor whites. While an extension of the home (the barn) is burned in "Barn Burning," the grand home itself is burned and eradicated in *Absalom, Absalom!* Cardwell suggests that Faulkner uses fire to

destroy the plantation home in order to purge the South: “Faulkner’s South is, when all is said and done, a doomed South; fire appropriately takes the ‘monstrous tinder-dry rotten shell’ of a mansion in *Absalom, Absalom!*—a way of life needed cleansing” (13). The need for cleansing proposes that the idea of a pure, grand plantation home is anything but pure; it is truly a grand home built on the impurities of the soiled South. Future chapters will explore in depth the tainted plantation home in Faulkner’s fiction, but Cardwell’s historical placement of Faulkner’s work within the context of other southern writers is included here to emphasize the literary changes which began to occur for the plantation home and southern society.

In *The Edge of the Swamp: A Study in the Literature and Society of the Old South*, Louis D. Rubin also positions Faulkner’s work among various authors and aspects of southern literature. Rubin zeroes in on the fact that little reputable literature blossomed from the Old South: “Except for Poe, the much-advertised golden days of the plantation South had no counterpart in literature. In a time when cultural nationalism was an important literary force, the South had little that was literary to point to with pride” (10). The literature of the Old South did not equal that of the North, and it was not because the southern region and its people were “qualitatively different from other American people and places, with a significantly different set of moral values, or as forming a society more nearly exempt than that of the North from the moral and social dilemmas that constitute the subject matter of important literature” (Rubin 9). Many of the same issues and similar attitudes existed in both regions. However, Rubin argues that “the *only* place to look for an explanation is in the one characteristic that *did* distinguish South from North: the active existence and the institutionalized acceptance of chattel slavery” (9). Hence,

with this distinction, more emphasis is gained in Faulkner's literature with associations to the plantation because the southern plantation is the edifice for slavery. Faulkner is able to write the story of the Old South but with the ideology of the Modern South overlaying the narrative like a palimpsest. The story of the Old South centers around what Rubin calls the "planter *ideal*," a success-driven focus on the self:

American middle-class drive to pursue its newfound opportunities and better its lot in a new continent, produced not a Master Class ethic with a different world view, but a highly characteristic goal of success, fulfillment, and the good life that took the form of the planter *ideal*—the dream of the plantation. In that direction—and geographically it was generally westward—lay achievement, fulfillment. (47)

The success-driven planter or plantation owner was seldom the "Renaissance Man," a name often bequeathed to one planter model, Thomas Jefferson. Instead, the planter was focused on his own success via his thriving plantation. The plantation owner did not necessarily come from a privileged lineage of planter families: "That the dream of the great plantation was just that—an aspiration, and not a firmly established characteristic of Southern life solidly and lastingly grounded in generations of aristocratic experience and providing a fixed viewpoint from which to observe the world—is what is at issue" (Rubin 47). Rubin shows that the planter aspiration is centered on the goal of capturing the successful and ideal plantation dream, becoming egocentric or plantation-centric, yet not worldly:

For the plantation *ideal*, as a goal powerfully coveted and imagined, is a middle-class affair, representing a normally acquisitive society's hopes. If materialistic in the terms of its fulfillment, it was no more exclusively so than other American aspirations. Place it in the context of twentieth-century American literature and it would fit the situation of Scott Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby equally as appropriately as of William Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen. (47)

Notice that it is the middle-class man who is focusing on the ideal plantation—it is his dream for success and self-worth. Placing the driven plantation owner alongside Gatsby and Sutpen emphasizes both his stamina for success and erection of a façade.

Furthermore, Rubin acknowledges that through the ownership of a plantation, political distinction was also afforded to the planter: “The point has been made about antebellum Southern politics that the leadership of the proslavery ranks tended to be provided by the new men. . . . The avenue of distinction was via the law and politics; political renown led to a place among the gentry and, whether through marriage or by purchase, the ownership of a plantation and slaves” (84). With this, often new, political power, plantation owners were able to create and maintain laws that upheld and supported slavery and plantation success. Plantation owners often attained fruition from a thriving plantation as well as from political supremacy: “The social and cultural ideal—the plantation—by definition involved the soundness on the slavery issue. The numerous instances of lowly born young men winning their way to leadership demonstrate that the planter establishment, such as it was, was by no means a closed society” (Rubin 84). Men did not have to come from wealthy families to achieve the plantation ideal and position of power; therefore, many sought wealth through the possession of a plantation, and “the plantation swiftly became a symbol of middle-class aspiration and attainment” (Rubin 84). The symbol of the plantation as something to strive for among those in the middle-class is palatial. For those determined to be a plantation owner (or married to a plantation owner), the often-attainable symbol is effervescent; on the other hand, for those who are written into law to be enslaved workers, the symbol is only attainable as a sepulcher of doom.

Cardwell also makes several unique analogies for the image of the plantation home. By unwriting the slave system from the plantation, the grand home can be viewed with great appeal. In fact, plantation homes can even have a divine aura: “The antiquity, dynamism, and summarizing capacity of the image of the house, together with its sometimes complex pictorial qualities, help explain its psychological and sensuous appeal. A nimbus of sanctity has hovered over houses; energy has flowed from the image as it might from Divinity in an emanation theory of cosmology” (Cardwell 13). This notion of the home as heavenly icon creates an image of the plantation home as pure as the ideal, genteel southern lady. Also, the home’s stance of power adds to its divine nature. Regardless of its nature, Cardwell suggests that the plantation home in the South is a representation of the South:

Southern mansions in literature are, like Gothic cathedrals, though in a more secular, limited, and shifting sense, *miroirs du monde*. The plantation house may be at once image, metaphor, sign, allegorical equation, and symbol. On the other hand, although the image, no matter how secular, retains mysterious powers, the social and literary contexts often place it in a fairly definite analogical relationship. The analogical function may be so closely “assigned” that the image might better be called metaphoric than symbolic. This is to say, among other things, that its values are more dialectic and polemic than they are intuitively suggestive. The analogue—or the second term of the metaphor—is the South or one or more aspects of the South. (14)

Cardwell’s comparison of the plantation home to the Gothic cathedral is interesting because Faulkner’s works are often placed in the sub-genre of southern gothic literature. The old, decaying plantation homes are quite similar to Gothic cathedrals which are representations of bygone days immured within an eerie setting during the present. The home’s connection from the past to the present in literature adds to Cardwell’s claims about the representations of the house in literature. The plantation home is analogous

with the South and facets of the South; however, its existence as an extension of time permits the home to become an embodiment of the South through each era until the present. In other words, the decaying or restored plantation home during Faulkner's time continues to be a representation of the South back through the Civil War until its days of glory—each of the home's phases becomes one depiction of a changing, or changed, South.

The impressive plantation homes were also representations for their owners who showcased the homes as a wealthy extenuation of self. The homes possessed the grandeur desired for the lives of their owners. Cardwell writes, "For upward-mobile people, a good house is an important symbol, useful in attempting to transform money into social position" (15). The luxurious plantation home marked the social status of its elite owner, and the home generated a visual picture of that wealth. Cardwell explores how the descriptions of the plantation home serve as simple metaphors for the aristocratic southerner and his glorified South:

For Southern writers before 1861 the house, with all its evocation, was a given. . . . They found the meanings and values they sought in easy stereotypes: solid, venerable structures; wide, hospitable piazzas; cool central halls; spacious high-ceilinged rooms; and marshaled out-buildings—*garçonnières*, offices, stables, workshops, storage sheds, hospital cottages, and slave quarters. . . . The plantation, with the house at its symbolic center, became much more than an agricultural unit functioning by means of a peculiar labor system. It became a little world, a way of life, an epitomizing of cherished values that were to be defended at all costs. (15-6)

Pre-Civil War writers sought sturdy, yet hospitable, southern values through the architecture of the home. The plantation home became the heart of the plantation revolving on its own axis in its own world. Cardwell highlights its "peculiar labor system," but more importantly he acknowledges that the ideals within this constructed

society “were to be defended at all costs.” Even before the Civil War broke out, Cardwell notes that southern writers were portraying southerners as strong protectors of their southern values—something they would continue to cling to during the war. In addition, post-Civil War writers would continue to characterize certain southerners’ strong sense of virtue. Henry Sutpen, for instance, defends the honor of his sister and rejects miscegenation. These sturdy southern ideals allowed the southern elite to stand as proud as their grand homes: “The antebellum South came to conceive of itself and advertise itself as the paragon among stable, hierarchical societies, an enclave of order in a chaotic world” (Cardwell 16). The plantation home in its systematic and structured plantation world gave the southern elite an artificial construction to showcase a perfect utopia.

The pure vision of the faultless world would not be had by all as the issue of slavery continued to create cracks in the walls of the plantation and its ideal world. Turning to the Greeks for law and design would not sustain against the horrors of oppression. Cardwell describes how the plantation owner held tightly to order:

The Negro cast a deep shadow over everything. Symbols of order were at a premium; and more powerfully, perhaps, than elsewhere in the Western world, houses became symbols of order. Putting the speculation figuratively, one might say that the regularity of the Greek architectural orders concealed fissures in the fabric of the plantation house that threatened to send it sliding down into a tarn blacker and more nearly bottomless than that which received the House of Usher. (Cardwell 16)

Southern ideals and virtues of honor were at stake with the system of slavery, but placing a heavy emphasis on wealth through its use allowed grand homes to function as a visual representation of the wealth and order derived from slavery. The plantation had to be run orderly and efficiently for such wealth to be generated, and the grand home became the

powerful result. Cardwell reemphasizes that turning to the Greeks' example helped to mask the corruption on which the South was built. Poignantly in many of his works, Faulkner exposes those plastered fissures. The evolution of southern literature permitted works to emphasize successively more about the oppression of slavery and the faults within the elite, southern ideal. As Cardwell argues,

When considered chronologically the literature of the Old South indicates that the large suggestiveness, the liberating effect of the house as a metonymic expression, tended to diminish. . . . The more simple, fixed, unarguable, and good the myth of the South, the more simple, fixed, and good the image of the plantation house. On the other hand, literary epigones do ordinarily reduce and stereotype; and the whole course of Southern history—especially the course of the dismally repetitious debate over slavery—contributed to the crystallization of formulae, the ageing topoi. The largely transempirical image of the house did not escape the trend. The general effect seems to have been that the Old South ended by mumbling almost schizoid reassurance to itself concerning Southern, orderly, aristocratic society. (21)

What once was an arguably sound representation of an orderly and ideal South began to alter through time and literature as a farcical depiction of an idyllic society as symbolized through the plantation home. The southern elite who strove to hang on to an ideal of power by commanding the use of slavery created a ludicrous argument which attempted to uphold their hierarchal place in society. However, as Cardwell suggests, the effect created a repetitious absurdity of a “mumbling almost schizoid reassurance” given by the elite. This image is reminiscent of Quentin Compson’s mummings that he does not hate the South and the echoes of Jim Bond’s howls into the dark night on a disintegrated plantation.

While southern plantation owners modeled their democracy and grand plantation homes on the Greeks, the faulty foundations would not allow southern ideals to endure. Surviving plantation homes continue to be admired for their grand architecture and

beautiful designs, but writers such as Faulkner have exposed the plantation façade by writing about the entire South and its use of slavery. Nostalgia for the glorified bygone days in an antebellum South is upturned as the true ideals and horrors of oppression, slavery, and fear of miscegenation are told. Nonetheless, Faulkner is able to show both sides of southern history by often capturing the beauty of these grand plantation homes while destroying them. Faulkner's own adoration for the plantation home is unveiled through his life and his connections with grand homes, and it is his own relationship with the home that offers him further insight into its fruitfully magnificent, yet contaminated history.

Chapter Two

Faulkner's Biographical Connections to the South and its Architecture

William Faulkner was born in the heart of the Deep South in New Albany, Mississippi on September 25, 1897. His family roots dug deep to all things southern, and his own familial connection to antebellum architecture was grand. Southern plantation homes were modeled after Greek architecture because it offered a “promise of permanence” (Wienczek 10). Faulkner’s treatment of “permanence” is powerful and strong because his connection to and creation of plantation homes is a center in his fiction and his life. The plantation home’s “permanence” generated a space and time continuum that allowed the essence of the past to intermingle with elements of the present, creating a setting that fostered Faulkner’s stories with an element of movement throughout time. Furthermore, Faulkner had associations with large estate homes, and he had an appreciation for their beautiful architecture. Nostalgia for these structures from his own past is prevalent since Faulkner’s personal residency within grand homes permitted him to successfully capture the grandiose feelings for large estates through characters in his works. For Faulkner, a large estate home was an external projection and representation of his self, and this desire would surface in many of Faulkner’s characters. Consequently, Faulkner’s understanding of elements of racism from his own family members and those from history produces a duality of sentiment in regard to the plantation home. An ever-present binary exists in his fiction that appreciates the beauty and intricacies of the plantation home, and yet hates it. To better grasp this struggle of opposing viewpoints about the plantation South and its architecture in Faulkner’s fiction,

this chapter focuses on Faulkner's biographical association with grand homes, as well as his family's history with racism and his own connections to Civil Rights.

The desire for place is an important characteristic of many, and there is often a need to set down or identify with one's roots in a specific place. In *One Matchless Time: A Life of William Faulkner*, Faulkner biographer Jay Parini acknowledges that "[a] sense of place was everything to William Faulkner, and more than any other American novelist in the twentieth century, he understood how to mine the details of place, including its human history, for literary effects" (1). Faulkner's personal desire for a sense of place is seen with his connection to Oxford, Mississippi. He set roots for himself and his extended family with his purchase and restoration of Rowan Oak. He had a personal longing for "home," and it was not until after his mother died that Faulkner fully relocated away from Oxford to Charlottesville, Virginia. Nevertheless, Faulkner held on to Rowan Oak and his Mississippi roots, and eventually died in Mississippi. His ownership of a grand home for his family connects Faulkner to his southern heritage, and it links him to his literature and his characters of both past and present. Faulkner uses the antebellum home's human history not only to show the home's grandeur, but to bring forth the feudal hierarchy and all its injustices. Parini continues, "Place, for Faulkner, becomes a spiritual location from which he examines a truth deeper than anything like mere locality. Faulkner saw himself as taking part in a great process, moving through history and, in an intriguing way, creating a counterhistory of his own" (1). With his literary creation of Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner does create a counterhistory by revealing numerous aspects of the antebellum South, including those of horror that other writers (and even historians) had masked. The use of a permanent place allows the voices,

movements, stories, and ghosts of the past and present to layer upon each other, like shadows, blanketed in a fluid and spiritual space. Faulkner also uncovers spiritual truths by creating the voices of the past—especially those centered around the southern plantation. The stories retold and the voices crafted from the past imitate Faulkner’s personal experience of growing up as his ancestors’ stories were passed down to him.

Faulkner’s sense of place and his love for the ornate detail of grand homes began at a young age and was coupled by his own familial relationships with magnificent homes and architecture. Faulkner’s ties to grand homes traces back to his great-grandfather, W.C. Falkner, an interesting man with his own unusual history. Parini describes the estate built in Ripley, Mississippi: W.C. Falkner “built an antebellum-style mansion with huge porticoes and pillars to house his burgeoning family. Its shaded, well-manicured garden was the envy of the town. He was a classic frontier success story, complete with a violent ending that would have delighted Hollywood” (11). W.C. Falkner aimed to impress others; he even commissioned a statue of himself to be placed in town after his death, although it stands at his gravesite instead. William Faulkner knew that his great-grandfather was a writer and an extraordinary man. In *The Life of William Faulkner*, Richard Gray presents Faulkner’s family history as part of his biography. The Old Colonel “wrote a serialized novel, *The White Rose of Memphis*, first published in 1881, which went to thirty-five printings, and operated a large plantation and a saw mill” (Gray 63). Faulkner’s own desire to become a writer and eventually own a majestic plantation home was influenced by this figure. Dean Faulkner Wells, in her book *Every Day by the Sun: A Memoir of the Faulkners of Mississippi*, describes Faulkner’s connection to his great-grandfather. Baby Dean knew Faulkner as “Pappy” and the

father-figure in her life. Dean lost her father in a plane crash before she was born, and Faulkner felt responsible for his brother Dean's child and helped care for her as one of his own; therefore, she had intimate knowledge of Faulkner and his life. In her memoir, she notes that Faulkner was named after William Clark Falkner, the "Old Colonel," and "[i]n many ways William emulated his great-grandfather by living as a gentleman farmer with horses and dogs on an antebellum estate, and by writing, of course" (Wells 31). This emulation occurred not only in Faulkner's life, but through many characters in his fiction as well. W.C. Falkner's large and impressive home was just one layer of bricks in Faulkner's foundation for the use of plantation homes in his literature and the desire of a grand home for himself.

However, W.C. Falkner was not the only relative who influenced Faulkner. J.W.T Falkner, Faulkner's grandfather, owned an impressive home in Oxford known as the Big Place. Faulkner biographer Joel Williamson, in *William Faulkner and Southern History*, notes that the "Falkner men had a history of unusual houses. William C. Falkner had belatedly turned his modest house in Ripley into a replica of an Italian villa. In the 1890s J.W.T Falkner had built the Big Place on South Street in Oxford" (228). This legacy of ownership of a grand home such as the Ripley estate and the Big Place would be passed down to Faulkner, although it skips his father.

William Faulkner spent a great deal of time during his childhood years at the Big Place. Faulkner's brother, John Faulkner, recounts their early years in Oxford in *My Brother Bill: An Affectionate Reminiscence*, a memoir written posthumously about his brother's life. The boys and their parents moved to Oxford on Second South Street after his grandfather built another house on South Street: "This new house was three stories

high, a landmark that could be seen from miles outside town. It became the center of our lives for as long as Grandfather lived” (Faulkner, John 13). From early on, the Big Place was a center in Faulkner’s life, and its splendor impressed young Faulkner. Even though Faulkner and his family lived nearby, they spent a great deal of time at their grandfather’s magnificent home. Joseph Blotner, Faulkner’s most famous biographer, who held a personal relationship with the writer and helped bring him to the University of Virginia as writer-in-residence, also details Faulkner’s connection to the Big Place. In *Faulkner: A Biography*, Blotner describes Faulkner’s powerful connection to not only place but his relatives: “The strong ties of kinship were reinforced by frequent visits. Before Jack Falkner was a year old, his parents took him and his brother to Oxford to visit their grandparents in ‘The Big Place,’ the handsome home the Young Colonel had built for his beloved Sallie Murry. Back in Ripley, they saw the Murrays almost daily” (8). These frequent visits to family facilitated Faulkner’s strong feelings of connectedness to his family and to a sense of place. The Big Place and its initial essence of permanence became another cornerstone in his personal and literary creation of space.

Numerous Faulkner historians showcase the elaborate description of the Big Place that so impressed a young William Faulkner. Dean Faulkner Wells recounts her great-grandfather’s establishment of the Big Place: “When J.W.T. Falkner moved his household from Ripley, Mississippi, the Old Colonel’s home base, to Oxford, he bought property on South Street within sight of the courthouse. In 1899, he built one of the largest houses in town, a three-story white elephant the family called ‘the Big Place’” (47). Like his father, W.C. Falkner, J.W.T. Falkner sought to impress others in the town by constructing the largest and grandest home. Dean Faulkner Wells refers to the Big

Place as a “white elephant” which suggests a slight embarrassment owing to the home’s outlandishness. Dean Faulkner Wells highlights additional details about the Big Place: “The lot had originally belonged to Maud Butler Falkner’s grandfather in the 1830s. For years the house stood in the center of the large lot facing east; then it was moved to the northwest corner, facing north. The Falkners celebrated the turn of the century in the third-floor ballroom” (47-48). It is interesting that the Butlers’ lot was used for the site of this grand home because the Big Place now inherits a place linked to Faulkner’s maternal side while the home itself links to his paternal side, allowing for an ancestral space from the lines of the Falkners and Butlers. The home and its land come from both sides of his family. A majestic celebration at the Big Place during the turn of the century would emphasize and reflect a new era of prosperity and longevity; that of course, would not last for this building that was built with intention to endure. For the time being, however, the Big Place was a reflection of J.W.T. Falkner’s ostentatious life. Parini notes that J.W.T. Falkner “built a home in Oxford—the Big Place—and was often seen at the courthouse in his white linen suits and Panama hat, smoking a fat cigar” (14). J.W.T. Falkner was an important and impressive man who took pride in his home, his politics, and his investments. When Faulkner and his brothers were young, “[t]he Young Colonel was now a state senator, and he lived conspicuously in the Big Place, as it was always called. His investments widened to include apartment and office buildings, even raw land” (Parini 17). Like the Old Colonel, the Young Colonel valued wealth, power, and distinction, and the Big Place established his affluence—an affluence which influenced young William.

Oxford, the Big Place, and Faulkner's own home helped establish Faulkner's love for place, and they inspired future literary creations. Parini describes Oxford and the antebellum-style home which were the foci of place for Faulkner's childhood:

As a boy and young adolescent, Faulkner's world was neatly circumscribed, with mythic elements that included woods and swamplands as well as the town itself; beyond the immediate family circle there was the Big Place, where his grandfather towered over the family, the genial patriarch on whom his father also depended for emotional (as well as financial) security. The house had many bedrooms and a full attic on the third floor, where the Young Colonel's grandchildren would often play by themselves. There was a good library in the house, too—many of the books having been acquired by the Old Colonel—and his mother encouraged Faulkner to read. (20)

Here, the quaint Mississippi town and his grandfather's omnipresence aided in Faulkner's growth and inspiration for his own piece of majestic architecture on its clutch of Mississippi earth, as well as within his literary works. J.W.T. Faulkner's antebellum style home (and library) was a place that could be thoroughly enjoyed by William, his brothers, and cousins, and it left a noteworthy impression. This desire for (and even detrimental feelings toward) a grand home and prominent place is conveyed by numerous characters in Faulkner's fiction. Growing up in these homes allowed Faulkner the time and appreciation for both large and miniscule details of architectural craftsmanship. In fact, even his parents' home housed elaborate architectural details which would contribute to Faulkner's love of architecture. Maud and Murry's home, where Faulkner grew up, was on Second South Street in Oxford: "Set well back from the street was the house, a big one with a fireplace in every room but the kitchen. It was rather ornate, with latticework at the bottom of the porch that stretched across the front, and with elaborate trim where the porch supporters met the roof. The extra-large windows were flanked by tall shutters" (Blotner 13). While this home was not nearly as majestic as the Big Place,

it did contain grand features such as multiple fireplaces, intricate trim work, and other niceties. Yet again, this home, along with his mother's appreciation for ornate details, fostered an environment which would contribute to Faulkner's love of detailed southern architecture.

Unfortunately, the Big Place, which was built to last, fell into the decline that typified many grand homes before it. Faulkner's awareness of the decline of the Big Place and his family's prosperity surfaces in numerous characters who experience the same fate. Once the home was passed down to Faulkner's father and siblings, the home's grandeur quickly deteriorated. Williamson describes the handling of the Big Place by Faulkner's Uncle John: "[E]minence of that house faded rapidly under the hand of Faulkner's 'Uncle John.' J.W.T. Faulkner, Jr., administered his father's estate after his death in 1922. At first, he rented out the Big Place to his father-in-law, who made it into a boardinghouse" (229). John then negotiated with his sister and Murry, and Murry received a building lot on the main street. Williamson continues, "Uncle John moved the house back from the corner and cut it up into apartments" (229). The Big Place no longer stood tall as an emblem of wealth and prominence; it was moved farther back from view and became a multi-family home instead of the proud home of a single, affluent family. John Faulkner also tells of this decline: "Years ago it was turned sideways and moved to what was Granny's flower garden and cut up into apartments. We still call it Grandfather's house, crowded in though it is among thirteen other houses and a filling station that occupy what was once his lot" (13). The details that John Faulkner highlights show a sense of melancholy for what once was. Granny's once beautiful flower garden is now the resting place for the apartment homes, and a gas station (a marked sign of

descent for property) resides on the lot. The psychological impact of this marked fall would have been great for Faulkner as the magnificence of this place from his childhood reflected the changing times of society. Faulkner identified with the loss of this grand home and even uses the devaluation of a home with its proximity to a new gas station in “A Rose for Emily.” Parini notes the decline of Faulkner’s grandfather’s Big Place in 1927. During Faulkner’s early writing career, the “Big Place, the family homestead, was being cut up into apartments: a dreadful and symbolic disembodiment of the Falkner legacy. The family no longer had the wealth to keep it going. The townscape itself was changing rapidly, too, as cheap, small bungalows began to rise up and concrete was replacing long stretches of lawn and garden” (Parini 110). This disembodiment affected Faulkner, especially since it occurred at the time he began writing. The feelings of loss for bygone days and the effects of a changing society and culture are prevalent themes in Faulkner’s fiction. Similar to Rose Hill Plantation, the Big Place was divided for economic expediency. The southern aristocracy could not last, and Faulkner witnessed the good and bad of the inevitable. The binary surrounding the plantation home gave Faulkner an outlet to write both sides of the past, without diminishing the negatives.

An additional ornate home helped fuel Faulkner’s decision to include such architectural detail in his work. Murry and Maud Falkner built a small home on their lot on South Lamar which was also the site of the Big Place (Williamson 229). Murry’s lot was left over from the break-up of the Big Place, and Maud was allowed to design the home. Murry and Maud had to relocate after Murry left his teaching position and campus quarters owned by the school. In her memoir, Dean Faulkner Wells describes Faulkner’s mother’s home: “Maud’s house was a buff brick structure located a few blocks south of

the square. . . . It was a British-style ‘captain’s cottage’ that she had designed herself with a gabled roof, a porthole-shaped window in the center gable, and a wraparound front gallery with French windows and a green canvas awning. A captain’s lantern hung by the front door” (14). This glimpse of Maud’s delicate design for her own home helps set the foundation for Faulkner’s interest in the architectural beauty of ornate homes. Like her son, Maud loved intricate details. Wells adds,

Maud’s home showed her love of detail: high ceilings, hardwood floors, a formal dining room, a spacious parlor with a fireplace, three compact bedrooms, and two baths. . . . Much of the furniture had belonged to Murry’s grandfather, William Clark Falkner, some of which he brought back from Mexico after the war of 1846: primitively carved, heavy oak chairs and tables, mirror, and sideboard. (15)

Maud’s love for solid and durable features and furniture with aspects of architectural detail emphasized quality and beauty. She and her brother had grown up in Oxford in an ornate and lasting home: “The house where she spent her childhood still stands on what is now Jefferson Avenue. A Victorian cottage with a touch of gingerbread surrounding the porch, of light brown clapboard construction with heavy oak double doors” (Wells 30). Even her childhood residence exhibited elements of sturdiness alongside architectural intricacies. Maud’s love for architectural details would be handed down to her son William as he shared this love through the renovation of his own home and through the written craftsmanship of homes in his works.

The largest evidence of Faulkner’s deep connection to antebellum homes was his purchase and restoration of a large plantation home that he named Rowan Oak. Faulkner and his wife Estelle felt that houses were important, and Faulkner

always yearned to replicate the Big Place that his grandfather had lorded over. His characters are always in awe of fine houses, always yearning for land and property. He knew these feelings intimately, and he wanted something grand and

glorious, an imposing house that would reify his internal sense of self, and he just happened to have his eye on such a place. (Parini 155)

The old Bailey Place, or Shegog Place, was an antebellum home that Faulkner knew of during his youth, and his ability to purchase and restore the home allowed him the opportunity to represent himself as proudly as his grandfathers before him. Faulkner's brother has reminisced on Rowan Oak: "It was the old Bailey place, where we used to raid the orchard on our way to our swimming hole. . . . I used to have a regular path beat through our pastures going back and forth visiting him. That house is the only one Bill ever owned in Oxford. He never wanted another" (Faulkner, John 161). As children on their way to adventure, this home was a grand landmark that a young Faulkner could admire. John Faulkner knew how significant this home was to his brother, and its importance could be placed in Faulkner's labor and restoration of the place as well as its southern history.

The grand home was built before the Civil War with numerous architectural details of the Palladian style. Joseph Blotner provides Rowan Oak's history and its relationship to other grand homes in Oxford:

The sturdy and symmetrical two-story plantation-style home was ennobled by a Greek portico and four wooden columns, with a second-story balcony set between them. Built in 1848 by an English architect for Robert B. Shegog, it was similar to three or four others in the city and county. Only a few houses rose to the three-story eminence of the home J. W. T. Falkner had built for Sallie Murry. (12)

This home was built in true southern antebellum style as it was modeled after Greek architecture with its columns, portico, and balcony. The name of the original homeowner Robert B. Shegog was used by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*. The visiting preacher in Dilsey's church is Reverend Shegog who preaches an impactful Easter

sermon. The significance of Faulkner's love of architecture and his own home is stressed with this nod to Shegog. As one of a few grand homes already in existence in Oxford, Rowan Oak stood out for its magnificence and aura of stateliness, although it was currently in a state of ill-repair. Even the architecture of the neighboring university was that of the plantation South: "Just across the railroad tracks, a mile west of the courthouse, lay the campus of the University of Mississippi (familiarily known as Ole Miss), with its scattering of Greek Revival and Georgian buildings, set among magnolias, dogwoods, redbud, and tall shade trees on a square mile of elevated rolling land" (Blotner 12). For Faulkner, the opportunity to own a significant piece of architectural history elevated him as a person of status, even though he never graduated from the university nearby with its same architectural splendor. Prestige is often associated with southern architecture—even at this southern academic institution which emulates the same Greek architecture as that of Thomas Jefferson's designs for the University of Virginia, yet another noteworthy model.

Faulkner's desire to own and refurbish a place from history gave him an image of prestige. Faulkner saw through the old Bailey Place's present shabbiness back to its grand past, and he, along with Estelle, sought to renovate the home to its entire splendor and glory. Tracing back to its construction, "Colonel" Robert B. Shegog bought a parcel of land in 1844 from someone who had been sold the land from a Chickasaw named E-Ah-Nah-Yea who was granted the land from the government. This history is likely fodder for the background of Sutpen's purchase of his own land. The English architect who built the two-story Colonial for Shegog was William Turner. After the location was selected, "the land was cleared and the kiln built in which the slaves would bake brick for

the foundation” (Blotner 258). This historical component of Rowan Oak would be similar to the construction of Sutpen’s antebellum home since his slaves created its bricks. Several years after the Civil War, Mrs. Julia Bailey purchased the home in 1872, and Mrs. Sally Bailey Bryant inherited it in 1923. It fell into disrepair as she rented it to numerous tenants, and it was even vacant (Blotner 258-9). In 1928, Mr. and Mrs. Claude Anderson rented it, and he used the land for small farming. While under their care, the old Shegog Place continued to deteriorate: “Mice and squirrels scurried in the attic under the leaky roof. Beams were rotting and sagging. Stained and faded paper peeled from the cracking plaster on the once-bright walls” (Blotner 259). Even standing in faded glory, Faulkner saw potential and beauty in the grand estate. Having recently married his life-long love, he purchased the home from Bill Bryant on a “deed of trust” on April 12, 1930 (Blotner 259).

Faulkner was now able to fulfill his desire and reclaim a piece of southern history. This home allowed him to repossess an air of affluence that his family had lost. Blotner quotes Jill Faulkner in an interview about her father and Rowan Oak as “the symbol in Pappy’s life of being somebody . . . everybody in Oxford had remembered that Pappy’s father ran a livery stable, and he had lived in this house up not too far from the livery stable, and this was just a way of thumbing his nose at Oxford . . . a nice old house [that] had a certain substance and standing to it” (261). This substance and standing was more than important to Faulkner—he was no longer a stable hand but a willful and talented writer who (with the purchase of this antebellum home) now had an external representation of grandeur. To add to the home’s stateliness and zeal, Faulkner renamed the home Rowanoak or Rowan Oak after reading “Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* about the

way Scottish farmers put pieces of rowan tree over the doors of the cowhouses to prevent witches from casting spells and stealing milk” (Blotner 262). Actually, the rowan tree is not oak but ash, and it symbolizes peace and security (Blotner 262). With the name Rowan Oak, Faulkner uses literature to add to his home’s history and transcendence.

At the time of purchase, Rowan Oak was a deteriorated and eerie place, much like the gothic spaces that haunt Faulkner’s fiction; however, in its glory days, the home was splendid. Faulkner’s biographers describe the home during the past and its current condition at the time of purchase. Parini notes that Shegog was an Irishman “who had made his money in Tennessee and moved to Mississippi in the mid-nineteenth century” (155). Once Shegog settled in Oxford, “he built an imposing house, an L-shaped structure, that stood at the end of a shaded, cedar-lined drive. It looked symmetrical from the front view, with balancing parlor-wings on either side of a fine portico that boasted four white columns. Above the Georgian front doors a balcony opened out” (Parini 155). Although Rowan Oak hides back from the road, nestled behind its cedar trees, Parini describes Shegog’s construction as an “imposing house” that “boasted” architectural details. This marked air of pompousness adds to the fact that a grand estate was a sign of ostentatiousness. While the house is not symmetrical, it was designed to look so—yet another façade of power because the front makes the home appear larger than it truly is. Blotner also elaborates on the exterior, as well as the interior, description of the L-shaped house:

[It] rose slowly. It was sturdy and roomy, symmetrical in front, with parlors on both sides of the wide entrance hall and a dining room and kitchen extending back from the one on the right. Upstairs were three bedrooms. The Grecian roof of the portico was supported by four tall wooden columns. Above the Georgian front doors was a balcony, and on either side, above the wide, open gallery, were two

large shuttered windows upstairs and downstairs. A professional gardener landscaped the grounds, curving a long cedar-lined drive to approach the house. (258)

Here, numerous details of southern architecture were crafted in this home, especially the Grecian style portico and Georgian doors. In addition, its interior space with a large entrance hall and additional parlors added to its grandeur. As Parini observes, “It was all very classical and impressive, except for the fact that by 1930 the house had fallen upon hard times. The roof leaked, mice and squirrels nested in empty rooms, and the stained wallpaper bubbled out. The plaster in the ceilings bulged and split. The windows could hardly be opened or shut” (155). It is noteworthy that Faulkner purchased the home at the beginning of the Great Depression. For many, using money to restore a dilapidated old home was incomprehensible. For Faulkner, however, the task was imperative, and he relied on his own skills to do much of the restoration. Faulkner got to work renovating the home and restoring it back to its splendor. Dean Faulkner Wells illustrates the large task of renovating Rowan Oak:

The first impression was of quiet grandeur, but in 1930 when Pappy, his wife, Estelle, and her two children from a previous marriage moved in, the house was falling apart from years of neglect. There was no electricity and no running water; squirrels and mice were completely at home on the second floor. Pappy and Aunt Estelle had their work cut out for them. The shell of a house needed everything from a new foundation to a new roof, wallpaper, wiring, plumbing, painting, and screens for windows. Pappy rolled up his sleeves and went to work, doing many repairs himself. Even in its dilapidated state, the house—with its grounds and long, curving driveway—evoked his great-grandfather’s estate at Ripley. (21)

Wells’ description of the home and her inside view of the family highlights her uncle’s determination to bring back the home to all its glory. She notes that the daunting task of renovation was not easy on the newlywed couple. Because of financial strain, Faulkner’s

brother aided in the remodel: “William could not afford to hire carpenters to repair Rowan Oak, so Dean regularly brought fraternity brothers to help work on the house. They put on a new roof, rewired and expanded electrical circuits, and . . . put in new fixtures, ceiling lamps, pipes, and plumbing” (Wells 77). These college students, along with a hired worker named Rusty Patterson, helped Faulkner complete the restoration. John Faulkner recollects, “Rusty was a house painter. He always came to work with some whiskey, some in him and some still in a bottle he had in his hip pocket. As they painted along, he and Bill nipped out of Rusty’s bottle till it was gone, then Bill went in the house and got a bottle of his” (162). The pair would also drink while working on the beams under the house, but Rusty did not charge Faulkner while working under the house because he had too much fun. In later years, Faulkner would add to Rowan Oak with minor projects, but he would hire professionals for any major work because “[h]e could afford to pay to have it done now” (Faulkner, John 162-3). Understanding the labor and craftsmanship in restoring an antebellum home allowed Faulkner a unique insight into southern construction and architecture which he could use in his literature.

In fact, the location for much of Faulkner’s writing (besides when living in Hollywood) was in his study at Rowan Oak. Wells says, “Pappy’s ‘office,’ a term he borrowed from southern plantation owners, was a bedroom/study with a single bed, a fireplace, and a large oil painting of an angry mule over the mantel” (171). Here, Faulkner emulated the antebellum estate owners of the past by using his “office” to get his work finished. Even after Faulkner enclosed the back porch to create a new office for himself, he used the same table and chair to write his last books that he had used to write the rest: “Like in his front study, he pulled the table end-ways to the window, so the light

came over his left shoulder” (Faulkner, John 263). Rowan Oak was not just an antebellum space in which to write about the antebellum and present South; it was a detailed place that housed information about southern architecture that Faulkner mined for his literature. Faulkner relished numerous characteristics of the old southern home and incorporated into his literature, including the portico, the columns, and the balcony, but most significantly, the past.

Consequently, restoring and moving into an antebellum home must have influenced his work. As soon as he moved into Rowan Oak, he returned to the characters who lived in a large, old home from *The Sound and the Fury* and wrote and revised an additional story for them (Blotner 265). Blotner says, “That summer or early fall his mind turned back to that fictional family which had also lived in a large, once-imposing house that had fallen into disrepair and dilapidation” (265). Residing in Rowan Oak and living near the woods where he had played as a child must have affected Faulkner’s literature (Blotner 265). The desire to own the home’s past, as well as the home itself, surfaced in his fabricated concoction of an eerie history. Faulkner was fascinated by ghosts from the past and created an aura of ghostliness for Rowan Oak. Every Halloween when the Faulkners had a party at Rowan Oak, Faulkner would pretend to be the ghost of Judith Shegog who was buried on the grounds along with her Yankee officer. In a trance-like state, Faulkner would walk down the stairs and out into the darkness (Blotner 266-7). He later told his niece Dean that he made up the story about Judith because “[t]he house needed a ghost” (Blotner 655). Dean Faulkner Wells reminisces on Halloweens at Pappy’s house:

There were no Halloweens like those at Rowan Oak, nights of magic terror. We grew up believing in our own family ghost, Judith Sheegog, the beautiful girl who had committed suicide by jumping from the second-floor balcony, breaking her neck on the front steps below, all for the love of a Yankee soldier who had abandoned her. Her grave, according to Pappy, was under the huge old magnolia tree at the end of the front walk, and her ghost walked the grounds of Rowan Oak “when the moon was right and foxfire danced in the woods.” (155)

With his own home, Faulkner crafted an eerie past that mirrored other haunted and gothic antebellum homes. While his creation was primarily for the delight of himself and others, Faulkner’s ghost is reminiscent of the hauntings of the past. What is important here is Faulkner’s desire to bring the people and stories of the past into the present and the present space. The house and grounds of Rowan Oak, henceforth, became another literary creation of the imagination, but an oral creation instead of a written one. In a sense, Rowan Oak became a grand, antebellum muse that Faulkner relied on to craft his stories. When a magazine editor, Anthony Buttitta, visited the Faulkners, he overheard them arguing because Estelle wanted them both to go to Hollywood, and Faulkner told her, “You’re only looking for a good time. I don’t want to go. I want to stay here. This is the only place I can write about” (Blotner 359). Faulkner acknowledges that this plantation home enabled him to generate the necessary feelings of elation and hatred toward antebellum homes and the South. Rowan Oak is an external projection and representation of his own self, embodying conflicting dualities about the South through its permanence throughout time. The home contains the binaries of splendor (due to its marvelous architecture) and desolation (existing from an era of slavery); nevertheless, these binaries help Faulkner approach and craft the tension that still existed in the South. His focus on permanence enables Faulkner to tell the tales of the past through the antebellum, Georgian doors of the present.

It is also interesting that Faulkner gravitated to other plantation homes besides Rowan Oak. Even Faulkner's choice of restaurant when dining with his niece Dean was a converted, antebellum home: "Pappy was staying by himself at Rowan Oak and took me to dinner at least once a week. I was his logical (only) companion readily available. We usually went to the Mansion, an antebellum house converted into a restaurant by Aubrey Seay, popular with townsfolk and students alike and just up the street from Nannie's" (Wells 212). And, while the Ole Miss students enjoyed dining at the Mansion for its jukebox, Seay would unplug it when Faulkner stepped in the door because he knew Faulkner had a disdain for background music (Wells 212). While the Mansion restaurant may have just been a nice restaurant in town, to Faulkner it served as another reminder of the past enshrined in antebellum architecture and history. Since Faulkner uses fire to showcase the decline of the plantation South, it is notable that the Mansion restaurant burned in 1967 right after Seay passed. During an interview with John Cofield for the *Hotty Toddy News*, Annette Seay Hines, Aubrey's daughter, remembers her father placing an "out of order sign" on the jukebox when Faulkner and Estelle dined there. Annette Seay Hines says, "I remember waiting on Mr. Faulkner several times and he used to sit in the third booth on the right side of the restaurant and face the front. Mr. Faulkner's favorite meal at The Mansion was the barbecued chicken and peach cobbler, and sometimes he would order the cobbler before his meal" (Cofield). The Mansion burned after Faulkner passed away as well, but the grand and historical home turned restaurant was a favorite of Faulkner's.

Furthermore, Faulkner's position as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia would take him to the birthplace of southern architecture in America:

Charlottesville, Virginia. Faulkner finally felt that he could fully relocate to Charlottesville after his mother, Maud, died. By April of 1962, Faulkner and Estelle were ready to head back to Virginia and planned to live there more permanently. Blotner quotes Jill on her father's move:

I think that he was torn at the idea of leaving Rowan Oak, but I really feel that Oxford had become almost unbearable to him. I don't think he had any regrets at all leaving Oxford. . . . I think he had transferred his roots to Virginia. Because Virginia is old unlike [the way] Mississippi is old. Mississippi is old and in some ways ashamed of it. . . . Virginians are not like that. They enjoy some shabby old things. And Pappy was very happy with that. . . . That was the way he felt about so many things. (701)

Jill perfectly describes the sentimentality that Virginians felt for the past as different than the angst felt by Mississippians—they did not hate their “shabby old things” and all they represented. For Faulkner, there was a bearable balance for dealing with the emotions of the South in Virginia, probably because there was less hatred and extreme racism brought than in the Deep South of Mississippi.

Just as Quentin Compson tells himself that he does not hate the South, Faulkner reminds himself of the same thing, although many members of his family had a history associated with racism. Faulkner wanted to know more about the injustices and accounts of slavery. John Faulkner remembers how the boys would listen to their Mammy, Caroline Barr, tell about race and slavery. John Faulkner writes, “Mammy used to tell us stories of slavery times. Jack didn't pay too much attention to them but Bill and I did, in particular Bill. I can remember him listening by the hour to her” (49). Mammy's stories helped Faulkner peer into the lives of slaves, and they facilitated his desire to show the horrors of slavery and the inequalities of blacks based on race. John Faulkner continues, “I cannot pass over Mammy too quickly because of the tremendous influence she was on

Bill's life and outlook and writings" (51). John Faulkner's insight into the mind of a young Faulkner and his close relationship with Mammy grant him the knowledge of just how significant these stories of slavery were for Faulkner's literary work and point of views in life. In fact, Faulkner was one of the few members of his family who did not hold racist viewpoints, according to Dean Faulkner Wells. She writes,

Pappy, Wese, and I formed a moderate minority in our family of ardent segregationists and racists. . . . In an interview with a local newspaper, [an] aunt was quoted . . . as saying, "I'm a bigot and proud of it." The Faulkner men, with the exception of Pappy, heartily endorsed this sentiment, using the "n" word, snickering at racist jokes, and openly advocating violence to defend the "Southern Way of Life." (Wells 179)

Defending the southern way of life via racism was an ardent act of many in the Deep South when Faulkner was alive. His bigoted family members who had racial prejudices were typical of mainstream southerners. The fact that Faulkner saw things differently, perhaps with the knowledge passed down by Mammy, made him unique in his gift for seeing through the southern way of life to the reality of its prejudice and discrimination.

Faulkner's family history of racism was opposite that of Faulkner's willingness to see the black race, not as beneath him, but as different than himself. Gray notes, "Instead of pretending to understand black people, protesting that they were all part of the family, he grew more willing occasionally to admit ignorance and otherness. . . . He learned, in short, to acknowledge difference" (34). Faulkner recognized that while he did not understand the black race, he understood that there were differences between the races; however, those differences should not lead toward the need for separation. In fact, Faulkner uses the anguish caused by separation in many of his works. Gray writes, "Faulkner's novels are full of characters who suffer the consequences of racial division,

the social and moral apartheid that was perpetuated and even institutionalized by the ‘Jim Crow’ laws, and all the other elaborate paraphernalia of segregation, long after slavery was abolished” (34). This division that resonated from the past, pre-Civil War era through to Faulkner’s present was as permanent as the antebellum homes that Faulkner admired. In addition, Faulkner hated intolerance even though bigotry typified many of his family members. A friend of Faulkner’s grandfather, J.W.T. Falkner, had riled up a mob to shoot and kill Nelse Patton, a black man arrested for cutting a white woman’s throat with a razor. Gray notes that Patton’s death in 1906 was one of two lynchings that frame Faulkner’s life, the other being the murder of Emmett Till in 1955 after which Faulkner spoke out in opposition to racism and its violent manifestations. Nevertheless, the horrors of Patton’s death found their way into the final chapters of *Light in August* with the death of Joe Christmas. Patton was shot, castrated posthumously, “dragged behind a car,” and “hung naked from a tree” (Gray 36-7). The mob who killed Patton resembles the mob who kills the fictional Joe Christmas.

The ties that Faulkner’s grandfather had to such horrifying acts allowed Faulkner to fully recognize such racist hatred; therefore, he can write from both perspectives—that of the racist bigot and that of the southerner who is repulsed by such bigotry. It is through these differing perspectives that Faulkner can artfully craft the inner feelings of both Thomas Sutpen and Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!* Williamson quotes Faulkner’s letter to his publisher Harrison Smith in 1934: “I use [Quentin Compson] because it is just before he is to commit suicide because of his sister, and I use his bitterness which he has projected on the South in the form of hatred of it and its people to get more out of the story itself than a historical novel would be. To keep the hoop skirts

and plug hats out, you might say” (244). Here, Faulkner acknowledges his desire to create a more realistic view of the South—one that is not idealized as elegant, southern charm. Faulkner aims to showcase the true beliefs of southerners, whether these beliefs include racist sentiment or disgust at such intolerance, not just an idealized love for the South. Williamson notes that Faulkner tries both courses of creation for the South (love and hate), “but more and more he emerged as a profound critic of the South, and particularly of the strict roles it prescribed as to sex, race, and class” (244). In addition, since many white southerners sought to uphold the purity of their race, the intermingling of races through sex became a topic of heightened interest for Faulkner as the taboo subject of miscegenation was a key issue during and after slavery in the South.

Fear and hatred toward miscegenation existed during Faulkner’s life. Wells observed that racist, white southerners would do anything “to defend the ‘Southern Way of Life’” (179). Part of defending this way of life meant keeping white, southern women pure by ferociously prohibiting black males to have intercourse with them—even if it meant murdering any black men who stepped across this boundary. During slavery, this sentiment was especially true; although, hypocritically, the tables could be turned for white males—they were free to force themselves upon black women (then enslaved workers) with no repercussions. The result, however, was the intermingling of the races and descendants of mixed blood. The miscegenated race of people would be ostracized in more than one way: they were still believed to be beneath whites since they were part black, and they were even more “other” than blacks because their entire being existed upon a forbidden sexual encounter. This fear of miscegenation stems from the edict to keep the white woman as sexually pure as possible—she must stand upon the southern

pedestal of purity. Richard Gray quotes W.J. Cash from *The Mind of the South* for a description of the pure, white woman as the southern ideal: she is “the South’s Palladium—the shield-bearing Athena gleaming whitely in the clouds, the standard for its rallying, the mystic symbol in face of the foe. She was the lily-pure maid of Astolat . . . And—she was the pitiful Mother of God . . . There was hardly a sermon that did not begin and end with tributes to her honour (43). The metaphorical transformation of the white woman as the “South’s Palladium” is relevant because it directly links her to the plantation home and the Grecian style of architecture: as a pure white column, she stands on the pedestal as the southern ideal and dream. More than likely, this pure white woman was immured inside the very walls of her metaphorical counterpart, shielded from the possible contaminants of the black male and threats to her female purity. Paradoxically, the threat and fear of miscegenation extended only to the white females of the Old South since sexual relationships between white men and black women, their slaves, were quite common.

Williamson shows that white males in the South used their own motivations to uphold the laws against miscegenation because they upheld white women in such an idealized, pure fashion. Williamson explains,

Historians have sometimes argued that white men in the South painted themselves into a sexual corner. In the middle years of the nineteenth century they took advantage of black women and so pedestalized white women as to render physical and sexual relations with their wives unusually difficult. The southern wife was pious and pure, the angel, the conduit with God, and accessible physically only for procreation. For men to press themselves upon their wives beyond that point was to yield to lust, but to abstain was to breed frustration. (382)

White women, especially those of the upper classes, were only used sexually for procreation, not fornication. A mental divide must have been present for these white

women who knew that their husbands would not turn to them for sexual fulfillment, but to black slaves. This feeling of resentment added an additional element to the ostracizing of any mixed children who were born as the result of a miscegenated affair. The people who were born as the result of white men forcing themselves on black slaves were banished from all angles—white women resented their conception, white men saw them as potential violators of their white women because of their impurity, and blacks viewed them differently because they were often given special treatment by the white plantation owners. The fallout in the South due to miscegenation was devastating because “in slavery miscegenation by masters happened in some fashion everywhere. It wreaked havoc with the emotions of individual men and women, and tore rudely the ideal fabric of marriage and community in Southern culture” (Williamson 384). Faulkner recognized that the taboo of miscegenation, as well as slavery, led to the South’s demise.

Plantations sow parallel lines of descendants: white and mixed-race. Williamson writes, “The slave South was full of stories in which certain men in planter families habitually crossed the race line for sex and fathered a sequence of children who were simultaneously black and white” (383). These mixed children became part of this “other” class, existing in a liminal space where they did not belong to their father’s family or the family of enslaved workers. Faulkner captures the tainted, parallel life of the child of mixed races in several works. Williamson notes for instance that “Lucas Beauchamp was perfectly historical for provenance, and so too was Clytie. Charles Bon was more than historical, but the exaggerated circumstances in which he existed highlighted the deep tragedy of the plight of the real-life child of mixed blood and elite education” (383). Using his own familial history in regard to miscegenation, Faulkner uses characters of

mixed-race to show the fears and injustices placed upon them. Given that Faulkner gained a great deal of information through oral stories passed down by his relatives, it is likely that he knew of the probability that his great-grandfather was one of the plantation owners who had a child of mixed-race. Parini states, “A strong secessionist, and himself a minor slave owner, W.C. appears to have fathered a mulatto” (Parini 10). Whether or not it is a certainty, the story that the Old Colonel may have descendants of mixed-race alongside his white children would have been a tale that would have interested a young Faulkner. After consulting the census for historical records, Williamson offers the possible scenario about the miscegenation: “In 1880 the census listed only one servant living in Colonel Falkner’s household on Main Street, but she was a Falkner too. Her name was Lena Falkner. She was thirteen years old and mulatto. It is possible that Lena was also Emeline’s daughter, born about 1867, perhaps in Pontotoc, and that Colonel Falkner was her father” (67). Emeline, one of Colonel Falkner’s slaves, was most likely the black woman who was forced to have a sexual relationship with him, producing a child of mixed blood who would have been a relative to Faulkner. In Carl Rollyson’s Volume I of his biography, *The Life of William Faulkner: The Past is Never Dead 1897-1934*, he argues that Faulkner’s great-grandfather has another line of descendants from his relationship with his slave Emeline. Rollyson writes,

Among Emeline’s progeny, it has always been told that Colonel Falkner fathered her fourth child, named Fannie Forrest Falkner. . . . After Emeline’s death in 1898, her Ripley cemetery tombstone identified her as Mrs. Emeline Falkner, and although no record of an actual marriage has been found, she has been memorialized as such by a family that has always believed . . . in both their black and white progenitors. Alfreda Hughes, Emeline’s great-granddaughter, grew up in West Baltimore with the understanding that she shared the same great-grandfather with William Faulkner. (*The Past is Never Dead* 5)

Even though Faulkner emulated his great-grandfather in numerous ways, the great-grandfather's hypocrisy and injustice is brought forth in many of his works that deal with the fear of miscegenation.

In addition to his great-grandfather's history, Faulkner may have been refreshed on the topic of miscegenation after reading a novel with this theme. When he was starting out as a writer, in April 1923, Faulkner wrote a review of Joseph Hergesheimer's novel, *Java Head*, which deals with the subject of miscegenation (Parini 63). This review could have sparked Faulkner's interest in this prohibited topic and may have influenced him to write about miscegenation in future works. Also, in October, 1931, Faulkner was one of the authors in attendance at the Conference of Southern Writers at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. While there, besides heavily drinking, he met several important writers of the Southern Renaissance and stayed at the Monticello Hotel (Williamson 232). Faulkner's stay at this hotel in Charlottesville before *Absalom, Absalom!* was written would draw his attention to the architectural history of the plantation home—even if reiterating the name offered a mere thought pertaining to Jefferson's Monticello. Having stayed at the Monticello Hotel, Faulkner could have been inspired to get back to work writing about his own fictional plantation house with all its darkness. He may even have been exposed to rumors about Jefferson's "other" children via miscegenation who were also never truly acknowledged by their father.

After the Civil War and throughout Faulkner's life, the fear of miscegenation continued, and the idea of mixing races was still shunned by most of the white population. Ironically, after the Civil War, there were far more women of marriageable age than men; consequently, white women rarely, but sometimes, "willingly took black

lovers and sometimes married black men, most likely men of light color and material substance” (Williamson 377). Defending the ideals of the Old South—including white female purity—via the Civil War led to more white men gone than the plantation homes that they sought to protect. As a result, some white women sought companionship or care in the arms of black men. However, in Faulkner’s fiction, there is “no willing sexual union much less marriage between a white woman and a man known unarguably to be black” (Williamson 377). Williamson uses “unarguably” because Joe Christmas does not truly know if he is actually white or of mixed blood. Therefore, the taboo topic of miscegenation between a white female and a black male is undermined in Faulkner’s fiction as he creates a central crux around Christmas’ race. In fact, Faulkner wrote about miscegenation for many key reasons: “Far more than slavery, Faulkner focused on miscegenation as the repressed myth of the Southern past. And he focused on it in ways that indicated he was not just interested in what [Charles W.] Chestnutt termed ‘the problems of people of mixed blood’ in and for themselves, but for the chance they offered him to explore the linked questions of social positioning, identity and knowledge” (Gray 42). Here, Gray argues that the thematic use of miscegenation allows Faulkner the ability to explore multiple levels of southern society, class, and beliefs. The repression of blacks, those of mixed-race, and even white women culminates in one essential ghost from antebellum days: the disdain for miscegenation. Fear of miscegenation was one primary reason why southerners could not come to terms with the idea of prohibiting slavery. The southern white men who made the laws could not stand the idea of their offspring intermingling with free blacks. Faulkner captures this fear of the thought of mixing races when he characterizes Joe Christmas. As for Joe, the “dilemma stems not

from the fact but from the *idea* of mixed blood. Neither Joe nor the reader ever knows whether he is white or part-black” (Gray 42). Here, Joe hates himself for what he thinks he is, just as southern lawmakers and plantation owners hated the idea of abolition (and later Civil Rights) for what they thought would happen if laws and attitudes were not in place to separate blacks and whites.

Faulkner is able to utilize the inequalities of miscegenation and belief in white woman’s purity in many of his works. Williamson returns to the South’s stance on maintaining the wholesomeness of white southern belles: “Southern society invested heavily in controlling the virginity of its women, and only lightly in controlling the virginity of its men” (393). Faulkner dashes this stance on southern women in numerous works; however, he does write about virgins in his major work that centers on miscegenation. Williamson points out Faulkner’s specific use of characterization: “Only three of his major women are apparent virgins, and all three appear in *Absalom, Absalom!* Judith and Clytie were very much vestal virgins in Thomas Sutpen’s temple. Rosa Coldfield devoted her purity to Sutpen in a very different, almost equal and opposite, mode” (393-4). Judith and Clytie, parallel sisters of white and mixed-race, remain pure, housed in the façade of the grand antebellum home that Sutpen erects. Their purity, along with that of Rosa, highlights the faults in southern society’s ideals because their lives become as tainted as the plantation house where they reside—primarily due to the fear of miscegenation.

With one grandfather befriendng a man who lynched a black man and the other great-grandfather possibly fathering a mixed-race child, Faulkner had an intimate understanding of the South’s fears and injustices, and he uses them to create a haunted

space in the antebellum homes from the past. W.C. Falkner and J.W.T. Falkner held onto their grand homes as well as their tainted views of southern morality. Their magnificent homes became façades of injustice, and Faulkner could see the ever-present duality that existed inside. Through the walls of stately southern architecture, ghostly memories of hatred arose from the past. These ghosts were the tarnished ideals of a society in demise. In fact, Faulkner describes Quentin as both a ghost and an audience for the ghosts from the past. Gray discusses Faulkner's characterization of the "two separate Quentins" from *Absalom, Absalom!* (12): one who listens to the ghosts of the past, and one who (although too young) is a ghost himself because he is from the Deep South. While Gray notes that Quentin is not Faulkner, an autobiographical association can be compared with the "two separate Quentins" (13). Gray acknowledges Faulkner's own comments of both loving his native land while hating parts of it in his essay "Mississippi" (Gray 13). Faulkner felt that the South could not escape from its past. In addition, Gray includes an excerpt of Faulkner's introduction to *The Sound and the Fury* to further showcase the duality of his relationship to the South and all of its ghosts:

We [Southerners] seem to try in the simple furious breathing (or writing) span of the individual to draw a savage indictment of the contemporary scene or to escape from it into a make believe region of swords and magnolias and mockingbirds which never existed anywhere. Both of the courses are rooted in sentiment . . . I seem to have tried both of the courses. I have tried to escape and I have tried to indict. (13)

Faulkner's introduction is important because it shows the two concocted realms of the present and the past, highlighting that both are "rooted in sentiment." It is that heightened sentiment which keeps the truths of the past from being told. Faulkner acknowledges here that he has tried to offer a quintessential make believe South, while at

the same time, prosecuting it. Faulkner, in fact, melds together a sentimental escape to and indictments of his region's past.

Chapter Three

Faulkner's Building Blocks and a Revealing Plantation Diary

Travels in Oxford and surrounding areas, books, historical artifacts, and tales of friends and neighbors all added to Faulkner's work and even his understanding of southern architecture. Numerous grandiose buildings were nestled in Faulkner's world, and he had their histories to pull from in order to create his own fictional county in the antebellum South. The desire for (and even detrimental feelings toward) a grand home and prominent place is conveyed by numerous characters in Faulkner's fiction. There is even more evidence than simply his immediate family's influence that architectural history and southern history influenced Faulkner and his works.

One of those influences came from his education. In *William Faulkner: His Life and Work*, David Minter notes that Faulkner studied Mississippi history in the seventh grade, especially the history pertaining to the Civil War. He held several books about the Civil War and Mississippi in his library. Faulkner's knowledge of this era allowed him to craft his own historical fiction, emphasizing certain elements of the Civil War and the Old South that he deemed should be brought to light. Minter adds that

most of what [Faulkner] knew about his region and its past, certainly about his family and its past, he learned from "old tales and talking"—a fact that helps to account not only for the conversational form of a novel like *Absalom, Absalom!*, but also for the remarkable fluidity, the fundamental seamlessness, of time as we experience it in his fiction, where history always includes present and future as well as past. (13)

Faulkner's formal education, coupled with informational tales from family and friends, offered him the means to create historically relevant information which had mobility

between eras. From listening to tales from bygone times and from his own knowledge of the Civil War, Faulkner is able to infiltrate the present with tales from the past, mimicking his own experience in the South.

As for additional influences in architecture, Thomas Hines in *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha* elaborates extensively on Faulkner's connections to architecture and homes in and around Oxford, Holly Springs, and Ripley. Hines, also a native of Oxford, began his journey of uncovering architectural connections to William Faulkner after writing a letter to his son detailing the ways in which their ancestry crossed paths with that of the Faulkners. In addition, the Spights (Hines' ancestors) and the Falkners lived "diagonally across from each other" in Ripley (Hines 138). Thomas Spight's large home was named "The Magnolias" due to its large magnolia trees in the front yard, and it sat across from Colonel Falkner's "Italian villa" (Hines 138). Spight's granddaughter, Holland Pearce, married William Falkner and gave birth to J. W. T. Falkner (Hines 133). Furthermore, these connections moved from Ripley to Oxford since Thomas Hines, who was born in 1936, lived less than a mile from Rowan Oak (Hines 142). Hines' life and ancestry intermingled with Faulkner's, and he recalls being in the presence of Faulkner on more than one occasion: "I also remember that once the Faulkners hosted a dance for Vicki in the ballroom of The Mansion, a downtown restaurant" (Hines 143). Since Hines, an architectural historian, has firsthand knowledge of the architecture of Faulkner's South, his illustrated book shows relevant locations and events which shaped Faulkner.

William Faulkner was surrounded by grand, southern architecture growing up, and as previously discussed, it greatly impacted his literary work and his own love of

grand homes. Hines points out that in 1925 Faulkner traveled to Europe “where he had a traditional *Wanderjahr* with his friend, the architect William Spratling. Spratling had been commissioned to do sketches of various European buildings for publication in *Architectural Forum*, and Faulkner was with him on many of those expeditions, observing the buildings and drawings in progress” (Hines7-9). This piece of information highlights that Faulkner had a direct connection to the careful study of architectural detail, its history, and its implications while he journeyed with Spratling. Faulkner was able to bring back this focus on fine detail to the architecture of his South, boosting his already incredulous curiosity.

As Faulkner continued to write, elements of architecture began to surface in his work. Hines illuminates Faulkner’s initial architectural expanse: “With his third novel, *Sartoris*, Faulkner half-consciously began his Yoknapatawpha chronicle. One of the most vivid areas in which he sublimated *the actual into apocryphal* in that novel and throughout the saga was in the realm of architecture, landscape, and material culture” (15). Faulkner used what he knew of the South to begin to write his own fabricated history full of elaborate places and characters. Faulkner’s fictional creation blossomed with many types of architectural elements:

Indeed, in his long oeuvre, his treatment of architecture encompassed six large categories: folk vernacular, neoclassical, neo-Gothic, High Victorian, and modernist, as well as the related art of public sculpture. In those categories, Faulkner used architecture to help him center and focus his narrative, to evoke mood and ambiance, to demarcate caste and class, and to delineate character. (Hines 15)

Henceforth, architectural structure served as social and emotional structure in his work.

As Hines points out, Faulkner’s range of architectural categories expanded through time

with various types to produce numerous effects. Faulkner's creation of Yoknapatawpha facilitated these endeavors. Hines says, "In his fictive name for the town, Faulkner chose to honor another great figure from the Revolutionary era, Thomas Jefferson, but for the fictive county, significantly, he chose the name of an actual river in the southern part of Lafayette County, bearing the Chickasaw Indian name for slashed, or cut-opened land—Yoknapatawpha" (23). While Faulkner may have believed the meaning of Yoknapatawpha to be different, the true meaning of Yoknapatawpha as "slashed, or cut-opened land" adds a strong element of rawness and pain—the same rawness and pain experienced by many during the South's long and tainted history. This rawness is exhibited when Quentin Compson reflects on the story told to him by Rosa Coldfield in *Absalom, Absalom!*:

the two separate Quentins now talking to one another on the long silence of notpeople in notlanguage, like this: *It seems that this demon—his name was Sutpen—(Colonel Sutpen)—Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation—(Tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)—tore violently.* (4-5)

In Rosa's words, this plantation was torn violently in the land just as the true definition of Yoknapatawpha denotes slashing and cutting open the land, a former parcel of Native land. Gray suggests that going back to Native Americans allowed Faulkner to reach the beginning of the South's human history (52-3). Yoknapatawpha County symbolizes the beginning era of a violently spoiled land that continues to be filled with anguish.

And while the county name gives a nod to the South's Native American history, the city of Jefferson (and county seat) may give homage to Thomas Jefferson, a powerhouse for the country. If Jefferson does in fact derive from Thomas Jefferson,

much can be attributed to the use of his name: architectural influence, presidential leadership, a role in renaissance, participation in slavery, and acts of miscegenation. Any knowledge that Faulkner may have gained about Jefferson during his time at the University of Virginia, most likely planted a seed for Yoknapatawpha. Hines includes Faulkner's Map of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, from the *Viking Portable Faulkner* (1946) that lays out the town and county and many locations of Faulkner's stories, landmarks, and key events (14). The town name "Jefferson" stands out on the map, and a note written underneath *Absalom, Absalom!* sparks interest: "Where by 1820 his people had learned to call it 'The Plantation' just like the white men did" (Hines 14, Fig. 8).

Mapping out the land itself and its uses reiterates the heightened relevance and importance of land in Mississippi and the South. It is crucial that Faulkner attributes Sutpen's land gain over that of Native Americans because it reflects the true land gains of Mississippi during this era. Gray argues that Faulkner links the Mississippi land to that of betrayal, especially the betrayal of Native Americans (52). This betrayal is written into Faulkner's narrative as Sutpen forcibly gains claim to his treasured one hundred acres. Gray states that

it is hardly surprising that, as a native son of Mississippi and an unusually alert one, Faulkner should have registered the tangled, tentacular nature of the relationship between man and land. The vicissitudes of history were something written into his surroundings, promoting the instabilities that seemed to be as much a matter of place, really, as of time. (53)

Here, the forcibly removed Native American lands literally become the faulty foundation that most plantation homes were built upon, adding yet another level of human betrayal beyond the slave narrative. These instabilities set the groundwork for the fissures that

would definitely come, adding another layer of significant weight to the collective story. Rosa tells Quentin about Sutpen's obscure beginnings in Jefferson and his procuring of the land for his plantation:

[Sutpen] fled here and hid, concealed himself behind respectability, behind that hundred miles of land which he took from a tribe of ignorant Indians, nobody knows how, and a house the size of a courthouse where he lived for three years without a window or door or bedstead in it and called it Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been a King's grant in unbroken perpetuity from his great grandfather—a home, position. (*Absalom, Absalom!* 10)

The Native Americans here are described as ignorant because they do not realize the land's value, and it is believed that Sutpen must have begotten it dishonestly. Before Sutpen's arrest for his home's furnishings, Rosa says that "if he had misused or injured anybody, it was only old Ikkemotubbe, from whom he got his land—a matter between his conscience and Uncle Sam and God" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 33). Rosa questions Sutpen's attainment of the land from this Indian Chief, and she questions Sutpen's naming of the land as well. She points out that he calls it Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been bestowed upon his family from a King, giving the land a superficial title of lineage. Gray highlights that

[a]s a Mississippian, Faulkner had particular reasons for linking the fact of the land to the idea of betrayal: because massive land claims, the dispossession of Native Americans and the claim to possession of African-Americans were all marked and related features of the state's history. Between 1820-1832, huge land cessions amounting to two-thirds of the state were wrung from the Choctaws and Chickasaws. (Gray 52)

Land ownership for farming and plantations grew in Mississippi at a rapid speed due to the cheap land now available that had been taken from Native Americans. While other states had done the same, added farming and slavery kept towns from developing long term, which slowed industry and education and therefore "a pattern was set that for a

century after 1830 would keep Mississippi one of the most rural states in the nation” (Gray 52-3). Faulkner was able to pull on the historical relationships of man and land in his works. Gray writes, “The vicissitudes of history were something written into his surroundings, promoting instabilities that seemed to be as much a matter of place, really, as of time” (53). The instabilities, the betrayal of the land, and the betrayal of the oppressed formed a real life setting that transitioned easily into Faulkner’s fictional world of land ownership and strife—especially of the plantation. And it is on these plantations, that architectural symbols of this strife and betrayal rose in that of the grand home.

These grand homes and architectural influences surrounded Faulkner growing up in Mississippi. The southern architecture of the Greek Revival was a major influence. Hines claims, “To his grandest characters, as to Faulkner himself, the most favored architecture was the neoclassical, especially the local variants of the international Greek Revival, the symbol, even in decay, of what Faulkner believed were the better impulses of Southern civilization” (45). One could argue against the notion that Faulkner believed it was a symbol of “better impulses,” but it was a major influence, nonetheless. The Greek Revival plantation home does have dual elements of favor and abhorrence. Nevertheless, these beautiful buildings surrounded Faulkner in his youth and throughout his life.

These magnificent influential structures were part of Oxford’s landscape with many on the University of Mississippi’s campus. The Lyceum Building (1844-48) on campus is considered “[t]he finest Greek Revival building in Faulkner’s Lafayette County” (Hines 46-7). It was designed by the nationally renowned neoclassicist architect William Nichols (1777-1854), and it features an over-scaled and tall portico “faced with

six huge Ionic columns” (Hines 46-7). The College (Presbyterian) Church (1846) was another important Greek Revival building in Faulkner’s personal life. It is a smaller, “simple brick structure with a strong, Doric-columned portico” in College Hill, Mississippi, just four miles from Oxford (Hines 47). Furthermore, one of the most significant buildings in Faulkner’s writing is the county courthouse. The Lafayette County Courthouse was completed in 1840, and the name of the architect is unknown; however, it was built by Gordon and Grayson contractors. Hines points out that in his work, Faulkner argues that the Yoknapatawpha courthouse was the symbol “not only of law and justice, but spiritually, psychologically, architecturally, the center around which life revolves” (Hines 48-9). These large structures were hubs of extreme relevance for the residents of Oxford which Faulkner carries over into his literature. These three examples embody education, spirituality, and civilized law within their walls. And as cracks formed in southern institutions—especially law—Faulkner uses the decline of these structures to symbolize the institution’s internal decline.

In Faulkner’s fiction, the impressive grand homes of the Yoknapatawpha gentry were also Greek Revival buildings representing a quality of life and people that Faulkner emulated, even with their societal flaws. Many of the houses in Faulkner’s fiction were composites of actual homes in and around Oxford and neighboring towns (Hines 52). Furthermore, it is important to note the history and fall of many of these actual structures as it relates to the fall in some of his character’s homes or incidents in his narrative. William Turner was the antebellum architect in Oxford who was known for creating the four-column portico. His architectural designs influenced other builders as well. Hines notes, “Antebellum houses in this mode in Oxford included the homes of the Craig,

Eades, Howry, Shegog, Neilson, Carter, and Thompson families, as well as two successive residences William Turner built for himself. Plantation houses in the four-column mode were built in the county for various owners, including the Price, Wiley, Shipp, and Jones families” (52). To reiterate, William Turner designed Rowan Oak (the Shegog House), which was built in 1848. The builder of one of Oxford’s impressive homes with a two-story, four-column portico (also designed by Turner) was Dr. Robert Otway Carter. Carter happened to be

the great-great-grandson of the legendary Robert “King” Carter, who in the 1740s, as one of the richest men in Virginia, owned one thousand slaves and three thousand acres of land. Faulkner may have known that “King” Carter allegedly aspired in his grandiose plantation house “Corotoman” to “rival or surpass the Governor’s Palace” in Williamsburg. (Hines 54).

Hines makes the connection that “King” Carter’s ambition is similar to Sutpen seeking to rival the Yoknapatawpha courthouse. He continues, “Like the actual Corotoman, Sutpen’s Hundred would ultimately succumb to destruction by fire” (Hines 54). While not a home in Oxford, the burning of the Corotoman is an actual structure built upon the faults of slavery that gives a concrete visual to Faulkner’s symbolic burning of a plantation home. These historical links add a realistic truth to Faulkner’s narrative. Furthermore, Hines points out that the Thompson-Chandler House (1860) may have been a model for the Compson’s house in *The Sound and the Fury*. The youngest Chandler son, “Edwin Dial Chandler, was born mentally retarded, a condition known to young William Faulkner. In fact, according to William’s brother John, the Faulkner boys often noticed Edwin behind the iron fence when they walked by the house” (Hines 55-6). Quite notably, after *The Sound and the Fury* was published, people referred to the Thompson-Chandler house as “the Compson House” (Hines 56). In addition, while these

events occurred well after the publication of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Phil Stone's home that Faulkner knew well, the Avant-Stone House, "burned to the ground in 1942" (Hines 59). This particular fire would not have influenced Faulkner's work, but it is noteworthy simply because of his strong connection to Phil Stone and his home.

One of Faulkner's connections through Phil Stone and other Oxford residents was Stark Young. Young helped Faulkner gain acceptance into Ole Miss as a special student, and it was Young who let Faulkner stay at his apartment in New York for a time as he began his career. While Young's literature did not gain large acceptance, he did become a famous drama critic. Yet, Young's literature and the use of grand homes as centerpieces in his work did influence Faulkner's own thematic use. Hines points out that the characters and settings in Young's Mississippi novels were based on people he knew from both Panola and Lafayette counties (Hines 62-3). In order to convey historical meaning, Young's novels center on southern mansions, with at least one set in a town modeled after Oxford. Hines claims, "Faulkner knew Young's novels but left no record of his impressions. Though the older writer significantly anticipated him in his use of architecture as a central and defining element, the genius of Faulkner's achievement surpassed in every way the work of Stark Young, including his use of architecture as metaphor" (63-4). Young nurtured Faulkner as a mentor, which helped craft the setting for some of Faulkner's prominent works.

By gathering these major architectural structures and influences, one can discover the architectural overlay present in Faulkner's fiction. These architectural structures become their own characters, emanating their own voices about the past. Without them, less would be said or heard. Hines argues, "*Absalom, Absalom!* would have lost much of

its power without the prominence and the grandeur Faulkner gave to Sutpen's house, the other Grand Design, the private, monomaniacal counterpart of the public Grand Design of the courthouse, square, and town" (69). Sutpen's Hundred does rival that of the courthouse through its magnificence and through the owner's rebuttal of the law. Before Sutpen marries Judith, he lived in the shell of his mansion: "He lived out there, eight miles from any neighbor, in masculine solitude in what might be called the halfacre gunroom of a baronial splendor. He lived in the spartan shell of the largest edifice in the county, not excepting the courthouse itself" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 30). Sutpen's design casts him bigger than the law. The shell of the home looms ominously, but he will bring it to stateliness before its ruin.

Faulkner uses dark elements and ruins to create true southern gothic novels. The architectural decay of what used to be adds a grotesque element that does not create nostalgia for some forgotten past. Faulkner brings forth the horror of what existed by showcasing the gradual or sudden acts of ruin. Hines highlights Malcolm Cowley's depiction of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* which "has elements of the genre of literature known as the Gothic Novel, 'characterized by a gloomy setting, grotesque or violent events, and an atmosphere of degeneration and decay.' Malcolm Cowley believed that *Absalom* belonged primarily to the latter mode, with Sutpen's Hundred taking the place of the haunted castle on the Rhine'" (Hines 75). Sutpen's Hundred stands (or rather, did stand) as a southern gothic castle of sorts, emanating the haunts of slavery. It was the antebellum architecture that could give his fiction the gothic slave narrative, rising in Faulkner's work by adding a physical presence to a shifting time in history. For Faulkner, architecture becomes more than the element of setting; it becomes its own

character with its own voice and narrative of the past. Hines continues, “Though certain modernist phenomena clearly excited him, he mourned the related absence of what would come to be called a preservationist sensibility. In Yoknapatawpha and elsewhere, he was certain, there was an insufficient recognition of the power and presence of the past in the present” (Hines 120-1). Faulkner embraces a unique and new writing style as part of the “modernist phenomena,” while using a palimpsest of past and present that architecture was not only *a part of life* but an art “that shaped and reflected its contours. However great the pain and joy of *the comedy and tragedy of being alive*, architecture was an art that was fundamental to life. Among all the vagaries of art and life, it came closest to representing a sense of continuity between the past and the present” (Hines 127).

Faulkner uses architecture to bridge the past and present, and the specific architecture of the plantation home shapes life around it. Sutpen’s Hundred is one such piece of art/architecture that creates the sense of continuity from its creation to its destruction.

Mr. Compson recalls General Compson’s description of the architect who attempted to flee the project but was caught and brought back to finish the job:

only an artist could have borne Sutpen’s ruthlessness and hurry and still manage to curb the dream of grim and castlelike magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed, since the place as Sutpen planned it would have been almost as large as Jefferson itself at the time; that the little grim harried foreigner had singlehanded given battle to a vanquished Sutpen’s fierce and overweening vanity or desire for magnificence or for vindication or whatever it was (even General Compson did not know yet) and so created of Sutpen’s very defeat the victory which, in conquering, Sutpen himself would have failed to gain. (*Absalom, Absalom!* 29)

Sutpen’s mansion is a work of art, and the French architect who designs and oversees its construction is a true artist. Only someone with the passion to create this architectural masterpiece would have endured Sutpen, and he successfully finishes his creation and

leaves. Faulkner utilizes the architect as artist to highlight the concept that this plantation home is truly a work of art.

Blotner points out numerous historical influences on and connections to *Absalom, Absalom!*. Faulkner first began to write a novel titled *Dark House*; however, in 1935, “[o]n March 30, he had dated a sheet of his margin-lined paper and written at the top ‘*Absalom, Absalom!*.’ Though the dark house had vanished from the title, it would still be central to the novel” (Blotner 346). The plantation home built on the stolen lands of Native Americans by the hands of Sutpen’s slaves was in fact dark and central to the tale. Blotner writes,

He had his principal characters well in hand: the Sutpens, the Coldfields, the Joneses, and Quentin Compson. And there was much local history and lore for him to draw on. There had been a number of large landowners—Colonel Barr, the Potts twins, Alexander Hamilton Pegues. A brother, Colonel Thomas Pegues, had supposedly hired a French architect to build his house, and the big house built for Dr. Felix Grundy Shipp in the mid-1830’s was still standing, a gaunt antique ruin eleven miles south of Oxford. There were two Was Joneses in records from the nineteenth century, and more than one Oxford merchant had antecedents which went back to ante-bellum days. (347)

Faulkner could extract from these prominent landowners and others in Oxford’s history.

These influences on *Absalom, Absalom!* were both factual and anecdotal. Blotner highlights the numerous landowners to serve as models in his work. By exploring the connection to Shipp’s plantation and Sutpen’s, Hines makes a poignant connection to the old home known as “Old Shipp Place.” Hines includes a figure of the now abandoned ruins of the Shipp House, and he says that “in the late 1850s, [Shipp] began to build his large, imposing mansion. According to historian Charles B. Cramer, Shipp, with the help of his numerous slaves, built his ten-room house facing the stage road” (60). Two kilns on the property were used to make bricks (Hines 60). Rosa tells Quentin about the beam

and brick making: “Sutpen had built a brick kiln and he had set up the saw and planer which he had brought in the wagon—a capstan with a long sapling walking-beam, with the wagon team and the negroes in shifts and himself too when necessary, when the machinery slowed, hitched to it—as if the negroes actually were wild men” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 27). Faulkner showcases the psychological horror of the creation of construction supplies by having his slaves hitched up to the machinery like animals. Sutpen’s Hundred is indeed a “Dark House.” Furthermore, Hines showcases that Faulkner’s map of Yoknapatawpha in the flyleaf of *Absalom, Absalom!* marks the mansion of the “Old Frenchman Place” in the same location of the Old Shipp Place, near “Frenchman’s Bend,” which is notable because the Shipp family came from Shipp’s Bend, Tennessee (62). The relevance of place was extremely important to Faulkner, and Blotner addresses Faulkner’s focus on it in regard to *Absalom, Absalom!*:

Even after Faulkner had finished with the text, he continued to think about the book’s complexity. He neatly lettered a chronology which began with Sutpen’s birth in 1807 and concluded with the destruction of his house, dated as occurring in 1910. He wrote a genealogy that included seventeen characters with their vital statistics. . . . A third reader’s guide probably gave him more pleasure than either of the others. It was a map of Yoknapatawpha County. He drew the Tallahatchie at the north and the Yoknapatawpha at the south, bisecting the county vertically with John Sartoris’ railroad. In the Northwest corner, he wrote “Sutpen’s Hundred, 12 mi.” and balanced it to the southeast with Frenchman’s Bend. He carefully identified twenty-seven places that figured in his fiction. He listed the county’s area and population and then wrote “William Faulkner, Sole Owner & Proprietor.” (371)

Here, Faulkner stakes his claim on his grand design, a masterpiece fictional county full of a variety of characters. Labeling the locations of important properties highlights Faulkner’s heightened regard for place. To narrow in on *Absalom, Absalom!*, the “Chronology” listed begins with Thomas Sutpen’s birth in 1807, and it ends with “Clytie

sets fire to the house” under December of 1909 (305-6). The destruction of the plantation home on Sutpen’s Hundred is a monumental act in Faulkner’s oeuvre.

When crafting a space in his fiction, Faulkner uses setting as one component of his narrative that speaks of the legendary existence of both people and place. In “Faulkner’s Imperialism: Space, Place, and the Materiality of Myth,” Taylor Hagood analyzes multiple mythic threads which Faulkner uses to “speak” the myths of the South. When creating the tales of Yoknapatawpha,

Faulkner establishes plots of space informed by an Arcadian ethic and haunted by configurations and reconfigurations of pagan values. And he uses these places to tease out the conflicts of speech and speechlessness by evoking literal historical earth to expose the mythic layers of experience that define the mythic-imperial place and control its constituents. (Hagood 33)

By using plantation homes in the South, Faulkner is able to tie southern architecture to the values and ideals held by the southern gentry. Connecting gothic buildings to European gothic structures reinforces a mythical aura from the past by both its rulers and underlings. It sets the stage for a true, gothic setting that allows the haunting of the past to linger within the walls of the present. Hagood continues, “Faulkner’s use of Greek-Roman mythic place echoes the classical element in the colonizing project of American space, which Greek Revival architecture dominated” (Hagood 33). Faulkner uses both Greek structure and elements of Greek architecture to create Yoknapatawpha. Hagood shows that *Absalom, Absalom!* uses multiple elements of the Arthurian Legend by comparing Sutpen’s “Old South myth of ‘rise and fall’” to that of Sir Malory’s King Arthur in *Le Morte Darthur* (45). The plantation façade resembles that of ancient castle ruins and myth: “Faulkner’s Arthurianism . . . negotiates the pathos of nostalgia for a lost past and provides another branch of mythology to inform a modernist interpretation of

twentieth-century life” (Hagood 45). There is nostalgia for the past in Faulkner’s works; however, Faulkner uses the setting to tell another, less desirable tale of events. Unlike King Arthur, Sutpen’s rise and fall is formed by chattel slavery, and Faulkner utilizes this key piece of history to show the destruction. However, the mythic structure adds to the narrative, and Faulkner uses it to create the crack in the foundation of plantation life. Hagood points out that the retelling, style, plot, and presentation combined with “flowery romanticism and earthly realism” link directly to Malory: “Specifically, Faulkner uses Malory’s mythic Camelot to inform his own story of a mythic Old South that collapses from the corruption hidden behind and undermining its gallant and beautiful façade” (45-6). The hidden corruption of southern ideals is what leads to Sutpen’s fall. With his mythic place of Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner could recreate a past that was not as ideal as many remembered. Hagood compares Faulkner’s mythic construction to that of Malory’s:

Two themes peculiar to the Arthurian legend particularly fueled Yoknapatawpha. The first is that of myth development: the legend offers a model of a myth originating in obscure sources that grows into a full-blown narrative almost completely unrelated to those sources. The second is the theme of loss—particularly loss resulting from forces within a nation, family, or individual. And such loss in itself preserves an otherwise nonexistent or fleeting civilization: Camelot’s demise, like that of the Old South, immortalized it. (46)

An elaborate, mythical narrative and the theme of loss were relevant to Yoknapatawpha and its characters.

Sutpen’s emergence and his loss is pieced together by multiple narrators, linking his obscurity to that of Malory’s Arthur. An omniscient narrator holds together the stories told by Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Shreve in what Hagood says is a

“myth-making process” that the third-person narrator directly refers to, “noting that as Quentin and Shreve discuss the Sutpen story at Harvard they are ‘creating between them, out of the rag-tag and bob-ends of old tales and talking, people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere’ (243)” (55). Here, the story of Sutpen has become part of the mythic, oral, storytelling process. Sutpen’s rise to grandeur, then his drastic fall, adds to his mythology as well. Sutpen encounters a minor setback en route to his powerful position when he sets out “to create his own empire and establish it for his lineage,” but fails with his first attempt in Haiti due to his wife’s partial Negro blood (Hagood 56). He then heads to Jefferson, Mississippi where

he acquires a significant plot of the Cotton Kingdom of antebellum Mississippi, where he builds the largest plantation in the area and names it Sutpen’s Hundred. Sutpen’s Hundred is a type of Camelot, and Rosa Coldfield makes the connection between the two explicit when she refers to his design as being his building “fabulous immeasurable Camelots and Carcassonnes in his coffin walls” (129). (Hagood 56)

Sutpen’s plantation fortress is a place where the women in his life are immured within its southern castle walls. Sutpen’s design to leave a lasting white legacy in his name, free of miscegenation, creates his mythic fall. For Rosa to compare the plantation home where she briefly resides to both Camelots and Carcassonnes is relevant because Faulkner presents this observation through a female character’s voice—one who has been both protected by and harmed by the plantation structure. It is only safe for her to stay if she were to breed Sutpen a male heir to his plantation castle. Sutpen’s Hundred becomes a place of safety when the three women work together to run the place while waiting for Sutpen’s return from the war. Rosa tells Quentin, “*So we waited for him. We led the busy eventless lives of three nuns in a barren and poverty-stricken convent: the walls we*

had were safe, impervious enough, even if it did not matter to the walls whether we ate or not” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 124-5). The notion that anything could matter to the walls gives the house potential consciousness, while the home’s massive structure allows for the protection of Judith, Clytie, and Rosa. Hagood makes several other mythical connections between Faulkner and Malory, claiming that Sutpen’s French architect is “Merlin-like” (56), Sutpen and Ellen become the “lord and lady of their Camelot,” and Bon “befriends and fights alongside Henry Sutpen in the Civil War as Lancelot fights in company with Gawain” (57). Similarities are apparent, yet there is a strong, underlying fear behind each of Faulkner’s characters. The French architect is quiet in the town and just wants to complete the job he is forced to do. Ellen is quite the miserable lady perched on the throne of her plantation home. Finally, Bon fights alongside Henry in the war with an ulterior motive—to get close to the father who disowned him. Nevertheless, Hagood’s points on Faulkner’s mythical manifestation are quite relevant: “Faulkner constructs a mythic Old South full of the tensions created by juxtaposing elements of glory and corruption. In doing so, he packs the Old South myth full of the excruciating tragedy that permeates Malory’s Camelot” (61). It is the downfall and loss of this mythical creation and plantation home that exposes the faulty southern ideals built upon the tears of slavery.

As Faulkner writes his narratives that incorporate slavery, it is important to note several influential pieces that he could have used for source material. Slave ledgers are one such source that may have marked inspiration for Faulkner because he actually creates his own ledgers in his own writing, highlighting their importance to the plantation culture. In “Accounting for Slavery: Economic Narratives in Morrison and Faulkner,”

Erik Dussere shows Faulkner's use of ledgers to record slavery related events within his work. In fact, Dussere compares Toni Morrison and Faulkner's use of economics in regard to slavery, and he points out Faulkner's use of in-text ledgers to do so. He states, "[B]oth writers encounter slavery as a set of ideological, formal, and historical discourses, formed by and formulated through economic terms" (Dussere 330). To analyze the economics used in their texts, Dussere discusses the ledger as an accounting system for slavery. However, there is also a double-entry system of documentation with a detailed inventory, memorial, and journal. From there, the ledger was used as a master-book to track credits and debits (Dussere 330-1). Plantation ledgers that tracked the accounting of slavery allowed humans to be compared to animals and items. Dussere writes, "Slavery insists precisely upon the equivalency of humans and animals, humans and objects; that equivalency is at the heart of the slave system and the violence perpetrated by that system against its victims, the epistemic violence from which the most contentious legacies of slavery flow" (333). The ledgers help to reveal the injustices of slavery because they document the lives of humans as if they were livestock used for economic means. Dussere points out that the ledger itself is a narrative form that "both authors are forced to alter and recreate" in order to place African Americans in the economic sphere of slavery (333). The use of ledgers is key to the creation of Faulkner's narratives about plantation homes and plantation life because it allows a formal, written documentation into the narrative as a whole.

While Dussere's focus is on the economic purpose of the ledger, the ledger also fits in as part of the plantation slaves' story. With "The Bear," Dussere argues that the ledger used becomes the "[b]ook which records earthly doings and provides some

measure of divine justice” (337). Here, the divine ledger becomes Biblical, and in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Shreve gives the role of ultimate accountant to God: “The sense of the divine ledger and the final reckoning of accounts that it implies, the linking of divine justice to accounting, recalls again Shreve’s parodic ledger in *Absalom, Absalom!*, in which God is referred to explicitly as ‘the Creditor’” (Dussere 338). The Biblical comparison of a ledger can be two-fold: the white slaveholder can deem himself as one of godly power; or, the True Maker will one day use his ledger to forgive or condemn the southern elite. And yet, according to Dussere, blacks are free from the judgment by God: “But for black characters, the entry into the economic sphere is a particularly disturbing corruption, because to Faulkner blacks are ‘pure’—as the sufferers rather than the perpetrators of slavery, they are as yet untainted by the curse that lies over the South, haunting its whites, poisoning the pores of its rich earth” (340). Noting that blacks are pure and untainted people in Faulkner’s literature is quite relevant. The slaves are not tainted as the elite southerners may view them or as Sutpen views the thought of their bloodline in his own as despicable. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Clytie’s purity and her act of fire set the stage for future discourse on Faulkner’s use of a daughter from miscegenation to uphold a burning, pure act of total destruction. The use of ledgers in Faulkner’s work highlights the influential factors that fueled his narrative. Plantation ledgers and diaries influenced his writing and events in his mythical, southern, antebellum creation.

Sally Wolff made a discovery pertaining to William Faulkner stating that Faulkner read and was influenced by an antebellum family diary in the possession of the Franciscos, who were descendants of Francis Terry Leak and long-time acquaintances of Faulkner. In *Ledgers of History: William Faulkner, an Almost Forgotten Friendship, and*

an Antebellum Plantation Diary, Wolff explores Faulkner's relationship with the Francisco family and his keen interest in an old plantation diary. Wolff, a professor at Emory University, takes her southern literature students on an annual trip to Oxford, Mississippi, or as she deems it, "Faulkner Country." One year, she extended the invitation to Emory University alumni in the Atlanta area, and this invitation sparked a new discovery about William Faulkner. Dr. Edgar Wiggin Francisco III curtly responded, "I can't go on the trip, but I knew William Faulkner" (*Ledgers* xi). Of course the correspondence was not just left at that, Sally Wolff asked to interview Dr. Francisco, and his story, along with the diaries of his great-great-grandfather Francis Terry Leak, would be explored by Wolff and ultimately presented in her book.

According to Wolff, William Faulkner was close friends with Dr. Francisco's father, Edgar Francisco Jr., and he frequently visited their home in Holly Springs, Mississippi, when Dr. Francisco was a child. Their home, McCarroll Place, has always been in the family and was one of the first buildings in Holly Springs. Wolff notes that "William Faulkner was fascinated with this family because of their longevity in the same house, their participation in plantation life and slavery, and the effects of the Civil War on their lives and community" (*Ledgers* 2). The Francisco family history proved to house a wealth of information which Faulkner could tap into for his interests on plantation life. In fact, "Faulkner apparently found captivating and affecting the diary of their ancestor, Francis Terry Leak, a wealthy Mississippi plantation owner who, between 1839 and 1862, hand-wrote extensive farm ledgers, or diaries, that record the day-to-day details of life on the plantation" (*Ledgers* 2). When Wolff asked Dr. Francisco if Faulkner ever saw the diaries, he responded, "He poured over them; that is, he studied the original

handwritten ledgers” (*Ledgers* 104). What someone else might view as boring, mundane entries about farm life, Faulkner found captivating and useful. These simple, non-fiction texts gave actual glimpses into the antebellum past.

As for the actual ledgers themselves, the McCarroll/Francisco family first preserved them at McCarroll Place, but in 1946, they donated the “Diary of Francis Terry Leak” to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The historical artifact is held in the Southern Historical Collection of the Wilson Library (*Ledgers* 2). The “Diary of Francis Terry Leak” primarily includes

the accounting ledgers for daily business involving the Leak plantations, including food and goods bought for consumption and use—such as sugar, coffee, molasses, and clothing and shoes for the white family and the slaves—as well as lumber and other building materials purchased for the construction of the house and other structures, various implements, and other farm equipment. (*Ledgers* 3)

While the majority of the diary entries are more factual than emotional, Leak sometimes wrote with emotion—especially when it came to the births or deaths of family members. Since Leak was trained as a lawyer, he “regularly transacted land and slave sales” (*Ledgers* 3). Leak also recorded weather conditions, “the work of his slaves (whom he referred to as ‘the negroes’), hog killings, reports of earth tremors, his purchase of Choctaw land, and his responses to the coming Civil War” (*Ledgers* 4). Leak himself can even be connected to Faulkner’s past as the diary notes his contribution of “clothing to the regiment of Colonel Falkner” (*Ledgers* 4). Wolff claims that

William Faulkner’s ready access to this particular set of ledgers, his repeated readings of it, as well as his close friendship with its owner make this particular plantation diary a likely source of material for his fiction. Not only could Faulkner sit and read these ledgers at his leisure, but he could also discuss, over many years, their nuances with his friend Edgar Jr., great-grandson of the diarist. He could listen to Edgar Jr. tell the family stories that made the life and times of the diarist even more real and illustrated more fully the close connection of

history with the present. These tales, a number of which have their roots in the plantation activities described in the diary, must have seemed to underscore for Faulkner his view that “the past is never dead. It’s not even past.” (*Ledgers* 9)

Faulkner could use these diaries and stories from his friend to tell the past as truthfully as he could. Dr. Francisco remembers listening to the men talk and that “Faulkner objected to what he considered to be the romanticized portrayal of the Old South. For example, he disapproved of the Pilgrimage women wearing hoop skirts: ““These women are beautifying history—and the hoop skirts—it’s fake, Edgar”” (*Ledgers* 11-2). Dr. Francisco remembers his father and Faulkner deliberating the pros and cons of a romanticized past and Faulkner being totally against it (*Ledgers* 88).

Dr. Francisco says that Faulkner knew of the diaries as early as the 1920s. He would specifically ask to see certain volumes, and “he ‘always had a pad’ and ‘was always scribbling. He did a lot of note taking’” (*Ledgers* 16). The fact that Faulkner sought to revisit certain volumes shows his marked interest and the diaries’ influence on him. Dr. Francisco also witnessed Faulkner contesting the diarist on many occasions:

He remembers that Faulkner sometimes reacted to what he was reading by speaking out loud as if he were upset. Faulkner’s disputation with the diarist suggests that he was arguing with a time and a place in American history that is almost inaccessible now. Presumably Faulkner seemed to engage in heated debate with the long-dead diarist because of the diarist’s proslavery stance, his readiness to secede from the Union, and his willingness to offer substantial financial support to the Confederate States of America at the advent of the Civil War. (*Ledgers* 17)

The viewpoints in the diary only fueled Faulkner’s fire to write/right pieces of historical fiction without rose-colored lenses. Apparently, Francisco Jr.’s wife, Ruth, did not care for William Faulkner. Each had dueling perspectives of the past. Ruth promoted a Pilgrimage in Holly Springs in which she would show the old homes and hoop skirts

from the era. Holly Springs had not been burned by the Union because “Grant had established his wife in Holly Springs, and by his order, no houses were to be burned. Union troops had occupied three rooms in McCarroll Place, but did not burn it when they left” (*Ledgers* 86-7). This Civil War “fame” and the fact that everything was not burned, allowed Ruth to present their home and artifacts. Dr. Francisco recalls how this theatrical representation of a false past infuriated Faulkner: “It was, as he called it, dressing up a past that lived in most people’s imaginations and had not really occurred” (*Ledgers* 87). Dr. Francisco’s father was torn with the idea because he felt that the Pilgrimage illuminated the positive aspects of their history. Dr. Francisco explained to Wolff, “I finally realized that they were both torn by conflicting emotions about the South they loved. They both had pride and regret, love and disgust, hope and despair. They both had absolute admiration for the South, but hated that it had to do with slavery” (*Ledgers* 87). Obviously, Ruth was quite opposed to Faulkner’s viewpoint, and her energy was devoted to the Pilgrimage.

Besides his interest in the diaries, Faulkner had a strong connection to the McCarroll Place. He often rocked on the porch looking at the reversed etching of “Ludie,” a young bride who had a tragic death of “acute gastritis” (*Ledgers* 54). Dr. Francisco said, “Ludie was gone, vanished, her whereabouts unknown, so only the etching remained. She managed to leave that evidence of her having existed for Will Faulkner to stare at seventy years later and say ‘She is still here’” (*Ledgers* 55). For Faulkner, “Ludie’s Window” is a reminder that the past does not remain in the past. Dr. Francisco recounted, “Will would say: ‘Edgar, I feel as if she is standing in the middle of the room. Edgar, she’s right here. The past doesn’t die, Edgar. It’s right here. Ludie is

right here'” (*Ledgers* 83). When Edgar Jr. would respond that Ludie was not there, “Will would complete the sequence with a haunting, Faulknerian reply: ‘Edgar, you may be immune, but I know that Ludie is standing there’” (*Ledgers* 55). The etched palimpsestic evidence of her having existed brings forth the stories and ghosts from the past inhabiting the same space—their lives overlaid with those of the present, which something Faulkner aimed to capture in his work. Dr. Francisco explained to Wolff, “He talked about how the etching represented changelessness and eternity and continuity. He was fascinated by her life” (*Ledgers* 82). Through the etching on its window, this antebellum home speaks to the present; and as Faulkner gathered a deeper understanding of history while visiting the McCarroll Place, he could use it in crafting his own fiction about the past. In addition to the McCarroll Place, Dr. Francisco said his father brought Faulkner along to call on neighbors, allowing the writer to visit other homes and learn their histories. Dr. Francisco remarked, “In the display of antebellum architecture, Faulkner would have recognized Holly Springs as the gold mine in Mississippi” (*Ledgers* 172). Since the homes of Holly Springs were spared during the Civil War, this town’s architecture and past added an untouched extension to that of nearby Oxford.

Through her own exploration of the diary, Sally Wolff draws connections to Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* from “names, images, themes, and ideas from the Leak Diary,” mainly from “Typescript volumes 3 and 6” (*Ledgers* 17-8). According to Wolff, two slaves on the Leak Plantation evoke Faulkner’s characters of Caddy and Benjy Compson. Candis is a twenty-five-year-old slave whose name could fashion Caddy, and the names Benj Collins, a land agent, and Ben, “a slave who is ‘not sound’” are names that could generate Benjy, someone “not sound” (*Ledgers* 18). Furthermore,

the detested Jason Compson has a similar medical condition to the disliked Terry Leak: “Among several of Francis Terry Leak’s several long-standing medical problems was that he suffered painful headaches. He recorded them in the diary as occurring frequently. In the novel, Jason Compson suffers from Leak’s malady” (*Ledgers* 19). Another small point mentioned in the diary could have been used as fodder for a grander theme of time. Even though he was losing his hearing, Leak mentions “that he could still hear ‘the ticking of a watch,’ a simple observation that perhaps struck Faulkner’s imagination and became a source for Quentin Compson’s focus on the ticking of his grandfather’s watch” (*Ledgers* 19). The reference to time and Leak’s ticking watch marks the past as well as the continuity of life. Wolff suggests, “Faulkner seems to add symbolism and metaphor to the detail that Leak provided—the sound of a ticking watch—to reflect more broadly on the nature of time, a central theme of the novel” (*Ledgers* 19). These names and characteristics could have been revamped into Faulkner’s story set during the same time period.

The Francisco’s antebellum home itself seems to reappear in Faulkner’s fiction. Wolff writes, “Dr. Francisco’s description of the McCarroll property as it was at the time Faulkner was visiting the family also suggests connections with *The Sound and the Fury*” (*Ledgers* 61). Dr. Francisco remembers growing up in the home:

McCarroll Place is at the top of a steep hill, which at the time of Faulkner’s visits led down to a large fenced pasture, and then on to a flowing spring. Cows and pigs grazed in the pasture, and as children, Little Eddie and his friends went through a gate and fence and through the pasture to play in the woods. The street forming the western border of the house is named “Maury.” (*Ledgers* 61)

Faulkner must have been entranced by McCarroll Place’s longevity as he once told Edgar Jr., “Nothing has changed in this house in a hundred years” (*Ledgers* 60-1). Wolff makes

numerous connections to the neighbors of the McCarroll Place and the Compson children and Dilsey Gibson from *The Sound and the Fury*. Wolff writes, “As children, the Stricklands and the McCarrolls visited back and forth between the two houses and played together. Pearl’s brother Frank was mentally disabled. Luella Gibson was the servant in the Strickland home. She carried notes back and forth between the residents of the two houses” (*Ledgers* 61). Furthermore, the unmarried Pearl Strickland left Holly Springs and “toured Europe with a German man, Gerard Badow” (*Ledgers* 62). Wolff notes that the “time period for these events also corresponds with Faulkner’s development of *The Sound and the Fury*, which he published in 1929”; furthermore, Faulkner includes a note about Caddy Compson in the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury* in which he “reveals that Caddy has left town, and later the local librarian notices a photograph of Caddy with a German man” (*Ledgers* 62). The events in life are represented in his artistic crafting of the novel.

Wolff and Dr. Francisco discussed their thoughts on Faulkner’s interest in the McCarroll/Francisco family history and the diary:

SW: Since I’ve met you and have listened to you talk about your dad and Mr. Faulkner’s friendship, the more I know about the Leak Diary, it seems clearer that Mr. Faulkner was documenting the history of the area and illustrating what life was like for people there before the Civil War, at the advent of war, and in the few years immediately following the war.

EFW: Right. Right. I’m beginning to understand that Faulkner wanted to show the transition from what it was like before and through the war by following interconnected families for several generations. Creating an entire county was really quite remarkable. (*Ledgers* 137)

The diary, the history of the McCarroll Place, and Faulkner’s friendship with Edgar Jr. gave insight to Faulkner about the past that he could pull from for his work. Dr.

Francisco recalled, “So Will really had two visits. One was a happy visit with Dad. Then

a second one, either intense or agitated, was a visit with Leak. Then Faulkner would close the diary, put up his notes, stand up and start for the door without another word. Dad would show him out” (*Ledgers* 142). Dr. Francisco’s memory of Faulkner’s two visits evokes the notion that there were two Faulkners or that he functioned in two realms: the friend with his focus on friendship and the artist with his quest to fully capture the past.

Wolff links certain parts of the diary to *Absalom, Absalom!* She acknowledges names and events that may have been influential: “Names again appear consistently in both the Leak and Faulkner texts, and Faulkner may well have drawn the idea of building a grand plantation house from the diary” (*Ledgers* 21). While the names Rose, Ellen, and Milly are quite common southern names, they are also listed in the diary. However, “Charles Bonner is a less common name that appears in the Leak Diary,” and could have been used to create Charles Bon (*Ledgers* 22). Dr. Charles Bonner, a physician, was an important and respected citizen of Holly Springs. Also, two slaves are often listed next to each other:

In the Leak Diary, Henry and Charles are slaves whose names appear next to each other in several Leak slave lists. Leak also refers to “my negro man Henry” (TS vol. 1: 65). In close proximity to the mention of these references to Henry, Leak recounts the killing of one man by another: “a negro fellow . . . was accidentally shot to day by another one of his negro fellows. The gun was pointed at the negro killed, & the trigger pulled, under the belief that it was not loaded” (TS vol. 3: 149-50). This event may in part account for Faulkner’s crafting the scene in which Henry shoots and kills Charles: “Henry spurred ahead and turned his horse to face Bon and took out the pistol; and Judith and Clytie heard the shot” (358). In the novel Faulkner focuses the scene not between people of one race, but rather—as is more typical of the writer—between races. (*Ledgers* 22)

Reading the story of one man shooting and killing another may have sparked the events for Faulkner’s own Henry and Charles. Quentin and Mr. Compson relive the fratricide:

They faced one another on two gaunt horses, two men, young, not yet in the world . . . the two faces calm, the voices not even raised: *Dont you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles; and I am going to pass it, Henry*) “—and then Wash Jones sitting that saddleless mule before Miss Rosa’s gate, shooting her name into the sunny and peaceful quiet of the street, saying, ‘Air you Rosie Coldfield? Then you better come on out yon. Henry has done shot that durn French feller. Kilt him dead as a beef.’” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 105-6)

Unlike the entry into the ledger, Henry knew his gun was loaded, and he was willing to use it if Charles Bon rode any closer to his sister.

Key resources that Faulkner may have used to craft his own fictional plantation home are Leak’s detailed entries about building the Leak Plantation. Wolff writes, “Cedar and brick are the primary materials Leak used to construct his house, and the forty thousand hand-made bricks required suggest the vast extent of the undertaking: ‘Employed Mr Tabler to make 40,000 brick & do my brick work for \$100 The work will embrace four chimneys, the necessary pillars & a cellar’” (*Ledgers* 23). The grand home is constructed on site, but differing from Sutpen, Leak hires someone to help make the brick and lead the masonry; however, slaves were integral for the construction of both. Brick kilns are made on site for both homes as well: “Leak’s men ‘Make Brick & Build Kitchens . . . Cover back Portico. Build Plaza.’ To do so, they must first prepare ‘a Brick Machine & a brick yard to day—making brick molds, sand box for the well in the yard, &C. Getting boards for Brick shelter’” (*Ledgers* 23). As mentioned before, Sutpen creates a kiln, and his slaves prepare bricks. Wolff writes, “Leak’s slaves make tens of thousands of bricks. In preparation for brick making, Leak takes measurements for and prepares ‘the Kiln’ that his workers will need to make the bricks. The kiln, Leak writes, ‘is in length, equal to the length and thickness of 120 bricks & has 4 arches or fire places & is about 7 ½ or 8 feet high’” (*Ledgers* 23). While an on-site brick kiln was the norm in

the creation of large homes, this diary may have offered Faulkner this reminder for use in *Sutpen's Hundred*. Sutpen brings remaining items to furnish his house just as Leak orders his: "To furnish the house, Leak ordered various items: '1 Banister French Bedstead'; 'Sash Catches'; '1 Trundle'" (*Ledgers* 24). Rosa tells Quentin that the town was suspicious of how Sutpen obtained his furnishings:

They just waited while reports and rumors came back to town of how he and his somewhat tamed negroes had installed the windows and doors and the spits and pots in the kitchen and the crystal chandeliers in the parlors and the furniture and the curtains and the rugs; it was that same Akers who had blundered onto the mudcoughed negro five years ago who came, a little wild-eyed and considerable slack-mouthed, into the Holsten House bar one evening and said, 'Boys, this time he stole the whole durn steamboat!' (*Absalom, Absalom!* 33-4)

This list of furnishings definitely exceeds that of Terry Leak; Sutpen's furnishings are closer in grandeur to that in "King" Carter's Corotoman Plantation. In addition, the graveyard Sutpen creates on *Sutpen's Hundred* has cedar trees just as Leak "sets out four cedar trees" for his own cemetery (*Ledgers* 24). Wolff argues that Faulkner's own desire to recreate a past by telling its true history is a large focus in *Absalom, Absalom!* Wolff writes, "How to know and understand the past, and how to understand and assess the truth about history—especially when people are gone, the documents are fading, and stories and legends intertwine—are crucial themes of *Absalom, Absalom!*" (*Ledgers* 25-6). Faulkner's "pouring" over the *Diary of Francis Terry Leak* was one attempt to grasp this historical document and present aspects of it through his own story.

How much, and even if, Faulkner used the Leak Diary, stories of Francisco Jr., or the McCarroll Place is debated by some scholars. Faulkner scholars and historians ask why this revelation has only recently been brought to light. One reason may be Dr.

Francisco's embarrassment at his familial ties to slavery. Wolff pressed Dr. Francisco about his this painful, childhood recollection around age nine:

EWf: He was reading in the diary about one of the slave situations. He was upset by what he was reading in the diary. So that upset me, too, and I said to myself: "It's our fault. It's our family's fault."

SW: What exactly did you think was your fault?

EWf: Suddenly I realized that slavery had occurred in our family. I thought that slavery was our fault—my family's collective fault—that slavery had occurred so close at hand. I thought, "Yes, this has something to do with me." (*Ledgers* 99-100)

The painful realization that his family had slaves was too much for the young Dr. Francisco. He disclosed to Wolff that he locked himself in his room afterward and much later his father tried to get him to understand that it was not his fault (*Ledgers* 100). The extreme guilt and sadness about slavery haunted many, and silence was their means to cope. The silence of the horrors of slavery was something Faulkner wanted to overcome. As for Dr. Francisco, he was finally able, in his late years, to talk of his connection to Faulkner with the encouragement of Sally Wolff and his wife, Anne Salyerds Francisco: "My mother's admonition didn't have much to do with it, but my own feelings of responsibility for my great-great-grandfather's slave ownership did" (*Ledgers* 12). Silencing the horrors of slavery due to guilt is a common practice, especially for a white southerner with ties to slavery from Dr. Francisco's generation. The shame, along with Dr. Francisco's mother's distaste for Faulkner, might very well have kept Faulkner's connection to the Franciscos from surfacing sooner. Also, Faulkner himself said he never researched his work. Parini quotes Faulkner's response to a question about where he learned southern history: "As far as I know I have never done one page of historical research," he told a group of students who posed this question. "Also, I doubt if I've ever

forgotten anything I ever read” (6). Would Faulkner consider reading a diary “historical research,” or would a diary constitute just a plain, pleasurable artifact? The majority of his fodder arrived via the oral tradition: “For the most part, he heard the stories that compelled his attention at home or at his father’s livery or in hunting camps: places where the oral tradition was alive and well” (Parini 6). If Faulkner did have a relationship with Francisco Jr., then the oral stories that Dr. Francisco recalled would have sparked Faulkner’s interests. Furthermore, during the time that Wolff claims Faulkner visited the Leak Diary, he was out and about, and potentially visiting Francisco Jr. Parini notes that in 1935, as he worked on *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner “spent a good deal of time *not* writing: hunting, fishing, flying and drinking” (193). These outdoor adventures correspond to Wolff’s accounts, and his visits to the McCarroll Place would have likely occurred.

Opposition to Wolff’s findings and the accuracy of Dr. Francisco’s accounts were brought forth by historian Jack Elliott in “Confabulations of History: William Faulkner, Edgar Francisco, and a Friendship that Never Was.” Elliott argues,

[B]ased on my own experience with oral history I soon became uneasy with the testimony. Much was related with a quasi-omniscience, recalling details of the century-old conversations and answering questions with the self-assuredness of someone who had only recently witnessed the events. This indeed raises questions—especially when virtually no corroboration is offered—suggesting as it does the possibility of fabrication. (313)

Elliott uncovered some of the inaccuracies that Dr. Francisco provides in his interview with Wolff in regard to specific dates and events. He says, “At best Francisco’s testimony is unreliable; at worst it is total fabrication” (348). One of Elliott’s arguments is his disbelief that Dr. Francisco and his parents would have kept secret their relationship

to William Faulkner, especially since their home was part of the Holly Springs' antebellum tour. But, Dr. Francisco explains his guilt and anguish about his family's past and its links to slavery. This human characteristic of repressing the past is what much of Faulkner's writing tries to unveil: one cannot forget the past. With urging and for the sake of academia, Dr. Francisco finally shared his past. Anxiety manifests in numerous ways, and Dr. Francisco's family's link to slavery is traumatic. Elliott claims that there is no evidence that Faulkner even visited with the Francisco family at McCarroll Place. However, he does include evidence that Faulkner visited the extremely small town of Holly Springs and knew of the McCarroll Place. Elliott uses two sources connecting Faulkner to Holly Springs. The first is Frank Hurdle, a Holly Springs native and Oxford Attorney, who wrote "Hurdle on Faulkner: The Holly Springs Connection." Hurdle was once a tour guide at McCarroll Place. When Ludie Baugh's etched name was shown to him, he was told "that Faulkner was a friend of the Franciscos and that he later incorporated the etched glass detail into one or more of his works" (qtd. in Elliott 342). Elliott suggests that tour guide information is often unreliable, and this detail connecting Faulkner to both the Franciscos and their house must be speculation used to "bring notoriety to McCarroll Place" (343). The second source Elliott references is Jane Isbell Haynes who wrote "Another Source for Faulkner's Inscribed Window Panes." Haynes affirms that Faulkner visited Holly Springs, but she does not mention his time at the McCarroll Place (Elliott 343). Haynes references three names etched on windowpanes, including Jane Cook's which was in Faulkner's home (Elliott 343). However, all three etchings, and the stories behind them, could have fascinated Faulkner.

Elliott also reveals that it was Dr. Francisco's cousin who lived next door, not his father, who was documented as the donor of the Ledgers of Terry Leak and who had them in her possession. Elliott discovered that Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton documented his 1944 trip to obtain the diaries for the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. After meeting with Perle Strickland Badow, the Franciscos' cousin and neighbor, she decided to think about it and had Hamilton write her later. Hamilton offered four typescript copies of the diaries, but Perle only requested one for herself and one for the Franciscos, which is documented in library records. Elliott points out that this evidence differs that of Dr. Francisco's interview in which he said his father donated them (Elliott 316-7). Something Elliott does not account for is that families in the South, especially during the 1940s, often make group decisions. It was important enough for the Franciscos to retain a typescript copy, so it was likely that they were involved in the donation. Furthermore, this family heirloom could have easily passed back and forth between the cousins. Elliott held a phone interview with Wolff after her book was published and asked her about this discrepancy. Elliott writes,

According to Sally Wolff, EWF3 [Dr. Francisco] claimed that when the representative . . . came to Holly Springs looking for manuscripts he found the ledgers in the possession of Edgar Francisco Jr., who was initially reluctant to donate them. Somewhat later he had a change of heart and decided to donate them, but passed them to cousin Perle next door, and she gave them to the representative, and in so doing she was the one who received recognition for the donation. (316)

Elliott opines that the "explanation seems contrived" (316). Again, the donation of the Leak Diary was very likely a familial decision which does not discredit Dr. Francisco's side of the family for having familial ownership. These cousins were both descendants of its author, and both received the typescripts after the donation. Elliott also tries to refute

the ownership of the original Ledgers using Hubert H. McAlexander's testimony about his use of the ledgers in the 1960s. McAlexander published historical works about the area and wrote about Faulkner. He grew up in Holly Springs, knew the Franciscos, and borrowed one typescript copy from Ruth Bitzer Francisco who said that it was Perle who donated the original. McAlexander informed Elliott through email: "I went through the copies making various historical notes . . . if there were any connections between . . . [Faulkner's works] and the ledgers, I would have noted them long ago" (qtd. in Elliott 318). Even if McAlexander did not find obvious connections to Faulkner's works, then why would he have thought to view the ledgers through a Faulknerian lens? McAlexander must have had insight that Faulkner knew of the ledgers and the Franciscos.

Elliott also makes the argument that the names Wolff matches to those in *Absalom, Absalom!* are "six fairly common names": Rose, Ellen, Milly, Henry, Charles, and Tom. However, he does accept Wolff's contention that Charles Bonner parallels Chales Bon (Elliott 320). One significant parallel that Elliott leaves out about Wolff's findings is a notation near Henry's name that he shot another man. Furthermore, Wolff finds significance in the names in the diaries not used in Faulkner's work:

That Faulkner would see in the diary the names of slaves and then weave not only their names but many of the situations of their lives into his novels and stories suggests his deep empathy for their plight. Faulkner did not seem to use many of the names of the white people he found in the diary for his fictional characters. Perhaps he felt less empathy for them, or he may have wished to avoid using the names of white members of Leak's community. (*Ledgers* 31)

If Faulkner knew the Franciscos well, he would also know that they did not want to be publicly connected to their slaveholding ancestor. Leaving white names from the diary out of his work may have been a friendly request.

While Elliott questions both Dr. Francisco and Dr. Francisco's source (his father), he only places a footnote in his final pages regarding Faulkner experts' consideration of Wolff's research. Elliott notes,

Despite my reaction to the Francisco testimony, many of the Faulkner experts seem to accept it at face value; at any rate, few have openly questioned it. Furthermore, the manuscript of *Ledgers* passed through a professional review process, leaving one to wonder where the critical judgment was that should have prevented a tale with such ramifications from going to press without a shred of corroboration. (347)

Dr. Francisco does leave certain dates in question, but that does not discount his testimony that Faulkner knew his family, visited the McCarroll Place, and read the "Diary of Francis Terry Leak." In fact, to Elliott's disapproval, "[A]t the 2012 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, a paper session entitled 'William Faulkner, the Francis Terry Leak Ledgers, and the Forms of History' was devoted to uncovering the influence of the ledgers on the writer. Apparently no one questioned the underlying assumption that he had actually seen the ledgers" (347). Faulkner research now incorporates his use of the diary.

Rollyson also acknowledges Faulkner scholars' debate over the Diary of Francis Terry Leak in an endnote for Volume II of *The Life of William Faulkner: This Alarming Paradox 1935-1962*. Rollyson points out that the diary could be another source for the commissary books in "The Bear" in addition to John Spencer Bassett's *The Southern Plantation Overseer as Revealed in His Letters*:

In *The Ledgers of History*, Sally Wolff posits another important source for the commissary books, the Francis Terry Leak diaries, which Faulkner may have read while visiting friends in Holly Springs, Mississippi. Several Faulkner scholars have endorsed and disputed Wolff's findings. The main problem I have with Wolff's evidence is that much of what she attributes to the Leak diaries can also be derived from Bassett's book, which we know for certain Faulkner consulted. As to the testimony of Edgar Wiggins Francisco III, who claimed a firsthand connection with Faulkner, I could not make a determination. Wolff's critics note that Francisco does not appear in the other Faulkner biographies and that much of Wolff's evidence is hearsay. That no biographer knew about Francisco's existence is not in itself dispositive. Such occurrences do happen in a biography. One of Amy Lowell's lovers, an important figure in her life, does not make a single appearance in Lowell's massive Houghton Library archive, and yet, letters turned up in the Massachusetts Historical Society that made it possible for me to rewrite a significant period in Lowell's biography that none of her several biographers knew about. Perhaps more evidence will yet come to light regarding Faulkner's experience in Holly Springs, where Francisco's family lived. (*This Alarming Paradox* 555-6)

Rollyson acknowledges that Faulkner borrowed Bassett's book; therefore, Faulkner would have been interested in the "Diary of Francis Terry Leak" as well. Plus, he argues that biographers may just not know of a close relationship.

With so much debate about her discovery, Wolff published a rebuttal, "Everybody Knew," which highlights evidence backing her original piece. Wolff produced testimony from numerous Faulkner scholars who support her research, including Noel Polk, John Lowe, Thomas McHaney, and Don Doyle. Polk met with Dr. Francisco and argues,

I admire skepticism almost as a religion, practice it nearly every day, but I know that a good deal of history and biography is based on interviews with people who make one sort of claim or another about what happened and when. The good historian or biographer must then weigh that claim against any other, against what she or he already knows, and speculate how this claim fits with other pieces of the puzzle. . . . I was absolutely convinced that [Dr. Francisco] was telling the truth, at least insofar as he remembered it from the 20s and 30s. The stories he told, not just about the ledgers, were completely convincing, totally charming, and told with the modesty of a person who had nothing to gain by spilling this particular set of beans, who in fact did not say anything about Faulkner's connection with the ledgers until now because he was embarrassed by his family's ownership of slaves. (qtd. in "Everyday" 66-7)

Polk's personal interview with Dr. Francisco is enough to affirm his testimony, but Lowe met with him personally as well and also believed Dr. Francisco's story about his father's relationship with Faulkner:

[T]he various details of that friendship squared with what I knew and know about Faulkner, the culture that produced him, and the multi-faceted presentation he makes in his works about both slavery and plantation culture. . . .Faulkner's forebearers were indeed leading figures of the patriarchal leadership of Mississippi, and owned slaves, but they were not planters, and lacked the kind of history Faulkner felt he needed to portray in his panorama of Southern culture and the shameful reign of slavery. The Leak diaries, centered on plantation life, helped him to create the Sutpens and the McCaslins and the many subsidiary figures in their orbits. (qtd. in "Everybody" 67-8)

Any scholar who met with Dr. Francisco felt the same truth and came to the same conclusion, and Wolff urged skeptics to do the same. Furthermore, Wolff reports that twenty-six Holly Springs townspeople knew that Faulkner visited Holly Springs, and half of those knew he visited the Franciscos at McCarroll Place, mentioning that "Faulkner's visits to Holly Springs have been under-recognized" ("Everybody" 70-1). Wolff also includes correspondence with Harter Crutcher who was a long-time friend of Jill Faulkner Summers. Crutcher proclaims that the friendship between Francisco Jr. and Faulkner "was common knowledge in Holly Springs, and that's the reason there is no documentary evidence" (qtd. in "Everybody" 71). Numerous other credible townspeople make the same acknowledgements. Wolff goes on to refute and explain other discrepancies in regard to dates and Perle's name being listed as the donor of the diaries. The evidence shows that Faulkner did visit the Francisco family and did consult the "Diary of Francis Terry Leak," as Dr. Francisco claims: "What an irony that I might be accused of fabricating [that my family owned the diary]" (qtd in "Everybody" 77). The

irony that Dr. Francisco mentions sounds like material for a Faulkner novel, one that is intertwined with the true accounts of a friend's child, town talk, skeptics, and maybe even a stubborn old mule. Wolff's findings add to Faulkner's history and reveal more about his connection with antebellum homes.

Faulkner utilized ledgers, diaries, and historical books about the South to grasp a fuller understanding of the past and its people. His travels around Mississippi, Virginia, and Europe also connected Faulkner to southern architecture in a way that helped him create grand homes in his own art. The tales he encountered about the past gave him much fodder for the tales of his own characters. For Faulkner, the stories about the past had to be told, especially to highlight the fall of the plantation home and the fall of the South.

Chapter Four

The Transforming Power of Miscegenation

Due to the South's distorted ideals, its legacy of slavery, and its fear of miscegenation, Faulkner incorporates the plantation home, including Sutpen's Hundred, and its fall to represent the fall of the South. Faulkner uses the antebellum past as a haunting mechanism that infiltrates the present, causing the home's demise. This process occurs especially in *Absalom, Absalom!*, but some of his other works utilize this theme as well.

Faulkner aims to uncover the truth about the past in his fiction. Rubin illustrates the manner in which the past is present in Faulkner's literature:

In that finest and most profound of all works of the Southern literary imagination, William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, a young Quentin Compson fights a losing battle with his community's history. He would like to escape its hold, go off to Harvard University, and live unencumbered in the Time Present of the early twentieth century, but he ends up in a dormitory room in Cambridge, lying on his bed trembling and with his teeth chattering, not from the New England winter but from the realization that people and events of a half-century ago and more have irrevocably shaped and marked his own consciousness. (1)

The past is so present in Quentin's world that it commandeers his thoughts. He cannot escape it even far away at college. The history of the South pervades the present, not allowing Quentin in his present setting in *Absalom, Absalom!* escape it. Rubin shows how Faulkner creates this desired effect through his back and forth telling of the plot: "If *Absalom, Absalom!* exemplifies anything about the South, both in the way of telling and the story told, it is that the habit of experiencing the present as if it were importantly and inescapably the outcome of the past is an attribute of consciousness itself, and not just a

method of accounting for cause and effect chronologically” (1-2). The weaving of the story through time allows the past to remain a part of the present. Using Margaret Mitchell’s *Gone With the Wind* as a counterpoint, Rubin compares the conventional historical novel that is written chronologically and in linear fashion to Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!* which “opens in the then-Time Present, with a young man listening to an elderly woman telling him about events of the past, and simultaneously thinking about himself *as* doing so” (2). Rubin explains how the novel proceeds by having Rosa and others tell Quentin about the past and shows how these stories of the past impact his thoughts and feelings. Rubin illustrates Quentin’s realizations:

As he learns more and more and develops his own conjectures about it, he is presented as becoming ever more involved emotionally in the accumulating moral revelation of the events and relationships being reported and deduced. Ultimately he is seen as being both awed and appalled at what he has learned—and it has been the telling of the story that has both caused that response and mirrored the process of learning about it. (2)

Referring again to *Gone With the Wind*, Rubin notes that both narrative paths are historical, but while Quentin’s emotional reaction is given linearly, the events are presented spatially in what is now called an “associative” fashion. With the associative path, “events are being learned in juxtaposition with other events, existing simultaneously in vertical, or spatial, extension, affecting and being affected by each other” (Rubin 2). Events happening in Quentin’s life in Jefferson and at Harvard are interwoven with the stories he has been told about the past, creating a manifestation of Quentin in both realms. Rubin further explains these associative phenomena: Events are then arranged to emphasize chronological causation, on the assumption that a proper understanding depends upon a chronological arrangement to make clear the causality—its moral

implications, its underlying meanings, seen in terms of the responsibility for subsequent events. Such is the nature of historical consciousness (2). The historical consciousness of the South is quite heavy and is laden with the distorted ideals of chattel slavery. Rubin illustrates how the creation of historical consciousness affects those who grew up in the Old South: “The student of the Old South and its literature, of my generation at least, finds himself in something of the position of Quentin Compson in Faulkner’s great novel, and, to an extent, in the position of the author of a book like *Absalom, Absalom!* as well” (Rubin 2). The torn feelings about the things one loves in the South and the things one hates about the South are blended into one’s uttermost being, forming realizations and attitudes for the present. He continues,

For, if one was born in the South and grew up there, one not only heard and was taught a great deal about antebellum Southern life when one was young, but much of what one afterward learned over the years has distinctly modified, not just factually but in terms of underlying interpretative assumptions, the “truth” of the past. More than that, all of it *mattered* a great deal, indeed still matters, for knowing it affects one’s present attitudes. And if any single thing is certain, it is that one’s own experience of Southern history is “spatial” as well as “linear”—which is to say that events learned affect one’s thinking not merely in terms of straight logic but also on multiple levels of experience, changing and being changed by one another simultaneously. (Rubin 2-3)

The factual and interpreted “truth” of the past matters in understanding, as Quentin is trying to do, one’s attitudes. Faulkner aims to create this chaotic and psychological truth in this great work. Faulkner had a compelling desire to complete this extensive novel, and as with Quentin, the voices from the past spoke to him and became a part of him.

Parini analyzes Faulkner’s ingenuity:

Faulkner often reflected in his later years on that “one matchless time” between the late twenties and the very early forties, when inspiration came (for the most part) easily, when he had found not simply his own voice but a teeming chorus of voices, each of them distinct, whole, and authentic. He had put these voices into

contrapuntal or dialectical forms, playing one against another, creating a complex tonal fabric. (279)

These voices from Faulkner's past and present haunted and yet pushed him to create a truthful picture of the South, and the events that ultimately unfurl in many of his narratives destroy the phoniness that antebellum home tours exude. Faulkner was psychologically compelled to write and right these wrongs through his seemingly chaotic voices.

Minter discusses Faulkner's process for constructing *Absalom, Absalom!* The various narratives passed down and pieced together by Quentin provide a psychological truth. Minter writes, "Faulkner had charted the two basic lines of information leading to Quentin, one from Sutpen to Miss Rosa Coldfield to Quentin, and one from Sutpen to General Compson to Mr. Compson to Quentin" (150). This modern narrative structure creates a realistic manner for the story to unfold: Quentin must piece together what he has heard and read in order to formulate a full understanding of the Sutpens. The multidimensional aspects of the novel create a web of individuals and stories centered around Sutpen. Minter elaborates:

As though to acknowledge the special place of *Absalom, Absalom!* in his work, he added a chronology, genealogy, and map that gave it an appearance of summation. What these additions suggest, the novel justified. For it is certainly his most inclusive novel, and is probably his greatest. It touches not only the geography and history but also the prehistory of Yoknapatawpha, and it makes contact with each of its social elements—including dispossessed Indians, enslaved blacks, and a variety of whites, from Wash Jones and the Coldfields to the Compsons. (152)

Faulkner's grand design brings forth multiple elements of the past and includes the warped social constructs of the Old South. Faulkner's myriad composite of people and

historical events allows him to write the past while showcasing its horror. In fact,

Faulkner delves deep into the South's past as it stemmed from native and foreign lands:

Through its action it reaches back into the early nineteenth century, when Yoknapatawpha was "still frontier." Through its French architect it reaches back to Europe. Through Thomas Sutpen's family it reaches back both to the splendor of Tidewater Virginia and to the simplicity of a primitive Appalachian community. Through Sutpen's slaves it reaches back to the West Indies and Africa. It provides, therefore, a sense not only of the people and history of Yoknapatawpha, but of its sources. (Minter 152-3)

These sources that enliven Jefferson, which Minter highlights, happen to be "other" in comparison to the supposed genteel white southerners of the time, which is exactly what Sutpen is trying to overcome in the design of Sutpen's Hundred. Through the intricately woven arrangement of narrative, Faulkner creates his own unique design of past and present to illuminate Sutpen's fall: "Together Faulkner's narrators—Miss Rosa Coldfield, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson, and Shreve McCannon—try to construct not a mansion but a narrative. They must form, out of old tales and talking, together with scattered memories, ancient grievances, and abiding preoccupations, the story of Sutpen's design" (Minter 153). Therefore, past events unfold through an oral, storytelling nature. Minter points out that while the events of the novel occur in Yoknapatawpha during the nineteenth century, the telling takes place in Cambridge, Massachusetts during the twentieth century:

The novel thus stretches from a time when people were trying to conquer a wilderness and build mansions through a period of war and devastation to a time when people sit, looking backward, thinking about their ravaged fields and decaying homes. The result is a novel almost perfectly balanced between two different kinds of intensity—between great dramatic moments, on one side, and great psychological and intellectual complexities, on the other. (153)

The need to understand the past and events in the South are highlighted here. Post war southerners did indeed see the decay of homes and plantations, and Faulkner uses multiple elements of southern decay to explain the South's fall.

In *William Faulkner: Seeing Through the South*, John T. Matthews delves into the South's fall in Faulkner's fiction as well. The southern plantation home as a façade of southern power was often highlighted by Faulkner in his texts as he depicts the fall and decay of these homes. Faulkner's depiction of the decline of the plantation home and family led to some of his best works: "[T]he topic that elicited some of Faulkner's most deeply empathetic writing [was] the decline of the plantation families that had created the world he and his clan lived in for generations, and the place he made home throughout his life" (Matthews 77). So, it is not only the fall of the plantation home but the fall and decline of the Deep South that is reflected in his works. The grandeur of something built on faulty ground would not last. While discussing Faulkner's characters, Matthews notes that Faulkner chooses "a more familiar kind of family: the planter elite that his own ancestors belonged to. Throughout antebellum Mississippi, every family lived its own permutation of plantation society, and throughout the Deep South, the social life and economics of plantation agriculture varied" (108-9). The planter family is not just necessary to reveal familiar heritage, the plantation structure is a necessary component to showcase the horrors of a society built upon slavery. Matthews uses a translation of Edouard Glissant's *Faulkner, Mississippi*¹ to point out two different mentalities in Yoknapatawpha: "one is *atavistic*—the longing to prove that your people descended in a

¹ Glissant, Edouard. *Faulkner, Mississippi*. Translated by Barbara Lewis and Thomas C. Spear. U of Chicago P, 1999.

pure line from the founding great figures of your world's creation; the second is *composite*—the realization that all peoples are mixtures of ethnicity, blood, race, class, etc., and that the ideal purity is a fiction itself" (121). The realization that everyone is "composite" is intentionally stressed throughout *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin and Shreve ponder this very insight at the end of the novel. Shreve tells Quentin what he thinks about Jim Bond, Sutpen's great-grandson, being left even though Quentin does not want to hear it:

"You've got one nigger left. One nigger Sutpen left. Of course you cant catch him and you dont even always see him and you never will be able to use him. But you've got him there still. You still hear him at night sometimes. Dont you?"

"Yes," Quentin said.

"And so do you know what I think?" Now he did expect an answer, and now he got one.

"No," Quentin said.

"Do you want to know what I think?"

"No," Quentin said.

"Then I'll tell you. I think that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it wont quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they wont show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond: and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African Kings." (*Absalom, Absalom!* 302)

Faulkner offers a brilliant epiphany here that no matter how hard the Old South Sutpens try to maintain an "atavistic" lineage of white purity, everyone already is or eventually will be a "composite" of all races. Through Shreve, Quentin is able to come to this realization, and Faulkner uses this revelation in the last passages of this novel to emblazon this point for readers.

Nevertheless, Sutpen tries ever so hard to ensure that his line will only be viewed as "atavistic." Faulkner utilizes this corrupt mentality to lead to Sutpen's ultimate failure.

While Quentin is finally able to see through the South, he has mixed emotions about the place he both loves and hates. As Matthews observes, Faulkner also dealt with these feuding feelings as he “sought to penetrate the deceptions and delusions of a morally bankrupt and obsolete tradition, to see through its hypocrisies and pretensions. But in committing himself over decades to participating in, and bearing witness to, the difficult evolution of his South, Faulkner also determined to see the place he loved through its troubles” (4). The dueling emotions about the South are exemplified in the beautiful plantation home turned to ruin. The stately architecture is reduced to a façade. Matthews continues,

Faulkner’s plantation fiction unflinchingly confronts what it means for the South to have been misbegotten in slavery. Its enormity ripples in every direction. In *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner imagines how the initial insult of reducing human beings to instruments of labor and commodities of exchange dooms a society to concussions of brutality, domination, and revenge. (Matthews 174)

Reducing those in his design to commodities dooms Sutpen. Even his own daughter Judith becomes another plantation commodity:

As she has been raised to marry within the plantocracy, Judith’s virginity becomes her leading asset; her parents plot the alliance that will advance their standing. Sutpen needs neither wealth nor respectability at this point; but Ellen realizes what they do need is refinement, some attainment of taste and elegance that will make Sutpen’s earlier crude (and intermittently criminal) phase of accumulation fade from memory. Charles Bon, a classmate of Henry Sutpen’s at the fledgling University of Mississippi, seems just the right acquisition: a stylish young cosmopolitan from New Orleans. (Matthews 180)

Bon seems just right in Ellen’s eyes, but Sutpen knows that this castaway son of his will taint his lineage and foil his plan. While Judith’s marriage to Bon does not occur, her role in the plantation design is just another crack in its foundation. Matthews writes, “Judith’s commodification under marital custom spreads from a plague of

commodification that compromises the plantation South. Humans of every sort get turned into instruments of advancement and enrichment” (180-1). Comparing the corrupt commodification of humans on a plantation to a plague highlights the extent to which human ownership was accepted.

Sutpen even views the women he wants to copulate with to produce an heir as commodities like that of his plantation and slaves, further adding to his plan’s demise and his own death. The offensive comment that Sutpen makes to Rosa, which makes her flee from marrying him, is told to Shreve by Quentin from the tales his father told him, by way of his grandfather. The reader is able to see Sutpen’s demonic nature and need for his “atavistic” plan through Quentin’s retelling of how Sutpen “had suggested to Miss Rosa that they try it first and if it was a boy and lived, they would be married” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 228). Rosa is appalled by this insult and goes home, but Milly, Wash’s granddaughter, is not lucky enough to escape the horror of Sutpen’s attempted design. Sutpen arrives at Wash’s cabin and interrogates Milly’s midwife, a former black slave, about the birth of his child:

“[Sutpen] jerked the riding whip toward the pallet and said, ‘Well? Damn your black hide: horse or mare?’ and that she told him and that he stood there for a minute and he didn’t move at all, with the riding whip against his leg and the lattices of sunlight from the unchinked wall falling upon him, across his white hair and his beard that hadn’t turned at all yet, and she said she saw his eyes and then his teeth inside his beard and that she would have run then only she couldn’t, couldn’t seem to make her legs bear to get up and run: and then he looked at the girl on the pallet again and said, ‘Well, Milly; too bad you’re not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable’ and he turned and went out.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 229)

Sutpen attempts to restart his white, male lineage by using these two women. One flees, and one has a daughter instead of a son. Like the slaves who built and ran his plantation, the women in his life are commodified for Sutpen.

Plantation owners sought wealth and prosperity. Gray argues that slavery “promoted a feudal, patriarchal system in which the laws of the market place were supplanted by the customs and pieties of the familial group: the South was, in effect, thanks to slavery, a vastly extended family” (Gray 31). This feudal system of slavery within a capitalistic nation adds to its atrocities. Gray includes a disturbing passage from a pro-slavery book which makes plantation life sound like an all-inclusive village for enslaved workers:

in the plump flush of full-feeding health, the happy warrantees [slaves] shall banquet in PLANTATION-REFECTORIES: worship in PLANTATION-CHAPELS, learn in PLANTATION-SCHOOLS: or, in PLANTATION-SALOONS, at the cool of evening, or in the green and bloomy gloom of cold catalpas and magnolias, chant old songs, tell tales . . . and after slumber in PLANTATION-DORMITORIES over whose gates of Health and Rest sit smiling at the feet of Wealth and Labour, rise to begin again welcome days of jocund toil. (qtd in Gray 31-2)²

The notion that slavery benefited the enslaved servants was believed by many whites, both elite and poor. Faulkner’s comic use of Wash Jones to portray the ignorant and bigoted poor white reveals this distorted mentality. Shreve imagines the conversation between Wash and Sutpen after Sutpen returns from the war:

“No,” Shreve said; “you wait. Let me play a while now. Now, Wash. Him (the demon) standing there with the horse, the saddled charger, the sheathed sabre, the gray waiting to be laid peaceful away among the moths and all lost save dishonor: then the voice of the faithful grave-digger who opened the play and would close it, coming out of the wings like Shakespeare’s very self: ‘Well,

² Hammond, James Henry. ‘Hammonds Letters on Slavery.’ *The Pro-Slavery Argument: As Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writers of the Southern States*. Charleston, 1852: 162-3.

Kernel, they mought have whupped us but they aint kilt us yit, air they?'—.”
(Absalom, Absalom! 225)

Southern white Wash and Sutpen still wish to hold their white power over their plantation society, even though Wash ever held any. Faulkner adds Wash's comic stupidity to exemplify many white southerners.

However, Wash does not succumb to the same conviction that a young Sutpen has about himself as a poor white male. During a psychological break, the young Sutpen regards himself as subordinate compared to the slaves at the big house. Everything that Sutpen designs and builds on his plantation stems from his desire to rise above. With the creation of his design, Sutpen becomes one with his plantation body, a psychological entity of decay and repression. In “Laboring Beneath the Father: The Plantation in *Absalom, Absalom!*,” Alisa Pan focuses on Sutpen's creation of the plantation home and its grounds. She makes excellent claims about Sutpen's psychological reasoning and creation of his grand home. The plantation itself becomes alive as his “design acts as a lived body (and more) in its ability to provide him with a barricade to protect himself and his family for generations. Sutpen uses his plantation body to claim mastery over three processes: labor, the production of space, and sexual reproduction” (Pan 417). Sutpen designs and builds his plantation as part of his psychological revelation that he needs to become the master of the big white house. Sutpen tries to make sense of being turned away from the front door:

“Because he couldn't get it straight yet. He couldn't realise yet that his trouble, his impediment, was innocence because he would not be able to realise that until he got it straight. So he was seeking among what little he had to call experience for something to measure it by, and he couldn't find anything. He had been told to go around to the back door even before he could state his errand, who had sprung from a people whose houses didn't have back doors but only windows and

anyone entering or leaving by a window would be either hiding or escaping, neither of which he was doing.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 188)

After being turned away from the front door by a slave as a child, he realizes that he must create a grand plantation for himself. Sutpen tells Quentin’s grandfather, “So to combat them you have got to have what they have that made him do what he did. You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with. You see?” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 192). Sutpen now has a plan for his own design.

Once Sutpen has this revelation, he splits into two Sutpens:

Part of Sutpen falls aside while a second consciousness emerges to turn back and reevaluate the scene. This violent splitting of his psyche prompts the process of disintegration through which he becomes both subject and object; for the first time, he can see himself as others see him. In this moment, Sutpen learns to differentiate between what he must reject (the changeable world of bodily sensation) and who he must be (an unchangeable figure of power and authority). (Pan 421)

This now demon Sutpen masterminds his design for dominance. His plantation ownership provides “the fiction of immortality that he demands” (Pan 424). His “atavistic” desire for a pure lineage stemming from his very own Sutpen’s Hundred offers him a dream to be forever important. Pan explains, “Sutpen uses the plantation’s production of its own space to give himself the enduring temporal quality that his psyche demands” (424). Sutpen becomes all powerful over himself and his plantation body: “Sutpen’s theater of power extends beyond the bodies of his slaves to the grounds and buildings themselves. Mr. Compson describes how Sutpen unifies and animates his plantation, seemingly giving life to his house” (Pan 427). Mr. Compson describes the personification of the house to Quentin:

[A]s though his presence alone compelled that home to accept and retain human life; as though houses actually possess a sentience, a personality and character

acquired not from the people who breathe or have breathed in them so much as rather inherit in the wood and brick or begotten upon the wood and brick by the man or men who conceived and built them. (*Absalom, Absalom!* 67)

The plantation home seems to have feelings and sensations bestowed upon it during its construction, making it an actual plantation body—a living, breathing entity at the center of Sutpen’s design.

Furthermore, Sutpen exists within the house even when he has gone to war. The plantation has become one with Sutpen. Pan claims, “Though slaves built this house, the wood and bricks nevertheless hold Sutpen’s personality and character. By appropriating the plantation space’s ability to hold and maintain social codes, Sutpen propagates the illusion that his consciousness remains potent even in his absence” (427). He goes to war, yet the house gives a pervasive aura that it is the body of Sutpen, dispensing his reign until he returns. Pan says, “The house appears to be a living extension of the man, something that he secreted from his pores and that stands as a proxy in his absence. As such, its walls exert his will upon those who enter” (Pan 427). His will is also exerted upon the women left to defend it until he returns from the war. Then, later, Clytie is left to defend what is left at all costs. Sutpen’s Hundred is part of Sutpen, but its foundation of slavery, no matter how hard he tries to uphold his legacy, will crumble.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner does not depict all the horrors of slavery. He shows Sutpen and his wild band of negroes working, hunting, or fighting, but not in extensive detail. However, Faulkner writes an extremely brutal passage showcasing Sutpen as the barbaric master. Rosa tells of Ellen’s discovery of one of Sutpen’s fight nights in the stable when searching for her children:

“Ellen seeing not the two black beasts she had expected to see but instead a white one and a black one, both naked to the waist and gouging at one another’s eyes as if their skins should not only have been the same color but should have been covered with fur too. Yes. It seems that on certain occasions, perhaps at the end of the evening, the spectacle, as a grand finale or perhaps as a matter of sheer deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination, he would enter the ring with one of the negroes himself. Yes. That is what Ellen saw: her husband and the father of her children standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the negro just fallen evidently, lying at his feet and bloody too save that on the negro it merely looked like grease or sweat.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 20-1)

This brutal depiction of Sutpen as master and beast shows the savage act of his desire to demonstrate his white supremacy. The fight night spectacles that Sutpen hosts deem the entire plantation body as diabolical.

In his own life, Faulkner hated that the past in the South was built upon slavery, and he was in a quandary when speaking out against racial injustices. Dr. Francisco revealed many discussions his father and Faulkner had on the topic during his interview with Wolff. Wolff writes, “William Faulkner and Edgar Francisco Jr. talked often about slavery, and especially about the role it played in the development of sentiments and actions that led up to the Civil War. According to Dr. Francisco, they lamented the very fact of slavery—that it had ever existed gave them both pain” (59). The two men would discuss John McCarroll’s “Fair 50-50 Plan” to resolve slavery. McCarroll wrote letters to Francis Terry Leak explaining the plan and hoping that Leak’s influence with the Confederacy would create a solution and keep war at bay. Dr. Francisco explained the “Fair 50-50 Plan” in which the slaves would be indentured servants who would work to pay off their debt and gain their freedom. Enslaved workers “would be manumitted and given wages instead” (Wolff 59-60). Wolff shows that “Coldfield’s manumission of his slaves is very similar” in *Absalom, Absalom!* (60). Coldfield rejects the war and boards

himself up in his attic when it begins. Faulkner shows Coldfield's moral nature before the war: "He had never been an irascible man and before the war was actually declared and Mississippi seceded, his acts and speeches of protest had been not only calm but logical and quite sensible" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 64). Allowing his slaves to work off their purchase price and reject slavery is a solution offered through Coldfield's character. Parini also backs up the sensible character Faulkner offers: "Only Miss Rosa's father, the icy and well-named Goodhue Coldfield, appears to understand that slavery is a curse and that everyone in the South will pay a price for this outrage against humanity" (Parini 207). But like other injustices in the antebellum Old South, Coldfield's sensibilities die with him, and the land is left cursed.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner points toward a plan of manumission that may have worked for the South if its leaders had not been so wrongfully hard-headed. However, any attempts to save the South from itself was what the southerners of a Postbellum South were left to mull over, Faulkner being one. Wolff relays Dr. Francisco's interview,

Will Faulkner said that those who could have led the South out of slavery, instead became like that damn mule pony—Sartis—so stubborn and blind that he got himself killed. He said: "Sartis was the South—proud, arrogant, stubborn, and half-blinded by their righteousness of self-determination," he would say. "Still true!" he would say. He and my dad grieved about why people couldn't avoid the coming tragedy. "Just like Sartis," Will said. He added: "That pony was given away. He refused to allow himself to be ridden. That pony got killed. That stubborn, blind pony. That is exactly what happened to the South—so blind and stubborn it couldn't change and destroyed itself." (112-3)

The white southerner was either in on the atrocious act of chattel slavery or did not have the capability to change the southern mindset. Parini explains how slavery also degrades everyone and everything: "The system of slavery corrupts all relations in the novel, even

those among whites; of course it underlies the Civil War itself, which blazes in the margins of *Absalom*, but it also undermines relationships within the white families who benefit from and supervise the operations of the slave system” (Parini 209). Because of slavery, everyone is damaged, but many whites could not see the full effects. Dr. Francisco knows that Faulkner would have heard the stories from Francisco Jr.’s grandmother Amelia at the same time as his father did. Dr. Francisco recalls that McCarroll began “to think and soon conclude that a slave culture will enslave the owner more than the slave, since it enslaves the mind and soul of the owner” (Wolff 176). McCarroll even began indenturing slaves to help move them to freedom. His father and Faulkner would discuss the stories they had heard since youth, and it reminded Dr. Francisco that they “acted like the last two surviving members of a secret order” (Wolff 176).

Being able to openly discuss his thoughts on slavery with his friend was valuable for Faulkner because many in his own family held opposing viewpoints. Rollyson points out that Faulkner’s own mother Maud did not believe blacks were equal:

After Dean’s death, Faulkner sat at his mother’s dinner table, working on those last chapters of his novel. And like Bon, who finds it so difficult to reveal himself, what could Faulkner have said to his own family about his deepest feelings, knowing that his own mother would reject them? Dean’s daughter . . . reveals how profoundly racist Faulkner’s mother, Maud, was. When Dean, named after her father, recited the Declaration of Independence, Maud pointed out that the “all men are created equal” phrase did not apply to “Negroes.” Maud broke her Nat King Cole records when she learned he was black. And yet this was the mother Faulkner shared a meal with at least once a week—and sometimes everyday—while in Oxford. (*This Alarming Paradox* 75)

Faulkner lived with racist attitudes and injustices, and he could not openly speak his true thoughts.

Faulkner aims to amend these disturbing viewpoints on slavery and racial absurdities by highlighting them in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner made several attempts to begin this great novel that he first titled “‘Dark House’. ‘A plantation in the South in 1858’” (Gray 204). He completed the manuscript of *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1936 having written it in three locations: Rowan Oak, his mother’s home in Oxford, and Hollywood. Part of the writing occurred in “the house of his dead father” and was “disrupted by the death of a brother” (Gray 204-5). Gray points out that the intricate framework of history and voices, along with its fluid movement, makes

it easy to forget just how powerful the stories of *Absalom, Absalom!* are on a simple human level: stories of incest, miscegenation, fratricide, patriarchal power and filial obsession, the fatally linked encounters of sex and death—all of which, and more, give the arguments of the narrative their living tissue, remind us forcefully what Frederic Jameson’s phrase, ‘history is what hurts’, really means. (205)

The stories told in the novel are fatally linked with sex and death, showing the destruction of Sutpen’s patriarchal power while trying to procreate a white, male lineage. Through Sutpen’s fall, Faulkner tries to make sense of the trauma of the past. Gray explains, “History is what hurts, and it will hurt regardless of whether or not we acknowledge its presence, admit that it is in fact there. If we fail to make sense of it, to locate ourselves in terms of it, then we become its unknowing, powerless victims” (Gray 209). Faulkner has to write through the painful history of slavery and plantations in order to acknowledge it and not be another dumb southern mule. He does so by eventually illuminating the plantation home’s utter destruction.

Faulkner interweaves his own multifaceted design by continuously questioning the racial inequalities of the South’s past by highlighting their absurdities throughout

Absalom, Absalom! Ultimately, it is the white southern males' fear of miscegenation between white women and black males that is the root cause. Gray analyzes miscegenation in the novel: "At the core of the family romance, of course, constituting its crisis point, are the linked threats of miscegenation and incest. . . . The story of the Sutpens involves a supposed violation of the family biological *and* cultural, behind which hovers the old racist question, 'Would you let your sister marry one?'" (212). Faulkner poses this very fear during Quentin's and Shreve's reenactment of Henry's murder of Charles Bon:

—*So it is the miscegenation, not the incest, which you cant bear.*
Henry doesn't answer. . . .
 —*Then do it now, he says.*
Henry looks at the pistol; now he is not only panting, he is trembling; when he speaks now his voice is not even the exhalation, it is the suffused and suffocating inbreath itself:
 —*You are my brother.*
 —*No I'm not. I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister.*
Unless you stop me, Henry. (Absalom, Absalom! 285-6)

This shocking revelation is the crux of the novel and the ultimate reason why Sutpen's Hundred will fall. The fear of miscegenation is a major reason why the Old South had to be eradicated, and Faulkner's absorption with people he knew in the past spread into his invented characters.

When Wolff interviewed Dr. Francisco, he said that Faulkner was keenly interested in the lineage of a mixed-race servant in the Francisco household. Because Dr. Francisco's father was told by his grandmother that he could not get upset with Julie, the cook, Faulkner thought that she must be related. Francisco Jr.'s grandmother would tell him, "Julie is family," but instead of just believing that she was important to their family, Dr. Francisco said, "William Faulkner was convinced. It made sense to him. He was

certain that Julie was related to us—that John McCarroll had probably had a relationship with one of his slaves—and Julie was the result of that, or her mother the result of that” (Wolff 121). Faulkner was obsessed with understanding and offering a voice and story for these hidden black family members who were descendants of powerful, white males. The next chapter will divulge the ways in which some of these characters, such as Clytie, have the final say.

Miscegenation is at the heart of Faulkner’s works that center on slavery and its destruction of the South. In *Go Down Moses: The Miscegenation of Time*, Arthur F. Kinney shows ways in which miscegenation affected the South; black and white relations in Faulkner’s work; and Faulkner’s own stance on race relations in his life. Kinney argues,

But legal marriage is one thing; relations are another. If white opposition to interracial unions was nearly unanimous, sexual congress between white men and black women was widely tolerated in practice. (Sexual congress between black men and white women, however, was not acceptable at all and was frequently the grounds for lynching black men.) From antebellum days onward, many white men conceived black “shadow families,” which they cared for as conscientiously as their own more public white families. (12)

These “shadow families” are sometimes sent north or later included in wills. Kinney makes clear that Faulkner’s own great-grandfather was one of the plantation owners with a “shadow family” via miscegenation (27). In his own literature,

Faulkner concentrates especially on the fact and fear of miscegenation among the white Sutpens, Coldfields, and Compsons. Indeed, *Go Down, Moses* is arguably the sequel to *Absalom, Absalom!* in that it attempts to examine both the causes and consequences of miscegenation. In both of these novels, black-white relations, and especially the threat of interbreeding, take on a particularly striking force. (Kinney 26)

This extreme fear of miscegenation and existence of “shadow families” is a wrong that Faulkner aims to resurrect from the past. Rollyson adds, “The Faulkner family never spoke of black relatives or liaisons, so far as is known. . . . A certain history died with Colonel Falkner, and his great-grandson spent a lifetime trying in his fiction to recover a displaced past” (*The Past is Never Dead* 6). Faulkner utilizes this theme to show its deep, psychological impact on his characters.

Before turning to the character Clytemnestra, Sutpen’s sons and their own traumas must be discussed. Through Quentin, the southerner who also cannot escape the South’s past, this trauma comes to light. In “‘What Else Could a Southern Gentleman Do’?: Quentin Compson, Rhett Butler, and Miscegenation,” Ben Railton dissects Quentin Compson’s role and focuses on how the novel interacts with the ideology of the South during the mid-1930s. Railton argues, “Quentin Compson’s development, from obedient boy to questioning Harvard student to tormented old soul, is paralleled by the development of his understanding of the central role of miscegenation in southern culture and of the guilt of the white South in denying its existence” (41). Quentin does harbor this guilt, and he embodies the South’s torment: “the southern past and ancestors occupy Quentin, residing at the deepest levels of his consciousness and exerting their influence on every aspect of his personality and life” (Railton 46). At home, Quentin must relive the past through the stories of Rosa and his father, and at college, he is compelled to retell them. Railton claims, “On one level, Quentin’s obsessive need to tell and re-tell the Sutpen story can be seen as a parallel to the novelist’s task” (47). The voices of the past speak to Quentin through Faulkner. These voices tell of race and fear and miscegenation: “What Quentin—and through him, Shreve—instead comes to understand, finally, is the

role that race, or more exactly miscegenation, has played in the history of the South. The story of Sutpen is full to overflowing with examples of miscegenation, all of them fraught with ominous portent for the fate of the Sutpen family and the South itself” (Railton 49). By realizing the true reason Henry kills Bon, Quentin and Shreve come to understand “race in the South” (Railton 50). Furthermore, Railton says, “[I]n understanding the sin which brought the Civil War and the destruction of the plantation system, they also can understand the continued wrong which keeps the South from escaping its past” (50). This wrong haunts Quentin as well. Railton argues “that there is nothing inherently or inevitably tragic about miscegenation in this understanding; rather, it is the white South’s inability to admit to or face the consequences of its miscegenation that spells its destruction” (Railton 50-1). This revelation leaves Quentin in a psychological and physical state of anguish as his words and thoughts close the novel:

“Now I want you to tell me just one thing more. Why do you hate the South?”

“I dont hate it,” Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; “I dont hate it,” he said. *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!* (*Absalom, Absalom!* 303)

Quentin is arguably attempting to convince himself that he does not hate his home and heritage, something that Shreve sees through. As for Faulkner, Railton claims he “was grappling with some of the most serious issues in the history of the South and of race relations, and like them was doing so in a way that did not rehearse—and in fact brought under intense scrutiny—the established interpretations of those issues” (57). Faulkner brings forth the racial injustices from the Old South, making readers question the issues.

What is more with Faulkner's characters is that Bon's fratricide occurs more so over the fear of miscegenation instead of incest. In *William Faulkner's Legacy: What Shadow, What Stain, What Mark*, Margaret Donovan Bauer looks closely at the key event of Bon's murder as she turns to Henry and his feelings of and withholding of love. Bauer utilizes Quentin's lens to analyze Henry's thoughts and shows that the murder of Bon "was at great sacrifice to [Henry] himself" because he was able to give everything up "for his beliefs" (121). When Rosa brings Quentin along to gain access inside the plantation home and witness Henry's presence, "Quentin finds in Henry Sutpen another victim of the Old South, as it was reflected in Thomas Sutpen's design" (Bauer 122). Sutpen's Hundred had no love or compassion, only used human instruments of a plantation society. Bauer observes that

Sutpen had formulated his design, which required "money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family . . . a wife" (263) but not love, nor even compassion, for Thomas Sutpen understood one thing that Quentin Compson and other "authentic" members of the southern aristocracy refused to face: that the southern practice of the relegation of people into set positions in society is a denial of love. (122)

Sutpen places all people around him as commodities for his demoniac plan, and he uses them, without love, to attempt his goal. Quentin sees through this horror and lack of love when he "recognizes the living ghost of Henry Sutpen" (Bauer 122). Henry loses himself as well as his brother when he kills Bon. Parini reflects on Faulkner's multifaceted use of racism: "The racial question occurs, in different guises, throughout the novel, and has riveted the attention of most critics. It is Bon's black blood that derails his marriage to Judith, among other things. It is Sutpen's racist behavior that finally draws the demise of his family, sending Henry, his son, wandering in the wilderness for forty years" (Parini 209). Henry is also doomed and only comes home to die, becoming a ghost from the past

who looms inside the plantation home, in a living, deathly state. Quentin relives the night that Rosa demands he escort her to Sutpen's Hundred and enters

the bare stale room whose shutters were closed too, where a second lamp burned dimly on a crude table; waking or sleeping it was the same: the bed, the yellow sheets and pillow, the wasted yellow face with closed, almost transparent eyelids on the pillow, the wasted hands crossed on the breast as if he were already a corpse; waking or sleeping it was the same and would be the same forever as long as he lived[.] (*Absalom, Absalom!* 298)

In this gothic passage inside the haunted plantation home, Henry has come home to die, but he has been dead ever since he killed his brother at the post of the plantation's entrance. If Sutpen had acknowledged his first son, "Henry would not have had to kill Bon to 'save' his sister, for, as is theorized by Quentin and Shreve, Bon would have given up all plans to marry Judith in return for any sign of paternal recognition" (Bauer 122). Henry kills Bon to save his sister from miscegenation, "even though he himself had first loved this man" (Bauer 122). Sutpen forces upon Henry his own racial prejudices and makes Henry be the antagonist against Bon.

The impact of Bon's murder resounds throughout the novel. Parini says that Bon should have been the son to inherit the plantation home, but he is always rejected. Parini argues that "it tells us something important about Faulkner that he favors Bon and condemns Sutpen. Of course, miscegenation was an obsession of his, perhaps attributable to his own family history. . . . Yet Faulkner remains firmly on the side of Bon, who seems intent on marrying Judith" (210-11). The main reason for Bon's murder resides at the center of the novel. In *Faulkner the Storyteller*, Blair Labatt focuses on Faulkner's narratology and notes the "impulse to explain" Bon's murder, the central event in the novel (27). Yet, the explanation "is a solution that by no means explains

everything—not evil, not the South, or why people live there, or why they live at all—but it is a solution that comes with a cathartic release, a sense of completion, a fulfilling sense of having refused to accept all apparent explanations, of having pushed on until . . . we know that we have gone ‘far enough’” (Labatt 27). The story cannot be fully explained because the corrupt ideals of the Old South are inexplicable. However, the attempt to explain Bon’s fratricide is cathartic, and the truth comes out. Labatt writes,

The main event of *Absalom, Absalom!* has finally been brought within the range of our intelligence. The revelation of the motive is a variant of Faulkner’s favorite “not . . . but” construction, which might be applied to the relation of the other, successfully corrected theories as well: not the ceremony, but the incest; not the incest, but the miscegenation; not the demon, but the innocent. Causes are thus assigned to a strict hierarchy grammatically. But Faulkner’s “not . . . but” really means “both . . .and”; incest is not denied as a contributing cause but only as a sufficient cause. (29)

The grammatical hierarchy is relevant because the reasoning for Bon’s murder builds to a pinnacle that encompasses the factors before it. It is, however, the miscegenation that marks his doom: “When Henry sees Charles not as his brother but as a Negro, he is repeating his father’s own authoritarian rejection, Sutpen’s willingness to use power in order to deny human claims” (Labatt 29). While Henry repeats his father’s rejection of Bon, Henry is just as disgusted with himself and his father as he was when he witnessed the fight night brutality as a child, fleeing “from among the negroes who had been holding him, screaming and vomiting” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 21). Sutpen and the South make Henry uphold the racial injustices even if they physically torment him, and Quentin is able to identify this guilt for both Henry and himself. Labatt argues that this power is reflective of the society:

The murder is the acting out both of Sutpen’s specific rejection of Charles and also the racial caste system; it is a special abuse within a more universal abuse of

power by Sutpen and his society. That is why the fact that the mystery is “solved” can never be merely pacifying, a source of flattery to rational deduction. For logic forces Quentin and Shreve to look at *themselves* and at the whole fabric of southern society, and to shoulder the tremendous burden of the guilt of man. The act of telling has a painful impact on the teller. (30)

The unfolding abuse of white power due to the fear of miscegenation is too much for Quentin to bear. While it is a release for him to discuss this haunting past, it comes with tremendous guilt for himself as a white, southern, male. Parini notes Faulkner’s explanation to Hal Smith, his publisher: “I use Quentin because it is just before he is about to commit suicide because of his sister, and I use his bitterness which he has projected on the South in the form of hatred of it and its people to get more out of the story itself than a historical novel would be” (qtd. in Parini 209). Faulkner takes this guilt-ridden character from his Yoknapatawpha setting and utilizes Quentin’s disgust of the South for major emphasis.

Faulkner even utilizes another racial absurdity and commodification of people with Bon’s octoroon faux wife and his sixteenth part black child in New Orleans to suggest depth and irrationality of racial prejudices. Bon’s other family is not enough reason to stop him from marrying his sister. Mr. Compson tells Quentin,

“Yes, granted that, even to the unworldly Henry, let alone to the more travelled father, the existence of the eighth part negro mistress and the sixteenth part negro son, granted even the morganatic ceremony—a situation which was just as much a part of a wealthy young New Orleans’s social and fashionable equipment as his dancing slippers—was reason enough, which is drawing honor a little fine even for the shadowy paragons which are our ancestors born in the South and come to man- and womanhood about eighteen sixty or sixty one. It’s just incredible. It just does not explain.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 80)

Bon’s own “shadow family” through a marriage-like ceremony to a kept, octoroon is not cause enough to bar Judith from marrying him.

Even after Bon's death, Faulkner writes more on the incredulities of racial injustices through the experiences and views of Bon's sixteenth part black son Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, who appears at Sutpen's Hundred where he sleeps between his two aunts: Clytie below him on a pallet on the floor, himself on a trundle bed, and Judith above him in bed (*Absalom, Absalom!* 160). Mr. Compson tells Quentin,

“And your grandfather did not know either just which of them it was who told him that he was, must be, a negro, who could neither have heard yet nor recognized the term ‘nigger’, who even had no word for it in the tongue he knew who had been born and grown up in a padded silken vacuum cell which might have been suspended on a cable a thousand fathoms in the sea, where pigmentation had no more moral value than the silk walls and the scent and the rose-colored candle shades[.]” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 161)

Charles Etienne is birthed from his octoroon mother's room into a world that links skin color to moral worth, and he finds out at the plantation that he is in fact beneath his white aunt, even though he is technically the next male heir of Sutpen's. Charles Etienne's tainted drop of black blood allows him to pass, although unsuccessfully, as either white or black. Faulkner uses farce to convey the apparent trauma of this mixed-race young man. Charles Etienne goes off and returns home married to a very black, now pregnant, woman. After his son, Jim Bond, is born, the white-colored Charles Etienne spends time flaunting his black wife at various venues. Mr. Compson tells Quentin how Charles Etienne ventured through

“a maelstrom of faces and bodies through which the man thrust, dragging her behind him, toward or from what, driven by what fury which would not let him rest, she did not know, each one to end, finish, as the one before it had so that it was almost a ritual—the man apparently hunting out situations in order to flaunt and fling the ape-like body of his charcoal companion in the faces of all and any who would retaliate.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 166-7)

Faulkner forces the atrocities from the ridiculous and unimaginable situation that Charles Etienne's life has become, but he makes it farcical to a gut-wrenching degree. Mr.

Compson describes how Charles Etienne repeatedly sought abuse from anyone

“who thought he was a white man and believed it only the more strongly when he denied it; the white man who, when he said he was a negro, believed that he lied in order to save his skin, or worse: from sheer besotment or sexual perversion; in either case the result the same: the man with body and limbs almost as light and delicate as a girl's giving the first blow, usually unarmed and heedless of the numbers opposed to him, with that same fury and implacability and physical imperviousness to pain and punishment, neither cursing nor panting, but laughing.” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 167)

Charles Etienne seeks out a self-inflicted, psychological punishment for himself and laughs through the assaults. These disturbing scenes are not meant to be farcical but are filled with an underlying psychological angst and pain that mirrors that of the entire South. Plus, the tainted bloodline Charles Etienne produces makes a mockery of Sutpen, as well as the South. No matter how diligently Sutpen tries to leave an “atavistic” line of a white primogeniture legacy behind, what ultimately results is a black great-grandson haunting what is left of his ruined plantation.

Faulkner utilizes Sutpen's Design to highlight how the absurd ideals of the Old South and slavery, as well as the fears of miscegenation, lead to the fall of the South. The haunting plantation era and the plantation home become ghastly, living reminders of southern repression. In the end, the architecturally beautiful plantation home will have to be destroyed in an attempt to move past these painful atrocities.

Chapter Five

A Psychoanalytical Look at the Use of Fire in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Faulkner utilizes characters and events in his novels to allow repressions from the past to surface. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, he carefully constructs Clytemnestra (Clytie) to orchestrate one of the most significant acts—burning down the plantation home. Using Clytie, Sutpen’s illegitimate daughter by a slave, to destroy Sutpen’s Hundred makes a crucial psychological impact on the events of the novel as it represents the eradication of the slave plantation by a mixed-race daughter, which delineates changes in the ways of the Old South, even for Faulkner’s present era of segregation. Faulkner even believed his intricately crafted grand novel would be worthy of the screen at this time:

When he finished reading the galley proofs of *Absalom, Absalom!* he wrote Morty Goldman. “I am going to undertake to sell this book myself to the pictures,” he told him. “I am going to ask one hundred thousand dollars for it or nothing, as I do not need to sell it now since I have a job.” By the time he placed a set of proofs on Nunnally Johnson’s desk, he had cut his asking price in half. His terse note provided a little information. “It’s about miscegenation,” he wrote. It was to no avail. Nineteen hundred and thirty-six was not the year for miscegenation in motion pictures. (Blotner 375)

The topic of miscegenation can be difficult for any audience. Using one of Sutpen’s illegitimate, mixed-race children who has no birthright to perform the final act of destruction is an impactful maneuver. In fact, Clytie is an often overlooked Faulkner character who needs closer attention: through her actions, Faulkner’s own voice and opinions about the South are heard. The fire Clytie sets eradicates the old, southern plantation home and what it symbolizes, but she is not the first to light a fire in Faulkner’s fiction.

Faulkner uses the theme of fire in many of his works with differing intentions. Fire is a tool to fight an oppressor. Fire is a weapon of power. Fire is a form of burial. Fire is a means to cleanse. In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner uses the deterioration of a manor home, “a ruined mansion called the Old Frenchman place,” to symbolize the crumbling of the Old South (Parini 134). Fire rises out of Faulkner’s work yet again, as neighbors are said to have been “pulling down piecemeal for firewood for fifty years” (qtd. in Parini 134). While this home is not burned all at once, the constant burning of the fragments of Old Frenchman place reflects Faulkner’s theme of the deterioration of the South and the slow eradication of its past. In addition, Parini points out that Popeye’s home also burned down in *Sanctuary*: Popeye’s “life story being one of horror, involving an ‘invalid’ mother, a missing father, and a pyromaniac grandmother ‘who burns down Popeye’s dark house’” (159). Besides the motif of fire, the “dark house” returns in *Sanctuary* and is eradicated and cleansed through the means of fire. In *As I Lay Dying*, fire is used in an attempt to burn Addie’s body, which is resting in the barn; however, “[t]he rotting corpse of Addie Bundren is barely saved from this conflagration, which Darl in fact set in the vain hope of cutting short the ridiculous journey” (Parini 146). This use of fire is a means to save the family from the journey to Jefferson, but it is also an attempt at a different form of burial for Addie.

One work which holds significant fiery comparisons to *Absalom, Absalom!* is *Light in August*, especially in regard to the Big Place burning. The pregnant Lena Grove “arrives in Jefferson just as the smoke rises from the house of Joanna Burden, a descendent of New England abolitionists who has been murdered that day, her house set aflame. The two stories originally link with that smoke” (Parini 179). The fact that

Joanna's parents were abolitionists is relevant because she would have been taught that slavery was wrong, and her family's humane ideals were contradictory to many southerners. Miscegenation between a black man and a white woman was especially despised in the South during this time, so Joanna and Joe Christmas' sexual relationship was extremely taboo:

Believing Joe is partly black, Joanna regards her lovemaking with him as deeply sinful, an outrage against God. She begs Joe to kneel with her, to pray for forgiveness. He cannot go along with this, and she—in a wickedly symbolic gesture—threatens him with a revolver from the Civil War. This triggers his most violent instincts, and he slashes her throat with a razor, then sets the house afire. (Parini 181).

Faulkner does not ascertain Joe's race in the novel, so the belief that he has mixed blood is enough to be problematic for both Joe and Joanna. Just as Faulkner uses Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon to show the absurdity of racial lines, he does the same with Joe Christmas. Outsiders do not know if either man is black or not, and both men live tormented lives. Yet, there is even more significance to Joanna's death scene. Joanna first pulls a Civil War revolver on Joe, a symbol from the Old South's battle to uphold slavery, and he kills her for it. Not only does he murder Joanna, Joe burns down her home, an old plantation home. Joe is known to have been living on Joanna's old plantation property where he bootlegged whiskey:

[T]here were a dozen men who admitted having bought whiskey from Christmas for over two years, meeting him at night and alone in the woods behind an old colonial plantation house two miles from town, in which a middleaged spinster named Burden lived alone. But even the ones who bought the whiskey did not know that Christmas was actually living in a tumble down negro cabin on Miss Burden's place, and that he had been living in it for more than two years. (*Light in August* 36)

The old slave cabin reiterates that Joe is beneath the class of whites, and it also evokes the era of slavery. Joe's sexual relationship with and murder of a white woman earns him a vile retribution. Parini says,

For the first time in his writing, Faulkner directly confronts racial prejudice in the South. Joe Christmas, so he believes, has mixed blood, and the fact that he has killed Joanna Burden, a white woman, only pours gas on the flames of white prejudice. Faulkner portrays the visceral racism that engulfs the people of the town as they pursue Christmas, led by the appropriately named Percy Grimm, who finally corners and kills Christmas, castrating him with a kitchen knife as he dies. (179-80)

Since Faulkner never offers a truth to Joe's race, crafting a character who suffers such a gruesome death highlights the horrors of racism, even when there is no certainty about his race. Although Joe does murder Joanna, his rage and his discrimination stem from the belief that he is partially black, a trope Faulkner uses for his mixed-race characters in *Absalom, Absalom!* Parini argues that Faulkner is sympathetic when describing Christmas, "the killer, the bootlegger who is possibly of mixed race, the outcast who remains, after all, a human being, and whose miserable death goes beyond the bounds of punishment" (180). Joe Christmas is a human being, and the harsh circumstances of his life revolve around his potentially being black. Yet, Faulkner has Joe speak through the act of setting a plantation home on fire with Joanna inside. He expunges the grand home and all it represents from the time of slavery while also covering up the murder. It is ironic, however, that he abolishes the home of a descendant of abolitionists, but Joanna is still "burdened" by the belief that miscegenation is sinful, so he literally ignites their relationship too. Faulkner uses a mixed-race character to, once again, set the plantation home on fire in *Absalom, Absalom!* The theme of fire erupting from a bi-racial relationship resurfaces in the novel that appeared four years after *Light in August*.

Joe Williamson points out that arson was typically a weapon of choice for the oppressed or powerless when he discusses the claim that Charlie Butler, Faulkner's maternal grandfather, was an arsonist. There is a mystery of arson that surrounds Sam Thompson who yelled at Charlie Butler, "Shoot you house-burning son-of-a-bitch," just before Charlie shot him (Williamson 108). Williamson argues,

Why Sam Thompson should have accused Charlie of house burning remains a mystery. Regardless of specifics, it was a highly insulting charge for one man to make against another. Arson—house burning, and barn burning too—was particularly the crime of the powerless, of slaves, "niggers," and poor whites, of sneaks and cowards. Arson was, indeed, a "mean advantage" that "a brave man" would not take. (108)

Whether Faulkner's grandfather burned a house is an uncertain family mystery, but the claim that he was an arsonist could be tinder for Faulkner's own use of fire in his fiction. It is relevant that arsonists were more likely to be poor or powerless people during this era. While Clytie can be viewed as powerless, she actually holds tremendous power when she burns Sutpen's Hundred. The question must be posed: why does Faulkner use a bi-racial character to set the plantation home on fire?

Clytie is introduced early on in *Absalom, Absalom!* Her brown face is seen alongside that of her white sister. Rosa tells Quentin, "But I was not there. I was not there to see the two Sutpen faces this time—once on Judith and once on the negro girl beside her—looking down through the square entrance to the loft" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 12). The two girly faces resembling Sutpen can be perceived as looking like twins, but with different coloring. Rosa has given Quentin an overview of Sutpen's grand design to create a plantation home and white legacy, but Faulkner ominously brings forth Clytie at the end of the first chapter for significant reasons. Sutpen has fathered another child who

is not a part of his design, and she is bi-racial. Faulkner hintingly marks Clytie's importance at the beginning of the novel, and her role in the livelihood of Sutpen's Hundred becomes crucial. Mr. Compson gives Quentin more details about the illegitimate child: "Yes, Clytie was his daughter too: Clytemnestra. He named her himself. He named them all himself. . . . Miss Rosa didn't tell you that two of the niggers in the wagon that day were women?" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 48). Mr. Compson points out that Sutpen named all his children, then he alludes to the myth of Clytemnestra and Cassandra by mentioning that he personally "liked to believe that he intended to name her Cassandra" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 48). In Greek mythology, Cassandra, a daughter of Priam, is taken by Agamemnon as a slave, and both are killed by Agamemnon's wife Clytemnestra upon his return home from Troy. Faulkner alludes to the myth through Mr. Compson's suggestion that her name should have aligned with that of the slave Cassandra. In "Clytemnestra: A Felicitous Spelling in the *Odyssey*," Patricia A. Marquardt offers an additional meaning for Clytemnestra's name and believes Homer would have known both meanings and used the other spelling. Marquardt writes, "Since the spelling *Clytemestra* ('famous cunning') is not inconsistent with that character's role in the *Odyssey* and is the simpler spelling, a change to the longer and less obvious *Clytemnestra* ('famous wooing') would seem pointless" (246-7). The etymology of Clytemnestra's Greek name is relevant because her character can be described as plotting or cunning, attributes Mr. Compson and Rosa dismiss.

With keen understanding, Rosa relays that Clytie is savage and untamed due to her race. Rosa describes Clytie to Quentin when she lived with both women during the war:

Clytie, not inept, anything but inept: perverse inscrutable and paradox: free, yet incapable of freedom who had never once called herself a slave, holding fidelity to none like the indolent or solitary wolf or bear (yes, wild: half untamed black, half Sutpen blood: and if 'untamed' be synonymous with 'wild', then 'Sutpen' is the silent unsleeping viciousness of the tamer's lash) . . . only to the prime fixes principle of its own savageness[.] (Absalom, Absalom! 126)

Rosa believes that Clytie has an untamed savageness from her black blood, but she also holds bestial blood from her white father. Her predicament of being free but not free is highlighted—Clytie was never a slave because she is Sutpen's daughter, and yet she cannot leave the home because she is Sutpen's daughter. Clytie's mixed-race portrays the torment of the three women:

Clytie who in the very pigmentation of her flesh represented that debacle which had brought Judith and me to what we were and which had made her (Clytie) that which she declined to be just as she had declined to be that from which its purpose had been to emancipate her, as though presiding aloof upon the new, she deliberately remained to represent to us the threatful portent of the old. (Absalom, Absalom! 126)

Rosa believes that Clytie's skin color is the reason for the war and the reason the women were left behind to fend for themselves. Clytie was never a slave and now that the war is over, she will never be one; however, Clytie is described as a threat from the past sheerly by being alive on Sutpen's Hundred. This threat will come to fruition when Clytie burns down the home, killing herself and her dying half-brother Henry inside. This murder-suicide will eradicate the past as the plantation home burns.

Gray analyzes Faulkner's utilization of black characters and women in his works. Gray points out that some of these characters watchfully remain in the margins until it is time to make their final say:

The *detailed* positioning of black and women characters is, admittedly, different. Black people hover on the choric edges of the action, as they do so in much Southern writing; until the final chapter when—in an anticipation of *The Sound*

and the Fury—the ‘pure quivering chord’ of their song ‘wordless and far away’ supplies the narrative with a notably sonorous conclusion. Women, on the other hand, are more observed than (notionally) observing; victims of a voyeuristic stare[.] . . . In either case, however, it is the basic strategy of positioning that matters: since the effect is to measure out the boundaries of the text. Black characters and women characters, in their various ways, are on the margins, like border-guards patrolling the territory of the known: as such, they can seem reassuring and protective or dangerous and unnerving. Either way, as protectors of the familiar or routes of access to the unfamiliar, they are irredeemably other: the narrator can go so far, up to the appearance of them, and no further. (113)

Clytie is quite protective, dangerously so. She blocks Rosa from coming up the stairs twice, and she protects all of her half siblings, nephew, and nephew’s child. Also, Clytie is quite “other” in Rosa’s eyes—her blackness is detestable, and she resembles a gothic ghost that resides in the house, just watching. As mentioned before, Rosa is first seen watching through the hayloft. At the end of the novel, Clytie becomes the gothic figure of the house, looking out from the upstairs window, watching. Shreve reenacts the scene for Quentin when Rosa returns to Sutpen’s Hundred the second time:

“And old Clytie maybe watching for just that out of the upstairs window for three months now: and maybe even your old man was right this time and when she saw the ambulance turn into the gate she believed it was the same black wagon for which she probably had had that nigger boy watching for three months now, coming to carry Henry into town for the white folks to hang him for shooting Charles Bon. And I guess it had been him who had kept that closet under the stairs full of tinder and trash all that time too, like she told him too, maybe he not getting it then either but keeping it full like she told him, the kerosene and all, for three months now, until the hour when he could begin to howl—” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 299)

Clytie has remained on the edges of Sutpen’s Hundred like a phantom, observing the actions of others until it is her time to act. She believes she must protect Henry from the law for the murder of Charles Bon. The image of the frail and old face peering from the upstairs plantation window for months is hauntingly eerie. Plus, there is Rosa, who has

been watching Clytie all this time. Both have been silent observers waiting to act. Gray describes the gothic elements of the characters and the haunted home:

Even the narrator as she recalls herself, and the rest of the family as she portrays them, are sucked into the atmosphere of gothic nightmare. Rosa, by her own account, becomes like one of Ann Radcliffe's heroines: a feverish eavesdropper, haunted by disembodied 'faces', 'voices' or 'hands', and experiencing a numb 'terror' at the mere suspicion that there is 'something hidden' at the top of a 'nightmare flight of stairs'. And the 'two half phantom children' born in the dark house, together with the black maid Clytemnestra who—by virtue of being fathered by 'fell darkness'—has become its 'cold Cerberus': they seal the fate of the family in this version of the tale of the fall of the house of Sutpen—helping to assure its 'doom' as the Sutpen 'name and lineage' are finally 'effaced . . . from the earth'. Undeniably gothic, the gothicism of Rosa's account must, however, be seen for what it is: the product of certain, very specific emotional and historical pressures. (215)

Rosa is haunted and undeniably haunts herself. The gothic nature of these scenes stems from the psychological impact of repressed feelings about the South as well as personal trauma. Faulkner's description of Clytie as a "cold Cerberus" is fitting because she guards the home like a three-headed fire-breathing dog at the gates of Hades from mythology. Sutpen's Hundred is no longer a beautifully crafted architectural structure—it has become a haunted, "dark house," and all the children born unto this dark plantation home and those associated with it are doomed.

The plantation home and other homes in Faulkner's works are often portrayed in a Gothic light. Sutpen's Hundred becomes an eerie embodiment of flesh that must be destroyed, and there is foreshadowing of its destruction before it is even erected. Sutpen's plantation home is described with a grave-like beginning. Quentin tells Shreve about his grandfather's description of Sutpen's Hundred when the men gathered "at his house that didn't even have walls yet, that wasn't anything yet but some lines of bricks sunk into the ground" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 178). The image of the home's foundation

resembles old, sunken grave markers and tombstones, casting a haunted and cursed light on its footing. Once it is constructed, the home becomes alive with a ghastly nature.

When Quentin goes with Rosa to the house to see if Henry is inside, the house can be viewed as flesh, as a living plantation body:

It loomed, bulked, square and enormous, with jagged half-topped chimneys, its roofline sagging a little, for an instant as they moved, hurried, toward it Quentin saw completely through it a ragged segment of sky with three hot stars in it as if the house were of one dimension, painted on a canvas curtain in which there was a tear; now almost beneath it, the dead furnace-breath of air in which they moved seemed to reek in slow and protracted violence with a smell of desolation and decay as if the wood of which it was built were flesh. (*Absalom, Absalom!* 293)

The old plantation is now decaying, but Faulkner gives it breath and flesh as if it were a monstrous edifice gasping its last breaths of life. With Henry on his deathbed, the home also becomes a tomb of doom. Shreve reevaluates the climactic scene when Quentin reaches Clytie: “Clytie’s trouble wasn’t anger nor even distrust; it was terror, fear. And she didn’t tell you in so many words because she was still keeping the secret for the sake of the man who had been her father too as well as for the sake of the family which no longer existed, whose here-to-fore inviolate and rotten mausoleum she still guarded” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 280). Clytie is convoluted with the horrors from the curse of her father, her family, and she is left to protect the home and her remaining family members alone. The plantation home is now a mausoleum, a ghastly sepulcher from which Clytie will haunt from its windows until it is her time to act. Furthermore, Clytie is so completely intertwined with the grand home that she becomes the plantation house. After Bon is shot, Clytie tries to stop Rosa from coming up the stairs:

‘Dont you go up there, Rosa.’ That was how she said it: that quiet, that still, and again it was though it had not been she who spoke but the house itself that said the words—the house which he had built, which some suppuration of himself had

created about him as the sweat of his body might have created, produced some (even if invisible) cocoon-like and complimentary shell in which Ellen had had to live and die a stranger, in which Henry and Judith would have to be victims and prisoners, or die. (Absalom, Absalom! 111)

It is the house that speaks through Clytie. This dark house is trying to protect the children, Sutpen's children, and therefore, Sutpen's Hundred's children, and keep them close to home. This eerie passage shows how dark, cursed, and villainous Sutpen's grand design has become. For years, Quentin has known the house to be haunted since he and other boys would venture to it and "*dare one another to evoke the ghost, since it would have to be haunted, could not but be haunted although it had stood there empty and unthreatening for twenty-six years and nobody to meet or report any ghost until the wagon full of strangers moving from Arkansas tried to stop and spend the night*" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 172). The uncanny home is as unnatural as the slavery that it represents. The house becomes a liminal space through which Quentin attempts to uncover the past. Gray writes,

Certainly, in the final pages of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Quentin does appear to cross the threshold, if not by the front entrance or the back, then at least through the smashed glass of a window. 'If we can just get to the house', he tells himself, 'get inside the house': as if to get inside the Sutpen house will be to get inside the past, to gain entry to its inner truth and meaning. He gets inside. What he acquires access to, however, is not a vital organism but a relic, a living corpse that is both Henry and the mansion: leaving him thinking, 'Nevermore of peace. Nevermore of peace. Nevermore Nevermore Nevermore.' Like the protagonist in Poe's poem 'The Raven', Quentin is left merely rehearsing, over and over again, the memory of what he has desired and missed. (223)

Quentin desires to uncover the truth of the past, and Henry is a gothic embodiment of the house. The past Quentin uncovers by going through the house is more destruction and decay. There is no beauty, no virtuosity, in Sutpen's grand design, and like Henry, it is left to die.

In *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler compares Sutpen's design to that of a gothic, Faustian form. The South not only lost, but is lost, and it is now haunted by its past. Fiedler writes, "Faulkner deliberately chooses the gothic mode, attempts to create the full-scale tale of terror, though everywhere he uses the devices of the form to invest with horror his vision of a chaotic and lost world" (470). Faulkner's multi-layered, narrative form does build to a height of terror in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and Sutpen's character is doomed to a gothic demise. Fiedler explains,

Only in Sutpen does Faulkner attempt the creation of the Faustian figure in whom the gothic achieves its thematic fulfillment. It is worth noting that he does not find his Faust among the humble peasants, black and white, who merely "endure"; nor does he discover him in the world of the aristocracy, of the Sartorises and their friends, in whom the codes of honor of the South are remembered if not lived. Sutpen is a man without either honor or humility, only with a "grand design"; he is a poor white on the rise, the self-made man, whom Faulkner has elsewhere mocked and scorned, fighting his way toward acceptance and respectability. (471)

Fiedler says that Sutpen is willing to take part in whatever may be demanded of him in order to secure a place for himself. Sutpen, as a Faustian character, rises on the backs of slavery: "Yet though he is accused by Shreve . . . of having made a compact with the Devil, Sutpen is not really credited with having a soul to sell" (Fiedler 471). This vain villain only wants to make a name for himself and leave a pure line of heirs to maintain his grand design, but due to his Faustian nature, all of this will fall.

Clytie, who has been protecting this haunted plantation built with the hands of slaves and which thrived on the foundation of slavery, ultimately sets it aflame. The mixed-raced, illegitimate daughter of Sutpen is the one to take down this architectural monstrosity. The aged Clytie herself literally becomes kindling for the fire: "Clytie lay there on the floor, more than eighty years old and not much more than five feet tall and

looking like a little bundle of clean rags so that you went and took her arm and helped her up and her arm felt like a stick, as light and dry and brittle as a stick” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 280). Her tiny, light brown body is now old and brittle like a dry stick wrapped in rags, anticipating her time to burn within the home she defends. Metaphorically, she now becomes the tinder and trash that she asks Jim Bond to keep under the stairs for lighting. In order to protect Henry from being taken away, Clytie designs a plan to burn the home with herself and Henry inside if Rosa comes back. Quentin reimagines Rosa arriving at the house with the ambulance, realizing it is on fire but they cannot make it in time to save Henry: “Clytie knew, counted upon, that; it would be a good three minutes before it could reach the house, the monstrous tinder-dry rotten shell seeping smoke through the warped cracks in the weather-boarding as if it were made of gauze wire and filled with roaring” (*Absalom, Absalom!* 299-300). What Sutpen once dreamed to be a magnificent mansion has now deteriorated into an old, dry edifice that easily catches fire as the cracks allow air to fuel the flame. It is Clytie, born of a slave but not a slave, Sutpen’s daughter but not his heir, who burns down the house, the slave plantation. Like Joe Christmas, Clytie speaks with fire. Through her, Faulkner claims that this dark place of her birth must be eradicated for all that it represents. Eerily, the house and the mixed-race Clytie become mixed flesh as she burns alive within its walls. Rosa, the driver, and the deputy watch it burn with life inside:

—the three of them staring, glaring at the doomed house: and then for a moment maybe Clytie appeared in that window from which she must have been watching the gates constantly day and night for three months—the tragic gnome’s face beneath the clean headrag, against a red background of fire, seen for a moment between two swirls of smoke, looking down at them, perhaps not even now with triumph and no more of despair than it had ever worn, possibly even serene above

the melting clapboards before the smoke swirled across it again. (*Absalom, Absalom!* 300)

Quentin imagines Clytie as possibly having a feeling of serenity now that all is purged by fire. Her gothic image intertwined with the fire and smoke is left to haunt the grave that Sutpen's Hundred becomes. The blazing, grand plantation home becomes a gothic specter of fire illuminating its absolute ruin. This finality also brings closure to Rosa's life. Shreve explains:

“And she went to bed because it was all finished now, there was nothing left now, nothing out there now but that idiot boy to lurk around those ashes and those four gutted chimneys and howl until someone came and drove him away. They couldn't catch him and nobody ever seemed to make him go very far away, he just stopped howling for a little while. Then after a while they would begin to hear him again. And so she died.” (*Absalom, Absalom* 301)

Rosa no longer has a reason to live. She has told her story of the past; she has attempted to protect her nephew as she promised. So she dies. All that is left of Sutpen's design is Jim Bond howling among the ashes, the burned home which has returned to its grave-like state. Bond is the end of the Sutpen line, a gothic and black being who is left to haunt what's left of the grand plantation home.

Through this fiery ending, Faulkner confronts the past. In *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha World and Black Being*, Erskine Peters analyzes the tragedy of what he calls “black being” in the South and in Faulkner's works. Peters argues that the blacks' predicament shines forth through Faulkner's characterization of them as well as other characters' attitudes toward them:

Faulkner attempted to pull the foundation from the Yoknapatawpha culture. Sorcerer that he could be and gothic genius that he was, he knew precisely that by magnifying the moral void present in Yoknapatawpha's history he could prick the community's imagination. This is one way by which he forced the

Yoknapatawpha community to confront the basic reality of their existence. (Peters 57)

In the case of Sutpen's plantation home, the foundation is burned to magnify the immorality of the South's slave plantation roots. Until the South confronts its immoral past, it will remain doomed. Quentin realizes this when he travels to the past from the mansion's portal, but he remains doomed because he feels no solace after the journey. Quentin is left trying to convince himself that he does not hate the South, and Faulkner leaves the reader in the throes of despair alongside him: "*I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 303). The issue of birthright, Peters argues, contributes to the South's tragedy: "The mulatto may feel particular alienation, owing to his not being acknowledged by the white parent. Yet the entire population of black being also feels this alienation because its basic birthright of human participation in the brotherhood is not recognized" (Peters 114). Therefore, it is not just the Charles Bons who are alienated; it is the whole black and bi-racial population that feels alienation. Jim Bond left howling among the ashes is a symbolic representation of this alienation. However, Faulkner writes Clytie as a character of action; she surpasses the racial lines that others set for her by defending her home at all costs. As Peters claims,

Clytie's character dominates most situations. Her presence affects more than it is affected. Even during the war there is the sense that the wasted, desolate farmland is favorably affected by her disposition. Her character dominates even in those tasks which were automatically expected of her as a slave: chopping wood, keeping a kitchen garden, harnessing the mule, plowing. (Peters 130)

Other characters do not understand that Clytie is productive in what she accomplishes. Mr. Compson's attitude that slaves are dependent by nature shows that he does not view her as independent, and Miss Rosa cannot either: "Miss Rosa simply cannot ignore

Clytie's individuality . . . [and] cannot conceive of blacks as possessing a mentality from which there would emanate the will to participate in the ordering of their own lives"

(Peters 131). Faulkner proves these white notions wrong through Clytie's character and her actions. Peters highlights her accomplishments:

Clytie is a vital participant who attends most of the novel's significant actions that occur during her life time. She not only assists in the physical management of the estate when Sutpen is away, but is also emotionally involved with Judith in maintaining Sutpen's room and waiting for his return. It is Clytie who probably hears with Judith the fratricidal gunshot at the gate when Henry kills their half brother, and she helps to carry Bon's coffin down the stairs to the grave. She witnesses Sutpen's crude and imperious betrothal to Miss Rosa, makes the trip to New Orleans to find Bon's orphaned child, attends Judith's burial, and makes the final and ultimately adamant gesture of the Sutpen line when she sets the house afire to protect family rights, thus destroying herself, Henry and all of the past within reach of the flames. (Peters 132)

Clytie has been essential to upholding the home and family in so many ways. While her voice and actions are not predominant in the novel, her final act is. Faulkner writes her as someone who is primarily seen and not heard, but she has the final say. Clytie represents the South's fear of miscegenation, and the plantation home represents all that is repressed from the era of slavery. A mixed-race character abolishes the grand home and signifies that both the nostalgia for antebellum days and the fear of miscegenation must be eradicated for the South to ever progress. Fire is power. Fire is cleansing. Fire is saving grace. Faulkner chose Clytie to speak this truth. Faulkner was surrounded by people who heralded differing beliefs about race, and he aimed to write those voices in many of his characters. The fear of miscegenation in the South was one belief that southerners had to face in order to progress. Bi-racial characters like Charles Etienne-Saint Valery Bon and presumably bi-racial Joe Christmas are given a unique space to act out their aggressions against the absurdity. However, it is Clytie who is given the

ultimate character of arsonist to not only protect her half-brother, but to eradicate Sutpen's grand design and all that the grand plantation home represents.

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Faulkner's fictional plantation had to be destroyed, and its destruction symbolizes the many grand homes in the South that have come to the same fate, whether by fire or deterioration. Although they were built in the Palladian style after Greek architecture, they do not represent democracy because they were constructed with the use of slavery. Many grand southern homes were destroyed during the Civil War, and afterward there was a nostalgic yearning for the days before the war. However, the past should not be romanticized, and Faulkner writes this truth. His connection to grand homes and their history offers him insight into the past that he aims to resurrect.

To recall, Faulkner's great-grandfather W.C. Falkner built a plantation home in Ripley, and his grandfather J.W.T. Falkner owned the Big Place in Oxford. Faulkner embraced the beauty of southern architecture and refurbished his own home, Rowan Oak. He even preferred to dine at the Mansion restaurant in Oxford. He was surrounded by Palladian architecture in Mississippi, including the Lyceum building at Ole Miss, the Thompson-Chandler House, the Old Shipp Place, the McCarroll Place, and even the plantation home from the Leak Diary. He was also exposed to the gorgeous architecture of the University of Virginia and its neighbor, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello.

While Faulkner admired the southern architecture of the grand home, he used its decay and destruction to expose the absence of grandeur behind its walls. By writing about the decay or utter destruction of the fictional antebellum homes in Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner captures the angst and repression of the South's ideals, and he illustrates that the

region cannot move forward without acknowledging its true history. Repressions of the past will haunt the South until they are revealed, and Faulkner's most glorious example of eradicating the past is by burning down the house.

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