

DISABLED MALE: THE LEGACY OF FAULKNER'S
BENJY IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This study investigates the ways in which William Faulkner draws upon William James and Sigmund Freud's theories of consciousness to create disabled male characters in his novels *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*. Additionally, J.M. Barrie's novel *Peter Pan* is analyzed as a similar study of disabled consciousness to demonstrate Faulkner's adaptation of the eternal boy prototype to the American landscape. This study traces this prototype and related symbols from *Peter Pan* to *Light in August* in order to demonstrate the ways that Faulkner develops characters both to exaggerate the eternal boy and demonstrate the social and psychological problems that stem from the industrialization of the American South. Close readings of passages from these novels demonstrate how Faulkner's characters exhibit mental and physical disabilities, through both stilted consciousness and impotency, to demonstrate disabled progress and masculinity. This study examines the female characters from these novels in juxtaposition to the male characters, arguing that the novels showcase the capability of these women to adapt to modernity. The women embrace sexuality and perform their maternal role as a way to ensure the progression of society and the continuation of families and communities. The principle conclusion is that women represent progress, modernity, and land cultivation in order to signify changing gender roles of an industrialized society, while the men are unable to function as agents of progress. Their disabled consciousness renders male characters unable to adapt to the changing roles regarding work; likewise, they are unable to sexually perform or accept the maternal process as a demonstration of progress. This reading of Faulkner is then applied to Willa Cather's *My Ántonia* as a suggestion for further research.

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Introduction

William Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, published in 1929, opens with Benjy Compson's description of "hitting. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence" (5). Here the reader finds Benjy watching a game of golf but his limited perceptions, due to a mental disability, obscure this scene. Through this narrative Faulkner provides an exceptional interpretation of the "unconscious," as Benjy cannot connect his observations of these actions to the greater concept of a "game." Benjy's conscious thought cannot competently interact with the external world, as he lacks abstract language to communicate his experiences of events and people. His inability to communicate with others disrupts his ability to navigate the world and exist in a social context. Yet Faulkner's choice to start with the scattered, fragmented, and partial impressions of a mentally disabled character creates a doorway to a phenomenon of stream-of-consciousness. This fragmented consciousness opens the novel for interpretation and functions as a way to engage the audience to actively analyze characters and events as modern readers.

In consideration of Benjy's stilted consciousness, this study traces the reoccurrence of disabled masculinity throughout *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and Faulkner's later novel *Light in August* (1932). The consciousness of these characters is evaluated through William James theories on stream-of-consciousness and Sigmund Freud's theories of identity. James and Freud's theories inform Faulkner's characterization and enable one to read Faulkner's disabled male characters as a

deviation from “normal” conscious thought. Through these characters Faulkner communicates the internal organization of experience within a disabled consciousness and depicts the disabled male’s inability to mature into an adult. One is able to deconstruct the limited vision of these characters to uncover their inability to progress with modernity.

The failure to progress is assessed based on the male characters’ inability to adapt to the mechanized society of the industrialized modern world and is based on Ann Wilson’s definition of “modern.” In "Hauntings: Anxiety, Technology, And Gender In Peter Pan" Wilson says, “the ‘modern,’ as the experience of recent times, involves the memory of the past and anticipates a future. Thus the experience of the ‘modern’ is change” (595-96). Historical time and the concept of change is precisely what these disabled male characters are unable to recognize due to their disabled consciousness. Likewise, their inability to accept the changing gender roles in mechanized society is furthered through their disabilities.

The origin of these disabled male characters actually resides in a piece of British literature, J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan*. Pan serves as the archetype for the disabled male upon which it appears Faulkner models his characters. Faulkner borrows the concept of the eternal boy from Barrie but Americanizes Pan as a vision not for escape, but for a civilization in decline. By locating themes from Pan throughout Faulkner's novels –the misuse of modernity, disabled sexual agency, the search for a mother, and the shadow– one is able to trace Barrie’s influence on Faulkner’s as he extends these themes onto an American landscape. Faulkner’s model relies on symbols from *Peter Pan* and advances these symbols and themes through

William James's and Sigmund Freud's theories of identity as a way to showcase a reconfiguration of the decline of the American South. By using themes from Pan to depict a civilization in decline, Faulkner highlights a need to reclaim the land and sets the key figure of "the boy" against fertility symbols. Faulkner's female characters serve as fertility goddesses, and through their ability to adapt to the changes of modernity they are able to reclaim the land and aid in the progress of civilization. As gender roles change, Faulkner depicts female characters as modern-day heroes and vehicles of progress and change.

Benjy's legacy appears throughout Faulkner's work and can be connected to Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*. Benjy reminds readers of Cather's character Marek, but Faulkner emphasizes his importance as a much more centralized character. Faulkner uses this character to progress masculinity studies and advance symbols for the decline of masculinity in modern literature. Masculinity studies extend back to *My Ántonia*, which leads one to consider the ways in which twentieth-century literature ratifies the role of women in the modern world. Faulkner and Cather's works add to a body of work that begins with Barrie and progresses through the twentieth century. The focus on disabled masculinity, as understood through this reading of Faulkner, opens up an avenue to explore this trope further.

I. William James and Adult Consciousness

Changes in depictions of consciousness in the late 1800's enable one to situate the disabled male figure in the history of psychology. Prior to the Modernist period in literature, the Victorians portrayed consciousness as a reflection of the underlying ideologies of a given social structure. In Victorian texts, according to Daniel J. Singal

in *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*, characterization focused on the public personae, as opposed to introspection, and favored convention, moral optimism, and pursued a type of “harmonious perfection” among characters within a text (Singal). However, as the field of psychology began to grow, modernists adopted theories rooted in psychology that focused on personal consciousness. William James’s theories on stream-of-consciousness, published in *The Principle of Psychology*, 1890, became widely accepted among the literary world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are significant to Faulkner’s characterization.

Understanding James’s theories enables one to see how thoughts are conceived within the “personal consciousness.” He says, “My thought belongs with my other thoughts, and your thought with your other thoughts. Whether anywhere in the room there be a mere thought, which is nobody’s thought, we have no means for ascertaining, for we have no experience of its like” (226). In other words, thoughts cannot exist in the consciousness in a string or a line because an individual would then only exist within the present moment and would be unable to access perceptions from the past. James analyzes James Mill’s philosophy of the human mind to support this analysis of consciousness and says, “we never could have any knowledge except that of the present instant... we should be wholly incapable of acquiring experience... Even if our ideas were associated in trains, but only as they are in imagination, we should still be without the capacity of acquiring knowledge” (qtd. in James 606). Therefore, to have a fully functioning consciousness one must be able to access the multitude of memories and experiences in various combinations in order to make

connections between the past, present, and future. Faulkner's characterization responds to these theories of personal consciousness; he creates characters with disabled consciousness as a demonstration of how linear thought is problematic. Able adult consciousness only takes place when one can access the multitude of thoughts and experiences in consideration of all other thoughts and experiences. When one is able to do so he is able to coherently socialize with the external world. However, Faulkner's male characters fail to enact the notion of coherence and socialization in regards to personal consciousness.

For example, in *The Sound and the Fury* all three of the Compson men seem to struggle with their conscious thought -albeit in three different ways. Each male character seems to fixate on a different aspect of temporal consciousness: Benjy's consciousness exists solely in the present, Quentin's in the past, and Jason's in the future. Each has the opportunity to control the narration of his own chapter, and because each of these characters seems to fixate on one time period, the reader is able to glimpse what life would be like if one were not able to access all of the parts of one's consciousness or memory.

Benjy's perspective depicts a solely sensual perception of the world, one without interpretation of or interaction with the external world. His chapter provides snap shots of actions and events without the interruption of a revelatory force or conscious narrator. "Caddy smelled like trees," Benjy tells us over and over again. It becomes clear that he continuously associates Caddy with the smell of trees. However, at no point does he say, "whenever I smell trees I think of Caddy," or, "Caddy reminds me of nature and the smell of trees." He simply says, "Caddy

smelled like trees.” He does not provide any evaluative commentary on his perceptions, so a reader does not know how these perceptions inform Benjy’s other thoughts or memories. In this way Benjy’s mind functions like a child’s mind, and it is Benjy’s disabled consciousness that allows him to remain eternally a boy.

Characters in Benjy’s foreground highlight his stilted cognition. Caddy asks Benjy, “do you remember when Mr Patterson sent you some candy last summer” to which there is no response (13). Instead the narrator says, “There was a fence. The vine was dry, and the wind rattled it” (13). Benjy sees the vine, he feels its dryness, and he hears it rattle, but he does not respond to Caddy’s question and he cannot think of Mr. Patterson in a coherent way. Although Martha Winburn England argues that Benjy has an exceptional memory, this passage contradicts that claim. Instead it seems that Benjy lives in one moment of his life and conveys his sensual perceptions of the world during that “day.” He does not relate this day to other events in the story of the Compson family, but instead leaves it up to the reader to make connections based on the information from ensuing chapters. Through Benjy’s disability the reader is empowered to make the connections on her own and come to understand that Benjy lacks an active engagement to the world, which is a necessary part adult consciousness. In this way, the reader must actively engage with the text and therefore perform the conscious analysis that Benjy is unable to exhibit.

Similarly, Faulkner conveys corporeal descriptions of sound throughout the chapter through the comments Benjy *hears* other characters make. However, like the flash bulb images of what he sees, Benjy does not express a cognitive response or reaction to the events in the plot. He describes his observations in the most basic

terms of human perception. He says, “The trees were buzzing, and the grass” but does not explain why they do so. One can assume there are insects in the trees that would make them buzz; however, the reader is witness only to Benjy’s base discernment. Later he says, “It came out of Quentin’s window and climbed across into the tree. We watched the tree shaking. The shaking went down the tree, then it came out and we watched it go away across the grass. Then we couldn’t see it” (74). The reader understands that someone climbed out of Caddy’s bedroom window but Benjy does not tell the reader that he saw a person climb out of the window and into the tree, that as he climbed down the tree it caused the tree to shake. Instead, Benjy describes the shaking because that is what he sees; lacks the capacity to connect the shaking to the person climbing the tree, and instead exhibits childhood consciousness as he only observes the shaking.

This raw portrayal of human perception is precisely what makes this section so important. Through this technique Faulkner is able to point out what the world would look like if one were unable to connect various perceptions to one another to form memories and interpretations of the external world. Benjy’s consciousness is so disabled that he cannot recall memories or connect ideas within his mind to one another, and he communicates and interacts through other characters. He exists entirely in a single moment because he cannot recall the past and has no notion of the future. According to Cleanth Brooks in *The Yoknapatawpha County*, “The ability to endure is the virtue which Faulkner most stresses in his simpler peasant types,” but Benjy is unable to do so (Brooks 39). He cannot take care of himself due to his limited consciousness and therefore will not be able to endure. Benjy’s restricted

consciousness suggests that one must actively participate in the external world and apply what he learns from nature to be considered an adult, or a man. Although Benjy cannot cognitively associate perceptions with social feelings and consequences, the reader, as a conscious observer, is able to use Benjy's perceptions to access the action from a different perspective. As Winburn says, Benjy's section "establishes the fluid movement between past and present, it sharpens the five senses for the making of transitions by means of sense impressions." (232). By highlighting his disability, the reader is able to sharpen her own senses and analyze the impressions without the intrusion of Benjy's interpretations.

In consideration of time, just as Benjy's virility is limited because he exists completely in the present moment, Quentin demonstrates the limits of a consciousness that exists solely in the *past*. Although his consciousness is not as obviously stilted as Benjy's, Quentin's mind constantly drifts to events from the past. During Quentin's chapter the reader gains access to events taking place at the present moment and episodes from the past, but Quentin never acknowledges the future. He never considers how his impressions from the past and present will inform the progression of his life. His consciousness is disabled in a similar way to Benjy's, insofar as Quentin's conscious thoughts fixate on one aspect of time. At the beginning of his chapter the impressions from the past appear as snip-its, or short interruptions in the flow of events; however, as the chapter moves on the events from the past begin to take control of the narrative and become more prominent than the present action.

Furthermore, the memories of the past leave gaps in the narrative and the events become disjointed and confusing, demonstrating that an isolated view of the past can obstruct one's vision of the present and is therefore problematic. Upon entering the watch shop Quentin asks, "Would you mind telling me if any of those watches in the window are right?" which demonstrates his confusion regarding historical time and his state of his existence (84). Quentin seeks meaning in history and in the ideals of the past; he seeks to uncover a "truth" to the universe but fails to see that "truths" are subject to the forces of modernity and the progression of time. When he leaves the shop he says, "There were about a dozen watches in the window, a dozen different hours and each with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that mine had, without any hands at all. Contradicting one another. I could hear mine, ticking away inside my pocket, even though nobody could see it, even though it could tell nothing if anyone could" (85). The different watches demonstrate that there are different "hours" or different perceptions of what is right, true, or moral, but these truths are a product of their historical "time." However, Quentin still hears his watch or "his time" above all of the others and only reacts to perceptions from his own consciousness, indicating his rejection of progress and change. Quentin positions his personal consciousness in the past, as something distinct from the modern world, which prevents him from maturing and functioning with adult consciousness.

Quentin's watch is a reoccurring theme throughout his chapter. The reader comes to find that the watch belonged first to Quentin's grandfather, then his father, and now him. As much as a watch inherently represents time, history, and progression, it symbolizes the connection between generations of men. Upon giving

it to Quentin, Mr. Compson says, "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it" (76). By giving him the watch, Mr. Compson is attempting to explain to Quentin that one must allow his conscious memories to flow and interact instead of trying to control his thoughts in consideration of the past. Mr. Compson tells Quentin that obsessing over the watch is just the "constant speculation regarding the position of mechanical hands on an arbitrary dial which is a symptom of mind-function. Excrement...like sweating" (77). Through this description Mr. Compson attempts to explain to Quentin that he should not become a slave to "mechanical hands" or obsess over the passing of time because it is a wasted endeavor. Instead he urges Quentin to actively participate in life. Mr. Compson attempts to divert Quentin from fighting the progression of time and the progression of society and points out that Quentin focuses too heavily on the historical ideals of the past. However, Quentin's disabled consciousness prevents him from analyzing the ideals of the past in service of the modern world. Instead Quentin says, "While I was eating I heard a clock strike the hour. But then I suppose it takes at least one hour to lose time in, who has been longer than history getting into the mechanical progression of it" (83). In an attempt to adhere to the ideals of the past Quentin tries to justify this loss of time by making it trivial. He says that history hasn't even caught up with "mechanical progression," so why should he.

Instead of demonstrating a mature reaction to his father's advice, Quentin continues to hold onto his childish notions of reality and remain disconnected from the external world. Just as the watch is broken, Quentin's conscious thought is

broken and he fails to see that the ideals of the past are also fractured. His fixation with the watch highlights his attachment to the “broken” ideals of the past and his futile attempts to relate the ideals of the past to the modern world. Even though images of time are always present throughout his chapter, Quentin fails to see that they are always changing. Time is always contradictory to Quentin’s watch because the external world is different from the world in Quentin’s consciousness. Towards the end of his chapter Quentin says, “Grandfather was always right,” which further demonstrates his adherence to the ideals of the past as truths that need to be upheld (176). The disjointed nature of Quentin’s consciousness is revealed through his obsession with history and the truths of previous generations.

Likewise, an analysis of Jason Compson progresses the concept of disabled consciousness as a handicap of the modern man. In sharp contrast to Quentin, Jason has no concern for history or his family’s legacy. Instead, Jason is obsessed with his own personal social ambitions and therefore ensures the decline of his family, thus preventing the progression of his lineage. As early as Quentin’s section it is clear Mrs. Compson’s favorite child is Jason when the narrative says, “Jason can do no wrong because he is more Bascomb than Compson” (103). This categorization of Jason as a Bascomb sets up the inevitable failure. Because his mother constantly reiterates that Jason is not “Compson,” he does not have conscious access to the past and positions himself as “the other” in relation to his siblings. Jason Compson then fixates on the future and abandons the ideals of the past in favor of personal progression. His fixation with the future forces him to forsake his own family and thus desert any consideration of the past in favor of obsessive materialism. This

obsession, according to Faulkner's philosophical model, is another depiction of disabled masculinity because Jason is completely illogical in his attitude towards money. Although Jason perceives his obsession with money as a path to progress, as Daniel J. Singal in *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*, says, "Faulkner undercuts this posture of autonomy, revealing Jason's claims as mere swagger" (136). Jason believes that by controlling money he can control his own future; however, he lacks consideration of the practical uses of money. He neglects to use money to fulfill the needs of his family, and instead only uses it in consideration of his own ego. This demonstrates Jason's limited perception of reality and his lack of consideration for others. He only performs in relation to perceptions from his personal consciousness and thus functions as a child. Although Jason views himself as a "father figure," it is clear that he is "more like a helpless child" (Singal 136).

Furthermore, Jason's concentration on the monetary value of both people and items prevents him from considering anything as symbolic, romantic, or entertaining, which serves as an extension of Benjy's inability to communicate abstract ideas. As Brooks says, "Jason has repudiated the code of honor. He has adopted for himself a purely practical formula for conduct. Money is what counts." (337). He does not consider the traditional code of conduct, but instead allows his own personal financial gain to define his world. His obsession with money prevents him from experiencing aspects of life that have an inherent value beyond the monetary because his consciousness is fixated on his own financial identity. His personal ambitions function in consideration of the self and his lack of concern for his family or for others demonstrates undeveloped consciousness. Benjy functions in the present to

appease his basic needs, which extends to all of the Compson men as they confine their consciousness to one aspect of temporality in sole consideration of the id. Jason's consciousness exists only in relation to his own future, but he is "utterly self-centered" and "displays the sort of petty spite one might associate with a five-year-old" (Singal 136). His limited perceptions prevent him from developing beyond this self-centered state.

Joe Christmas from *Light in August* also demonstrates a restricted consciousness and functions as an extension of Benjy. Chapter six of *Light in August* begins, "Memory believes before knowing remembers, believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders. Knows remembers believes..." (119). This chapter jumps back in time to the childhood of Christmas, and this cryptic message is reminiscent of Benjy's consciousness and also invites the reader to decode Joe's mind. This entangled explanation of memory invites the reader to engage the text in order to untangle the inner workings of the narration and Christmas's disabled thought processes. Similar to Benjy's narration in *The Sound and the Fury*, Joe's character provides perceptions of images and events, but Joe does not interpret his thoughts or perceptions and does not connect his memories from the past to his present situation. On the train back to the orphanage after being kidnapped the narrator says: "he saw the same hills, the same trees, the same cows, but from another side, another direction" (140). From Joe's limited scope a tree is a tree is a tree, all cows are the same cows, and all hills the same hills. He does not have the cognitive ability to decipher or decode his perceptions but instead seems to log them systematically. He collects perceptions for survival and looks at his environment as a

place to conquer instead of as a place to embrace and adapt to. Like Benjy, Joe functions as a child instead of an adult, as a boy instead of a man.

Correspondingly, Christmas's limited consciousness is portrayed through his relationship with his stepfather, Mr. McEachern. When Mr. McEachern first brings Joe home he says to Joe, "For I will have you learn soon that the two abominations are sloth and idle thinking, the two virtues are work and the fear of God," to which the narrator comments, "[Joe] had neither even worked nor feared God. He knew less about God than about work. He had seen work going on in the person of men with rakes and shovels about the playground six days each week, but God had only occurred on Sunday" (144). This is perhaps the most revealing passage in regards to Joe's disabled consciousness. It appears that Joe sees both "work" and "God" as observable reality and therefore has no conception of God as an intangible "idea." He describes work through actions he has seen men perform when he describes "men with rakes and shovels," and he equates God to Sunday because that is when he is taken to church. He is unable to consider the notion of God in any deeper sense, and instead sees "God" as something that takes place on Sunday. Like Jason, he is unable to understand abstract concepts in meaningful ways. Joe will never have a deeper understanding of the notion of God as an idea or concept, and he will never fear God. The reader watches Joe work hard and adhere to McEachern's work ethic because he can mimic the behavior of other men. However, since he is unable to conceptualize any notion of God or existence beyond the immediate, he is unable to consider the moral implications of his behavior. Therefore, he does not function in consideration of others, which prevents him from developing adult consciousness.

Furthermore, the restricted ways that Joe's mind functions are further elucidated as he sits under a tree reading a magazine just before he kills Joanna. The way he reads is a direct indication that his mind fails to make conscious connections between ideas.

He turned the pages in steady progression, though now and then he would seem to linger upon one page, one line, perhaps one word. He would not look up then. He would not move, apparently arrested and held immobile by a single word which had perhaps not yet impacted, his whole being suspended by the single trivial combination of letters in quiet and sunny space, so that hanging motionless and without physical weight he seemed to watch the slow flowing of time beneath him. (111-12)

The description clearly reflects Joe's conscious mind. His thoughts are "arrested" and "held immobile" by a single word, which shows that, like James's disabled consciousness, he is unable to make the connections between the words on the pages in correspondence with other words and sentences. He is suspended on the current word, like the current emotion or experience, and observes the external world in isolation instead of in relation to other people and other experiences. As the narrative advances and the reader is able to make more sense of Christmas, it is clear that he fails to make sense of himself. As David L. Vanderwerken points out in "Faulkner's Literary Children," "he lacks conscious information on himself" (24). Christmas's own consciousness lacks the ability to perform this type of psychoanalysis, which urges the reader to put the pieces together as they unfold.

Consequently, it appears that many of the characters from Faulkner's fiction suffer from disabled conscious thought and therefore never develop adult consciousness. However, the fractured consciousness of these characters leads one to question what inspired this disabled figure. It appears that all of these characters fail

to mature into adults, which enables the reader to see how the disabled male is an extension of J.M. Barrie's "eternal boy" in *Peter Pan*. Pan is the prototype of the eternal boy, as depicted in the first two pages of *Peter Pan*, where Pan is referred to in the following ways: "exactly like a boy," "little man," "boylike," and "there was never a cockier boy" (25-6). The overt attention paid to labeling him as such urges the interpretation of Pan as the literary prototype of "the boy." Pan says, "I ran away the day I was born... because I heard my father and mother... talking about what I was to be when I became a man... I don't ever want to be a man. I want always to be a little boy and have fun" (27). He wants to remain a boy forever, as he'd rather be a "little boy" and "have fun" than take on adult responsibility and accountability for his own actions. As an extension of Pan, Faulkner's characters do not make the active choice to forever remain boys, but instead portray disabled masculinity as they are unable to mature and develop conscious thought.

To further this notion, disabled masculinity can also be linked to Pan through descriptions of childhood consciousness. In chapter one of *Peter Pan* the "map" of a child's mind is discussed and the narrator says the following:

... [it] is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time.... for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing ... and either these are parts of the island or they are another map showing through, and it is all rather confusing, specially as nothing will stand still (9)

The configuration of the child's mind seems to conform to James's theory, as it is filled with numerous different ideas, reflections, images, time periods, foods, etc. Although Barrie does not attribute this characterization to the psychological theories of the time, it is clear that views on consciousness are beginning to change the ways

characters are developed in literature. In the above passage children have a difficult time navigating ideas within their consciousness in coherent ways. Barrie toys with notions of consciousness and creates the eternal boy, who forever lives in “Never Land” with a limited scope of the world. Faulkner uses this model to develop his male characters and Americanizes Pan as a symbol for the decline of the American South. However, in order to understand how Faulkner progresses the Pan figure, the ways in which disabled consciousness affects socialization must first be detailed. The question of socialization leads to a closer look at James’s theories of consciousness in connection to Sigmund Freud, as accessed by Faulkner.

II. Socialization: James, Freud, and Faulkner

In order to connect conscious thought to notions of socialization and progression, one can refer to James’s theories of consciousness and his discussion of how personal consciousness relates to concepts of the external world. According to James, one needs to categorize his own thoughts, feelings, and experiences into meaningful ideas to adeptly interact with the external world and endure as a social being. Therefore, the ability to recollect thoughts within the consciousness and make sense of one’s own behavior in relation to the external world signifies adult consciousness. As James says, “all Reasoning depends on the ability of the mind to break up the totality of the phenomenon reasoned about, into parts, and to pick out from among these the particular ones which, in the given emergency, may lead to the proper conclusion” (287). Therefore, one must have the ability to pick out patterns of thoughts or behaviors that correspond with the thoughts and behaviors of others in

order to lead to a “proper conclusion.” However, Faulkner’s characters are unable to consider the consciousness of others, which enables them to remain children forever.

In connection to James, Sigmund Freud was also highly regarded at this time, and was considered at the forefront of child psychology. Freud’s theories on the development of identity work in conjunction to James’s notions of consciousness and can also be examined in relation to Faulkner’s characterization. According to Singal, modernists relied on the psychological theories of Freud in order to construct characters. Singal says, “Freud went much further in restoring a modicum of coherence to the psyche and in setting the terms of how selfhood would be understood in the Modernist era when he assigned the ego the task of organizing the assorted fragments of identity acquired over the years into a more or less consolidated persona” (14-15). To clarify, Freud suggests that personality develops as a process of organizing experiences as a collective, and is comprised of the id, ego, and superego. Freud claims that the “id” is present from one’s birth and is responsible for “pleasure seeking” and for finding ways to fulfill one’s own needs and desires. The ego, on the other hand, mediates the id and organizes the multitude of perceptions and experiences acquired in order to formulate the personality. Additionally, the superego ensures that the desires of the id can be expressed and fulfilled in ways that are acceptable to the external world. This concept of identity was utilized by modernists and can be observed in Faulkner’s characters. Faulkner constructs characters unable to properly socialize with the external world, which demonstrates a disabled identity. Like Pan, Faulkner’s characters are unable to develop beyond consideration of the id, which renders them disabled and demonstrates their inability to escape childhood.

The connection between masculinity studies and theories of personality development are demonstrated in *Peter Pan*. In the novel, the mind of a child is an island and subsequently, the ideas within the mind -or in relation to this island- are isolated and do not interact with the ideas of others. The isolation of his thoughts sets Pan apart from the adult world and permits him to remain “a boy” forever, which enforces the notion that Pan is the prototype for the disabled male. Pan never matures into an adult and his consciousness never advances to coherently function or suitably face the modern world. Pan’s consciousness only functions in consideration of the self, and therefore he eternally remains a selfish boy unable to consider the thoughts and feelings of others. In “The Never Land of ID: Barrie, Pan, and Freud,” Michael Egan provides a Freudian interpretation of *Peter Pan* that supports this claim. He suggests that *Peter Pan* invites the reader to investigate the unconscious universe of Pan. Egan says the following about Barrie:

What he seems to have in mind is something close to Freud's notion of the selfishly amoral child, a human whose superego is still in formation and thus whose conscience is still relatively weak. To be heartless, he says, is to be ‘entirely selfish.’ It is to be what children are, ‘the most heartless things in the world,’ creatures who abuse love and who take emotional security for granted. (Egan 41)

It is clear that Pan does not consciously learn from his experiences or consider the welfare of others, which prevents him from ever maturing into a man.

Although, as Egan says, “Barrie emphasizes that each new generation of children must undertake the pilgrimage afresh, an essential condition for maturity,” Pan embodies the eternal boy who never realizes the pilgrimage into adulthood (Egan 41). Moreover, according to Egan, Pan’s eternal boyhood points to Barrie’s main point, which is “although we may all journey to our idiosyncratic Neverlands at night,

the ‘hostile forces’ of the superego make it a thoroughly difficult undertaking. This is why we can usually only ‘break through’ when asleep or when, as in the case of a parapraxis, the superego is momentarily off guard” (Egan 44). He goes on to say that according to Freud, adult consciousness can only journey to its “Never Land” when asleep, because the volition of consciousness is overpowering and resists this type of escape. Peter, however, symbolizes the opposite of this normative structure, as he is constantly in a state of “escape,” unable to develop conscious thought, memories, or considerations of the external world. As much as a normal adult consciousness dominates the childhood characteristic of escapism, Peter’s escapism prevents a fully functioning consciousness and allows for the eternal boy. By extension, Faulkner’s characters do not develop identities that are able to properly interact with the external world; however, instead of functioning as an escape from society these characters symbolize the stagnant decline of society.

It is not simply because Faulkner’s characters are disabled or fixate on certain types of perceptions, but because they do not consider the conscious thoughts of others that they are unable to socialize and therefore progress. They are all self-involved and do not know how to perform as part of a community. This lack of consideration for others can be linked to the actions of the Compson family, and the fact that they sell a plot of family land that was Benjy’s birthright in order to send Quentin to college. The sale of Benjy’s land serves as the beginning of the Compson family’s decline. The family rejects Benjy’s need to remain connected to the landscape in order to aid in Quentin’s social progress. By selling Benjy’s land, the Compsons favor individual needs over those of the community or family. The

priority of individual needs can be traced throughout Quentin's chapter as he communicates the story of Caddy's loss of virginity in relation to himself and how it affects him. Quentin fails to consider her needs as a woman and feels as though Caddy's actions are a direct insult to him. Additionally, he gives her the label of "sister" throughout his chapter, indicating that he only sees Caddy through her relationship to his own identity, and he fails to see her as a woman with her own consciousness and ambitions. Likewise, whenever Quentin's roommate Shreve talks about girls in a derogatory way, Quentin says, "Did you ever have a sister," indicating that he sees not just Caddy, but all women in the role of sister and in relation to himself. Quentin only does not realize "proper conclusions" or patterns of behavior that exist to create social beings. Instead, he commits suicide to end his own personal suffering, but does not consider how his suicide will affect his family. He sees Caddy's loss of innocence as the family tragedy and therefore has to make it his own and demonstrate how that tragedy affects him. Consequently, Quentin jumps into the river and allows the family tragedy to become his own personal tragedy.

Likewise, Jason sees Caddy's loss of innocence in relation to himself and also displays egoism throughout his chapter. Jason performs in relation to selfish materialism and personal ambition at the cost of his family's wellbeing. According to Singal, "[Jason] comes to believe himself the victim of an immense conspiracy whose sole purpose is to persecute him" (134). He sees Caddy and Young Quentin's sexuality as a direct threat to his own reputation and "everyone, it seems, is responsible for what has befallen him – his ancestors, Caddy, his niece, his servants, his employer, and the 'dam eastern jews' on Wall Street who are trying to steal his

money” (Singal 134). He is unable to see the world past the consideration of the “id,” and he thinks, “the universe itself takes special delight in harassing him” (Singal 134). He does not take personal responsibility for his position or his actions, but instead acts as a victim. Singal sees this consideration of self as a manifestation of “paranoia,” and claims that Jason suffers from a psychotic disorder. It appears that whatever his “clinical diagnosis,” Jason clearly exhibits a disabled consciousness that only functions in consideration of the self.

This lack of consideration for others is also exhibited in *Light in August*. The narrator says of Alice, “He didn’t know that she was crying because he did not know that grown people cried, and by the time he learned that, memory had forgotten her” (136). Christmas’s conscious memories cannot keep up with the things he “learns” or “knows,” and also precludes him from developing human compassion. Joe Christmas does not know that “grown” people cry, indicating that he does not perceive people as children and adults, but grown and un-grown, presumably. Moreover, he does not feel sympathy or emotion towards Alice but instead logs her behavior by its performance instead of its meaning. It appears that Joe stores practical information in regards to survival but does not store impassioned memories regarding human emotion or experience; therefore, he does not function as an adult or even as a human, but as an animal with base desires and needs. The reader watches Joe work very systematically as an adult. He seeks food and shelter but often fails to find a community. The problem is that Joe has lived a solitary life and has no identity; therefore, he does not know how to function within a group or as part of a community. Joe’s attention to self and to basic desires causes him to function as a “lone wolf,” and he does things to

satisfy his own needs and does not perform for the good of a community or for others. His attention to self is reminiscent of Jason Compson who also only performs to better his own situation.

The reader sees this animalistic behavior throughout *Light in August*. When Joe is kidnapped by a strange man and then collected by the police the narrator says, “The policeman gave him food. It was bread, with ham between, though it did not come out of a scrap of newspaper. He noticed that, but he said nothing, perhaps thought nothing” (140). The simplicity of this description draws attention to the details that Joe notices. The word “scrap” lends the interpretation that he sees this meal much like one imagines a dog or another animal would, as “bread, with ham between.” He does not say “a ham sandwich,” but instead provides the simplistic break down of precisely what it is. Similarly he does not mark the policeman’s kindness or feel happy to be in the company of someone who is caring for him, but instead marks the sensual perceptions of the experience in the same manner as Benjy would.

Later, the parallel between Joe and a dog highlights the difference between him and able, conscious men. Mrs. McEachern brings food to Joe after he is punished, and Joe, unable to accept her kindness and compassion, dumps it in the corner of the room. After she leaves, however, “he rose from the bed and went and knelt in the corner as he had not knelt on the rug, and above the outraged food kneeling, with his hands ate, like a savage, like a dog” (155). This passage confronts the previous idea that he is unable to kneel for God because he cannot understand the notion of God, while he is able to kneel for the food because he understands basic

human needs. He eats, sleeps, and works, but he does not pray, love, sympathize, or relate.

The extension of Benjy's disability applied to the limited scope of Christmas's consciousness invites the reader to witness what man would be capable of without access to intellectual thoughts such as compassion, love, community, religion, family, etc. Since Christmas is unable to equate the violence and loss from his past to his current feelings of longing and isolation, he acts as a hedonist and does things only for immediate pleasure, without consideration of consequence or the effect his actions will have on others. Christmas is unable to break perceptions apart and put ideas together and all of his actions are performed within consideration of the "id." He is incapable of developing deeper thoughts or emotions because he is unable to analyze greater concepts of humanity in relation to his adult volitions. Before he murders Joanna he says, "What in the hell is the matter with me?" (118). It is clear that he does not know why he wants to murder her or what makes him prone to violence because he cannot recollect the violence of his childhood and memories within his consciousness.

What is significant about disabled consciousness is what it says about the modern man. As Franco Moretti points out in *The Way of the World*, heroes such as Achilles, Hector, and Ulysses are mature men and they demonstrate how youth, "is both a necessary and sufficient definition of these heroes," and what's more, "youth ... becomes for our modern culture the age which holds the 'meaning of life'" (4). So, if youth serves as a symbol of one's meaning in the future and one's ability to aid in progress, then it is clear why Faulkner's characters are so tragic. If heroes of the

past were able to connect their childhood experiences to the progression of the modern world in order to facilitate meaning, Faulkner uses disabled consciousness to create modern male characters who deviate from this model. He advances the eternal boy to demonstrate the ways in which men become not just immature, but disabled and unable to conceive of a future that extends beyond themselves and onto a community of “others.” The characters do not consider the modern world in association with their personal consciousness, and therefore are incapable of performing as heroes. Without the ability to see time and experience beyond individual consciousness, these men contribute to a decline of civilization. Instead of creating heroes who demonstrate idealized behavior, consciousness, and conceptions of modernity, Faulkner’s disabled men demonstrate how egoism and individual social ambition immobilizes the future of society.

In addition to disabled socialization as a function of disabled consciousness, Faulkner also borrows other themes from *Peter Pan* to advance the study of disabled masculinity. The concept of the eternal boy in *Peter Pan* informs Faulkner’s disabled masculinity and can be linked to the social and psychological problems that stem from the industrialization of the modern world. Moreover, the juxtaposition of boyhood in relation to fertility symbols, immobilized male sexuality, and the mimicry of the shadow as a symbol for inferiority all stem from *Peter Pan* and inform Faulkner’s characterization of the disabled male. Faulkner utilizes these themes from *Pan* and advances the disabled male as a character “type” to portray the decline of civilization. Unlike *Pan*, who escapes to and reigns over Never Land, Faulkner’s male characters exist as part of the fallen American landscape and resist development

and modernity. However, they fail to reclaim their land and aid in the progression of the modern world.

III. Industrialization and Gender Roles

Faulkner's model relies on symbols from *Peter Pan* and advances these symbols and themes through James and Freud's theories of identity as a way to showcase the decline of the American South. Furthermore, this decline can be attributed to man's inability to adapt to the drastic changes taking place on the American landscape. Among these changes comes a shift in gender roles, as first observed in *Peter Pan*; and as industrialization spreads to American soil it is possible to trace the evolution of this process through Faulkner's characters.

As Ann Wilson suggests in her study of *Peter Pan*, "As industrial technologies evolve, they effect radical change, which generates anxiety, particularly for the middle class, which located between the upper and working classes, is in a site of negotiation and inherent instability" (596). Just as "the eternal boy" in *Pan* performs as a response to the anxiety generated by industrial change in England, so do Faulkner's disabled characters respond to the threat of modernity on the American South. In regards to industrialized technologies Wilson says, "because they change the terms of work, they inevitably have an impact on the relation of workers to their labour and, hence, on the identities of workers, particularly in terms of redefining class and gender" (129). In other words, industrialization redefines work and therefore identities and gender, which is precisely what Faulkner's characters showcase. Although men once held the dominant position in the workforce,

industrialization is changing that role. Therefore, these characters are displaced and unable to adapt to these changes, as made clear by their disabled consciousness.

This theme is communicated in Barrie's novel since nostalgia for the past and a desire to "return to an imagined past of stability that, if ever existed, is impossible to recuperate" (Egan 24). Nostalgia for the past is demonstrated through the comparison of the Darling household to Peter's Never Land. The Darling household symbolizes the emerging middle class, according to Wilson, and therefore demonstrates the acceptance of modernization. However, Pan's desire to remain outside this world expresses his rejection of progress in favor of stasis. He retreats to "Never Land" in an attempt to remain immune to progress, but it is clear that Peter's ideal is a *land* that can *never* exist. Problematically, Pan tries to preserve the world of childhood just as Quentin glorifies the past as something superior, that he hopes to restore and preserve. However, both Pan and Quentin fail to mature into men because they reject progress. As Wilson says, "the 'modern,' as the experience of recent times, involves the memory of the past and anticipates a future. Thus the experience of the 'modern' is change" (595-96). However, these characters are unable to consciously access all temporal aspects of existence; therefore, they fail to properly experience the changing world and fail to progress with modernity.

For instance, although Quentin resists change because he, like Pan, fears adulthood, he furthers the disabled male by denying the changing gender roles in the modern world. The fact that the Compson family sells Benjy's land in order to send Quentin to college demonstrates the removal of men from the land. Although land was once the most valuable asset to a family in the South, it has become a commodity

that can be sold to provide a pathway for Quentin to enter the material world and pursue social ambitions. In a society no longer concerned with pastoral ideals, the industrialization of America makes it necessary for Quentin to go to college in order to ensure a future. However, Quentin rejects the university lifestyle and the necessity of adapting to the shifting gender roles. His desire to adhere to tradition is problematic because it is no longer necessary for Quentin to work the land; therefore, he must find a new role for himself in order to progress with the modern world. However, Quentin discards modernity and rejects the future, which renders him disabled and leads directly to his suicide. Therefore Quentin's suicide symbolizes the decline of the pastoral landscape, and showcases the need for men to adopt new roles in society in order to progress.

Although Quentin desires to stop time demonstrates his rejection of progress, "time keeps ticking on" (SF 80). By breaking his grandfather's watch, Quentin rejects the machine and modernity, but "time ticks on" all around him serving as a constant reminder of the presence of industrialization. Again, Quentin recalls the wisdom he receives from his father when he relates the following memory: "Father said clocks slay time. He said time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life" (85). Mr. Compson acknowledges the machine but advises Quentin to ignore using a machine to quantify life. As long as Quentin continues to value time as a commodity, then time is dead because every second of time that is clicked away becomes part of the past and becomes a missed opportunity to experience life. Quentin needs to accept the abstract aspect of time as an experience of the present moment of change, and stop measuring time as

something material. It is Quentin's desire to preserve time and to preserve childhood innocence that kills its inherent value as a transient force of progress. Moreover, he wants to quantify every experience into something tangible, just as he wants to quantify time as something tangible. What Mr. Compson attempts to explain is that everything cannot be measured and preserved, and that Quentin must learn to appreciate the beauty that lies in knowing that nothing can be preserved. Through Quentin's attempts to defy the materialism of the modern world he is unable to see that his desire to preserve and possess the intangible is a materialistic desire. Hints of Quentin's materialism demonstrate his inability to fight progression. No matter how much resistance he displays, the modern world is already influencing him.

Likewise, Jason's obsessive relationship with technology and progress is also debilitating. Jason's obsession with saving money to preserve it for the future is just as insane as Quentin's hope to preserve ideals from the past. In addition, Jason's materialistic desire to allow technology and materialism to define him within the community leads to his failure. Jason embraces the future without enough respect for the past, and therefore he is unable to use the past to service progress. The most obvious way that Jason is disabled by modernity is seen through his car. Even though the fumes from his car make him physically ill, he still drives it around town for all to see. He is so blinded by materialism that he believes the possession of the car will change the way that the community views his family. He believes that if people see him in the car they will think he is successful and therefore respect him more.

However, the ways in which he uses this car utterly controverts this ideal. He spends much of his chapter chasing young Quentin around in his car in the attempt to

preserve his own reputation. He does not want people in town to see her skipping school and fraternizing with someone from the minstrel show. However, young Quentin successfully uses modernism to escape Jason. Her car succeeds where his fails, she outsmarts him by using his own car against him when she removes his tires, and their chase throughout town puts the family's quarrel on display for the entire town to witness. Through the use of modernity Young Quentin is able to make a fool out of Jason.

His final debasement comes when he has to pay a "negro" to drive him and his car back to Jefferson. Now the negro gets to drive around town in Jason's car and can elevate his own status by using Jason's technology. If, as Jason believes, the car creates an elevated perception of him, then it is quite easy to see there is no inherent value in his character. Just as the car can elevate the way others perceive him, it can also do the same for anyone else. Young Quentin is able to escape Jason through the successful use of technology, while Jason is forced into physical illness and public embarrassment because of his inability to use technology properly. What he fails to realize is a consideration of his family's heritage and his family's legacy. Jason does not consider memories of the past in connection to his anticipation of the future, which hinders progress.

Similar to Quentin, Joe Christmas also rejects technology and rejects progress. Throughout *Light in August* the only positive quality that Christmas displays is a strong work ethic. However, as discussed earlier, he is only able to perform his role in relation to the physical actions that are observable through the senses. Joe's reliance on his sensual perceptions can be seen throughout the novel, as there are

several accounts where Joe “performs” certain behaviors based on his observations of others. He does not think for himself, but instead mimics the actions of others. For this reason, he demonstrates a failure to progress because he does not have the ability to connect ideas to discover new ways to look at the world. When in town with Mr. McEachern the narrator says, “Joe ate fast because McEachern was eating fast” (174). When he begins to hang out at the Max’s with Bobbi it says, “he could cock his hat as they did; during the evenings behind the drawn shades of the dining room at Max’s he cocked it so and spoke of the waitress to the others, even in her presence, in his loud, drunken, despairing young voice, calling her his whore” (199). He behaves however those around him are behaving, and he is out late drinking because they are drinking. As Vanderwerken says, “Joe discovers evil, the corruption of the urban underworld reaching into the pastoral countryside,” but he does not find ways to progress within the urban underworld (39). Moreover, this underworld rejects Christmas when Max beats him and leaves him to fend for himself. Left to his own resources, “Joe undergoes no more development” and according to Robert Gibb, as understood in *Faulkner’s Literary Children*, Joe’s inability to connect experiences from his past onto a projection of his future, “makes the present an indistinguishable and meaningless dream” and suggests “there is to be no progression or development in Joe.... All is meaningless repetition” (39). This repetition renders him unable to find a new role in the changing world. He performs as yet another disabled male aiding in the decline of civilization.

Through this analysis it appears that these males fail to fulfill the requirements of Wilson’s characterization of modernity, as the experience of recent times in

relation to a memory of the past and anticipation of a future. Wilson's definition outlines modernity as change, and industrialization is changing gender roles in society; however, the disabled male is unable to adapt to these changes due to his limited consciousness. As demonstrated through Quentin, Jason, and Joe Christmas, the inability to properly use technology and the inability to discover the new role of men in society prevents these men from reclaiming the land and progressing with modernity. Because men are unable to adapt to the changing gender roles in industrialized society one begins to consider the ways in which women react to the industrialized world. Through an analysis of Faulkner's depiction of female characters it is clear that they play a much more significant role in progression. Faulkner's women reclaim the land and adhere to Wilson's definition of modernity. The female characters in these novels are able to remain connected to the past through nature, experience the present by living passionately and freely while also utilizing technology in useful ways, and anticipate the future by embracing their maternal roles to function as agents of fertility, which ensures the existence of future generations.

IV. Fertility Goddesses

Since men are unable to adapt to gender roles in modern society, it is important to turn to the portrayal of women in these novels in order to uncover their significance in reclaiming the land. In direct comparison to these disabled male characters, throughout Faulkner's novels there are female fertility symbols who aid in the progress of civilization. Unlike the disabled male figures, Faulkner's women are able to experience recent times in relation to the past, while also actively anticipating

a future. The ability to adapt to progress is achieved through the female connection to fertility and family. The women in these novels remain connected to the past through their connection with nature; the female characters are always described in relation to nature throughout these works. Moreover, they experience the present through their passionate and ambitious attitudes towards life and their active relationships to the external world. Finally, they anticipate a future in regards to their maternal role and inherent fertility. These women all embrace their sexuality and perform their maternal role as a way to ensure the progression of society and the continuation of families and communities. It is through these traits that women represent progress, modernity, and reclaim the land in consideration of the changing gender roles of an industrialized society.

This model can again be analyzed in relation to *Peter Pan*, this time through the role of Wendy. As much as Peter and the other lost boys travel to Never Land to escape progress, Wendy never strays far from her maternal role, whether in the Darling household or in Never Land. Therefore, the relationship between Peter and Wendy allows Faulkner's theme of the fertility goddess to take shape. Wendy performs as the mother to every male character in *Peter Pan*, including her own Father, and therefore serves as the fertility goddess and symbol for progress. Wendy is portrayed as "mature" from the start of the novel, and is always taking care of the other characters. At the beginning of the novel the narrator says, "All children, except one, grow up. They soon know that they will grow up, and the way Wendy knew was this: One day when she was two years old she was playing in a garden, and she plucked another flower and ran with it to her mother" (Barrie 5). Through this

passage one can observe Wendy's realization and acceptance of her maternal role in consideration of nature and progress. Upon plucking the flower, her mother comments, "Oh, why can't you remain like this for ever!" which is the catalyst for Wendy's realization that childhood is a temporary state. However, this passage demonstrates that Wendy first realizes her role as an adult while sitting in a "garden," connected to nature. Wendy's connection to nature is in direct opposition to the disabled males, since their separation from the garden is what is most problematic. Moreover, Wendy realizes her adult role from a very young age, indicating that she accepts the transitions of maturation and both anticipates and welcomes change as a necessary aspect of life and of progress. Additionally, she remains connected to the past because she brings the flower to her mother, demonstrating her connection to and acknowledgement of her heritage.

Moreover, even in "play" Wendy takes on a motherly role. In the initial play scene in the nursery Wendy, John and Michael are playing the roles of Mr. and Mrs. Darling on the day of Wendy's birth, and Wendy "plays" the pregnant Mrs. Darling. The implications of this scene are immense, as her role as "child bearer" and as "mother" are discernable even from the perspective of the children. As much as the roles of John and Michael are still yet undetermined, it is clear that Wendy's role is that of mother. Additionally, she assumes a motherly role when she "got out her housewife, and sewed the shadow on to Peter's foot" (25). She recommends having "tea first" before having an adventure, and when Peter says, "What we need is just a nice motherly person" Wendy exclaims, "you see I feel that is exactly what I am"

(65). Her role as caretaker and mother prevails in a world where boys eternally remain boys.

In addition, Wendy displays maternal traits in relation to her own father. In the opening chapter Mr. Darling behaves like a child when attempting to take his medicine. He tells Michael to “be a man” and take the medicine; however, the reader comes to find that Mr. Darling despises his own medicine and has hidden it to avoid consuming it. Now, when confronted with the task of proving to his son what it means to “be a man” one can see that not even Mr. Darling is able to do so. He argues like a child and even proclaims, “it isn’t fair,” as a child would, as he banters back and forth with his young son. Only Wendy is able to offer an adult resolution to resolve the matter, which Mr. Darling rebels against and his children look at him “as if they did not admire him” (20). Not even Mr. Darling, an accomplished businessman and a father, can function without assistance from the women in his household. It is clear that women are needed to support the male ego. What’s more, Wendy seems to fulfill this role inherently, as Wendy performs as a “mother” from a very early age.

To further this idea, in *The Sound and the Fury* Caddy Compson is introduced in a similar manner to the way in which Barrie introduces Wendy. In his chapter Benjy says, “Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see. We stooped over and crossed the garden, where the flowers rasped and rattled against us” (5). Through this description the reader is immediately aware that Caddy is strong and in control of the situation, which draws attention to her daring and

ambitious attitude. Moreover, her connection to “the garden” and impact on the garden is immediately accessible, as the flowers rasp and rattle when in contact with her. Caddy’s constant connection to nature is apparent here and in descriptions that equate Caddy to nature throughout the novel. Caddy is described in relation to nature and is almost always in the tree or is related to trees. Accordingly, Quentin, Jason, and Benjy sit at the bottom of the tree staring up at Caddy’s soiled pants as she climbs the tree to view the events taking place surrounding Damundy’s death. As Andre Bleikasten says in *The Ink of Melancholy*, Caddy’s position in the tree is “an image of childhood caught on the brink of forbidden knowledge – evil, sex, death” (48).

Caddy’s desire to progress corresponds to the definition of the modern and is arguably the most significant demonstration of the female connection to nature. The tree symbolizes life and the interconnectedness of nature to the past, present, and future -the roots to the earth and history, the leaves of old and new life, and the tree’s continued growth- and symbolizes the connection between the elements of modernity. Again, just as the men in the novel struggle to find their place outside of the garden, Caddy finds her place within the garden. She serves as an active participant in life, looking on to the forbidden knowledge of life and death, while the Compson boys sit below waiting. Caddy is of the tree, exists within the tree, and will aid in the survival of the tree. This can be seen in Benjy’s chapter where Caddy smells, tastes, looks like, and is the tree. Likewise, Caddy’s desire to know, to see, and to look back, signifies her connection with the past in consideration of the future and symbolizes the maternal form of progress.

Moreover, the day Caddy exposes her sexuality is simultaneously the day that Damundy dies, which signifies the natural female relationship to the human condition and the maternal connection between histories. Even though Damundy dies, Caddy's sexuality confirms that she will allow the family to endure and she will allow civilization to endure since she will one day bear children. Caddy's sexuality is confirmed as the reader comes to find that Caddy's is pregnant. Although her brothers view her pregnancy as a tragedy, her pregnancy is precisely what enables Caddy to reclaim the land and ensure a future. Caddy embraces her maternal role and is not afraid of the social implications of her sexuality. The success of her fertility is demonstrated in her daughter Quentin, who also embraces her sexuality and demonstrates a passion for life, while remaining connected to her past through her desire to remain connected to her mother.

Similarly, as opposed to Jason's self-serving obsession with money, Caddy only discusses money in relation to the preservation of her family and her daughter. Caddy is willing to pay any cost to support her daughter and to do right by her, which allows young Quentin to thrive and embrace her sexuality and fertility. When Jason accuses Quentin of slipping around with men she says, "I dont slip around, I dare anybody to know everything I do" (189). Quentin is comfortable with her sexuality and does not care about appearances. She follows her natural instinct and endures as a sexual being of passion and progression. Additionally, she employs technology as a way to advance her position in society and evade Jason's control. Where Jason fails to properly utilize his car as a vehicle of progress, Quentin succeeds. Moreover, she

is able to reclaim the money that is rightfully hers and thus disables Jason's materialism while simultaneously aiding in her own progress.

The powerful nature of these female characters is also displayed in *Light in August*. Lena Grove, like Wendy and Caddy, is also introduced in relation to nature and manages to endure and triumph despite her hardships. The first lines of the novel say, "Sitting beside the road, watching the wagon mount the hill toward her, Lena thinks, 'I have come from Alabama: a fur piece. All the way from Alabama a-walking'" (3). Not only does Lena watch the machine conquer nature, literally, as the wagon "mounts" the hill, but she also does not allow this to hinder her progress as she travels barefoot across the country, all the way from Alabama "a-walking." Her bare feet are in constant connection with the land, allowing her to remain connected to nature. However, like young Quentin, she uses technology when it is available to advance her position and she hitches rides to ease her journey. Neither woman solely relies on the tools of the modern world to progress like Jason, but instead uses these tools in combination with her natural instinct and connection to nature.

Moreover, Lena's consciousness functions normally in the sense that she is able to interact with the world, fit into social situations, and make conscious and rational decisions. The connections between the thoughts in her mind and the external world co-exist, and wherever she is she establishes her "open, friendly, accepting, cooperative nature, affirming community wherever she travels ... the earth is Lena's home" (Vaderwerken 23). She is content and happy in every situation she encounters and is always able to consciously act and react in relation to the external world. No matter where she goes the community takes care of her. She receives rides from

strangers, money from their wives, food, shelter, and protection, which demonstrates her ability to experience the present.

Moreover, the destruction that industrialization poses for men, in opposition to the empowerment it poses for women, is clearly demonstrated in Lena's chapter when the narrator says, "All the men in the village worked in the mill or for it... and in seven years more it would destroy all the timber within its reach... and most of the men who ran it and existed because of and for it would be loaded onto freight cars and moved away" (4). Lena's brother is one of the men who works in this mill; therefore, he will be "moved away" with the rest of the men and forced to discover a new role in the modern world, unlike Lena, who is able to walk the earth physically displaying her natural role and utilizing the machine when necessary. What matters most is that Lena continues to exist as a social agent; she gives birth, symbolizing her ability to aid in the progress of society, whereas Joe's castration at the end of the novels demonstrates his inability to do so. It is clear that not only is Faulkner utilizing James's and Freud's theories of consciousness and identity, but that he is reinforcing a notion of community and progress. The inability of the male characters to integrate into any type of community and to form any type of identity is negatively portrayed, and is juxtaposed to the positive quality of female fertility, which ensures the survival of the community and reinforces this interpretation.

V. Sexual Agency

While the male characters under examination are unable to adapt to the industrialized world and properly use technology due to their disabled consciousness,

they also they exhibit disabled sexual agency. Because these disabled male characters are unable to properly use the tools of the modern world, likewise they are unable to use their own bodies as tools for progress. In other words, because they remain boys eternally, these men are unable to sexually perform and procreate and therefore are unable to aid in the progression of civilization.

Looking again to *Peter Pan*, Peter does not seek Wendy for a romantic relationship, but instead desires her maternal care. Peter is completely oblivious to sexuality, as seen through his rejection of Wendy's ardent attempts to receive a kiss, whereas Wendy's desire to mature and obtain a sexual relationship with a man is made clear. Peter asks Wendy to tell stories to the lost boys and tuck them in at night, but whenever she attempts to engage in a sexual relationship with Peter she is rejected or ignored. Wilson suggests that the interaction between Wendy and Peter -regarding the kiss- is a code of middle-class femininity and she argues that Peter hopes to suppress Wendy's sexual agency. Wilson says, "her role is to make herself passively available, despite her own desires" (137). However, it is quite obvious that Wendy is the aggressor and in no way represses her sexuality – instead it is quite the contrary. Despite Wendy's attempts to romantically kiss Peter, the lost boys' position Wendy as their mother and force her into a role that suggests a state after virginity, an advanced sexual agency. Because Wendy is assigned the role of "mother," the lost boys are assigned the role of her children, which prevents them from interacting with her sexually. It is obvious that Peter seeks Wendy out and relies on her, as do the rest of the lost boys, to assist in his survival. Peter's failure to see Wendy as a sexual figure highlights his stilted masculinity.

To further this notion, none of Faulkner's men are able to engage in successful sexual relationships with women. For example, because Benjy is an idiot and apparently exposed his penis in an inappropriate way, he was castrated in order to prevent further problems. Detailed explanation is unnecessary, as it is clear that Benjy is unable to procreate with a woman and unable to pass on the family name. He does, however, acknowledge sexuality as he references Caddy's "muddy bottoms of her drawers," just as the other Compson boys do. Benjy's acknowledgement of Caddy's muddy drawers demonstrates his obsession with Caddy's loss of innocence and an unhealthy understanding of female sexuality. The allusion to her muddy shorts demonstrates that even though Benjy is incapable of cognitive thought, he still has a sense of "loss" in relation to Caddy's innocence, which corresponds to the loss of the Compson family's masculinity.

Quentin also struggles to accept female sexuality and fails to realize his own sexual agency. He is a virgin and commits suicide before ever engaging in sexual relations with a woman. Therefore like Benjy, he will also remain eternally sterile. He is obsessed with the moment when Caddy reaches maturity and likewise when she loses her virginity, and views it as a "dirty" act or something to be punished. In Quentin's chapter he recalls a conversation between himself and his father. He says, "In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it. Because it means less to women, Father said. He said it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it's like death: only a state in which the others are left..."(78). It is obvious that Caddy has matured beyond Quentin and he envies her prurient instinct. Caddy embraces her maternal role, which Quentin cannot come to terms

with, while it appears Mr. Compson accepts Caddy's natural role. The narrative goes on to say, "Why couldn't it have been me and not her who is unvirgin and he said, That's why that's sad too; nothing is even worth the changing of it, and Shreve said if he's got better sense than to chase after the little dirty sluts and I said Did you ever have a sister? Did you? Did you?" (78) When Quentin questions why it couldn't have been himself, Mr. Compson says, "That's why that's sad too" as if he knows that Quentin will never lose his virginity – will never become a man. Even Shreve, who makes a comment about "little dirty sluts," upsets Quentin, because Quentin associates all women with the notion of being a "sister." Quentin cannot view women as sexual beings and therefore cannot confront his own sexual identity in relation to them.

Quentin's rejection of female sexual agency can be observed again when Quentin recalls another conversation with his father. Mr. Compson says, "Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting you not Caddy and I said That's just words and he said So is virginity and I said you don't know. You can't know and he said Yes. On the instant when we come to realise that tragedy is second-hand" (116). Mr. Compson's advice reinforces the idea that virginity is a fleeting state and that its absence is what makes its existence possible –makes progress possible. This analysis of Caddy corresponds to the analysis of Wendy because the lost boys assume her loss of virginity when they place her in the role of mother. The lost boys do not seem to understand female sexual agency but they can sense the necessity of shifting roles in society. Even though they do not want to grow up, they seek out a "grown up" to assist them in survival.

Therefore, just like the lost boys, Quentin struggles to overcome his disability and continues to perceive events from the past with nostalgia. Quentin places far too much importance on the *loss* of Caddy's virginity and neglects to see her life as an entire experience, and her virginity as a minor part in the greater meaning of her life. Mr. Compson suggests that it only seems tragic based on the perspective from which Quentin looks at it, and if he can come to see its transitory state and accept it as something beautiful, and as a part of life, he would be able to move on. Although Mr. Compson perceives the disabled nature of Quentin's conscious thought, Quentin is unable to recognize his own shortcomings. He is unable to see how sex aids in progress and therefore fails to aid in progress himself.

With that in mind it is important to see how Jason's sexuality is also disabled. His lack of respect for women screams to the reader from the opening lines of his chapter, "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say" (180). Here he is referring to Caddy's daughter Quentin, and it is clear that he views her as nothing more than "a little dirty slut" – as Shreve would put it. Instead of denying young Quentin's sexuality, it appears that Jason is unable to view her, or any woman, as separate from her sexuality. However, like Quentin, he does not see female sexuality as a beautiful process of life but instead views sexuality in the same way that he views everything else, as a materialistic process of commodities. He sees their sexuality as a "job" to be performed and views it in terms of cost. Caddy's initial sexual act was meant to bring him a job -Dalton Ames was meant to help secure Jason a position in the bank- but instead it only brought him Young Quentin, who costs him money. He pays for sex with his girlfriend, Lorraine, by showering her with gifts and parties, and

similarly sees Young Quentin's sexuality as eventually *costing* him his reputation. Moreover, throughout his chapter he discusses young Quentin in regards to money and how much she costs him, when the truth is he actually maintains a regular income by keeping her locked up and absorbing the money Caddy sends for her care. Jason's goal in his chapter is to prevent Quentin from fulfilling her sexual role because it keeps his income rolling in, which makes him the perpetuator of sterility. Although his consciousness fixates on the future, it does not fixate on progress or the progression of his family but instead towards maintaining the least amount of mouths to feed. He even measures his masculinity in commodities. He says, "At least I'm man enough to keep that flour barrel full," suggesting that his financial income makes him a man (208). What is obvious here is that he will not progress because money cannot produce a family, and therefore he is far less than a man.

Similarly, even though it appears that he does have a "girlfriend," he commodifies her as well. He says, "Last time I gave her forty dollars. Gave it to her. I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I'm going to give her. That's the only way to manage them" (193). He "manages" women like some sort of business and tries to control them with money. What's more, her letter to him says, "Dear daddy wish you were here. No good parties when daddys out of town I miss my sweet daddy" (193). The fact that she calls him daddy further reinforces the notion that Jason's sexual relationship is dysfunctional and suggests a skewed balance in the relationship. Jason is viewed as a "father figure" or "sugar daddy" instead of as a romantic equal. For this reason it can be assumed that Jason will not naturally

procreate, but instead use his sexual relationship as a type of supply and demand that functions materialistically.

Furthermore, although Jason is the only child whom Mrs. Compson claims as her own, her disabled nature combined with his disrespect for family further immobilizes his progress into the modern world. He assumes the role of “patriarch” without having naturally earned it, and therefore just as his relationship with Lorraine appears to be skewed, so is his relationship with his mother. Although she is his elder, he appropriates the dominant position in the household and treats everyone in it as though they owe their vitality to him. He does not engage in a healthy sexual relationship with a woman, start a family, and thus secure a legacy, but instead seizes the dominant role in a sterile and stale household and attempts to prevent the only fertile member from blossoming. His use of family as an institution through which he embezzles funds signifies his sterile sexuality and preference for personal ambition over the greater good of the family. Jason does not foresee the hazards of immersing himself in the economic turmoil of the modern society and blames those around him for any hardships he suffers, instead of taking an active role in advancing his family. Therefore Jason’s character serves to preclude progress instead of enhancing it.

The trope of sterile sexuality is demonstrated by the Compson men and furthered through Faulkner’s other disabled male characters. In *Light in August* Joe Christmas also has a very unhealthy relationship with women. The onset of Joe’s disability comes when Joe is five years old and is in the closet of Miss Atkins, the dietician at the orphanage. Joe hides in her closet among “soft womansmelling garments” ingesting a pink snake of toothpaste. The closet seems to be a womb, and

the shape, color, and ingestion of the toothpaste suggest some form of sexual consumption and excitement, which makes this a highly sexualized scene. Additionally, the dietician is just beyond where Joe is hiding and is obviously engaged in some type of sexual interaction. However, this passage represents Christmas's wounded masculinity because if the closet symbolizes a womb, then his birth, or removal from the closet is confronted by violence and confusion as he throws up, and says, "it was no longer sweet" (122). The Dietician then discovers him and calls him a rat and a nigger. The sexuality of the passage, combined with the images of birth and abjection, is labeled "nigger" and "rat," which confuses Joe and disables his sexuality. Because his mind cannot consciously connect the trauma to its proper cause, Joe's first understanding of the sexual world is immobilized. Limp and helpless, he is thrust into the world of labels, sexuality, gender, and race, but these concepts stretch far beyond his conscious abilities. His lack of identity is shaped by this traumatic relationship and as the story unfolds the reader observes him as an adult. His inability to function sexually can be traced back to this trauma and grounds him as a symbol of stilted masculinity. From this point Joe seems to have abnormal associations with "food, blackness, secrecy, darkness, women, sexuality, [and] nausea," as Vanderwerken confirms (27).

In addition, Joe's sexuality is ambiguous as he is attracted to women who are far from any traditional notion of "feminine." Bobbi is the first woman Joe Christmas is attracted to, and her androgynous name indicates her lack of femininity. She is described in the following way: "She was not only not tall, she was slight, almost childlike. But the adult look was not due to any natural slenderness but to some inner

corruption of the spirit itself: a slenderness which had never been young, in not one of whose curves anything youthful had ever lived or lingered” (LA 172). Her physical qualities are not explicitly feminine and one can assume that she is also unable to bear children based on the fact that, “in not one of whose curves anything youthful had ever lived or lingered.” Not only does it seem that Bobbi was robbed of a childhood herself due to some sort of trauma, but also her “curves” lack youth and indicate that her adult form is incapable of producing a child. The attraction to barren sexual partners extends to Quentin insofar as the only sexual act he admits to is incest with Caddy. For Quentin the only woman he stakes a sexual claim upon is quite incapable of securing him a family; similarly Joe Christmas pursues sterile sexual relationships throughout the novel.

One can again see how Christmas pursues sterile partners through his relationship with Joanna Bundren. Joanna is always described as masculine and there are several references to her age, between thirty and forty years old, which indicates dwindling fertility. The text says, “and by day he would see the calm, coldfaced, almost manlike, almost middleaged woman who had lived for twenty years alone, without any feminine fears at all...” (235). She is manlike and middle aged, and her lack of feminine fears indicates a lack of the fear of becoming pregnant. Like Bobbi, it can be inferred that perhaps Joanna is barren, since for the last twenty years she has never feared becoming pregnant.

What’s more, Joe describes their sexual roles as reversed and says, “it was like I was the woman and she was the man” and says, “it was as if he struggled physically with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which

they struggled on principle alone” (235). Instead of their intercourse functioning as a passionate act or an attempt to procreate, he sees it as a violent struggle in which two men, perhaps, may engage. It is not until she discusses the desire to have a child that Joe is repulsed. The argument here is that his initial attraction to Joanna lies in her absence of femininity and fertility, through both her overt masculinity and her age. However, upon discussing the desire to have a child Joe thinks, “No. If I give in now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be” (265). Joe will not give in and impregnate Joanna because he denies progress and cannot come to terms with female maternity and the feminine link to the natural world. Because he views Joanna in terms of masculine traits, he cannot imagine her in a feminine role and rejects the notions of reproduction.

Through these analyses it is clear that Faulkner’s disabled male characters are not only mentally disabled, but also are physically disabled and unable to aid in the progression of civilization through procreation. At the unconscious level they fail to adapt to the changing gender roles in the modern world, and physically they are unable to perform sexually to ensure a future community. What is more, because they’re immobilized by their disabilities, they are unable to accept female sexual agency and the maternal nature of women. The inability to accept the sexuality of women is a result of their feelings of rejection from their mothers.

VI. The Mother

Because none of the male characters can perform sexually, they envy the sexuality of the women around them. To further this notion, none of these characters have a mother; therefore, they also envy female fertility. Fertility is precisely what is

important for the progression of modernity. Because these women are fertile and functioning, they ensure the progress that the men are unable to secure. In *Peter Pan* the reader discovers that Pan does not have a mother and that he also claims to have no desire to have one. He says of mothers, “[he] thought them very over-rated persons” (25). He goes on to say, “I wasn’t crying about mothers, I was crying because I can’t get my shadow to stick on” (25). It is here that we can draw a connection between the absence of a mother and a failed connection to histories and to progression. Because these characters do not have a connection to a mother, they lack a connection to their heritage. Peter’s issues stem from a lack of connection to the past due to a lack of a connection to a maternal figure, which is true of Faulkner’s male characters as well.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, although Mrs. Compson is present, she does not leave a legacy and denies any connection to her children. The reader discovers that Benjy was to be named after Mrs. Compson’s brother Maury, but after she realizes he is “an idiot” Mrs. Compson changes his name to Benjy because she doesn’t want him named after a Bascomb to carry on her family legacy. The renaming of Benjy signifies the end of the Bascomb heritage and thus disrupts Benjy’s birthright. Additionally, Mrs. Compson says of Jason, “he is the only one of my children with any practical sense you can thank me for that he takes after my people the others are all Compson.” The rejection from Mrs. Compson makes Benjy and Quentin “motherless” and puts Jason in charge of carrying on her legacy, which he is incapable of doing. She denies her other children and rejects them as part of her family. This rejection prevents Benjy and Quentin from ever successfully engaging

in a romantic relationship with a woman and carrying on the Compson name.

Likewise, it is Jason's lack of respect for his mother that prevents a stable connection to the past in consideration of a future for the Bascomb name.

Similarly, just as the Compson children do not have a mother, Joe Christmas is alone. He is born of ambiguous race as a bastard child and then is immediately taken from his mother and made an orphan, which seems to have a direct influence on his disabled personality. Even after being adopted by the McEacherns he never develops any familial connections. Mrs. McEachern attempts to "mother" Joe or to establish some form of motherly connection, but he rejects her and instead takes advantage of her kindness. Upon his arrival she brings food to him and attempts to explain her intentions as a mother, telling him, "he never told me to bring it to you. It was me that thought to do it... I waited until he was gone and then I fixed it myself" (154). She wants to display her ability to be a mother despite her inability to bear children, but Joe rejects her attempts. Instead he throws the food in the corner and only eats it after she has left. He cannot accept the food as an affectionate child, but instead "like a savage, like a dog" (155).

The reader then sees Christmas confront female fertility throughout different periods of his life, all of which function within the realms of violence and/or deviance. When his friends tell him what menstruation is he is disgusted and says, "It moved them: the temporary and abject helplessness of that which tantalized and frustrated desire; the smooth and superior shape in which volition dwelled doomed to be at stated and inescapable intervals victims of periodical filth" (185). He describes it as effecting frustrated desire and calls women victims of periodical filth. He quite

obviously cannot come to terms with the sexual or maternal development of women in any positive or realistic sense. Additionally, after conceptualizing this information he abandons his friends and ventures into the woods to kill a sheep. He “knelt, his hands in the yet warm blood of the dying beast, trembling, drymouthed, backglaring” (186). After he puts his hands in the blood the narrator says, “He did not forget what the boy had told him. He just accepted it.... *All right. It is so, then. But not to me. Not in my life and my love...*” (186). He relates the experience with the sheep to female menstruation, and clearly cannot come to terms with it as part of his “life” or “love,” but instead associates it to the violent act of killing an animal.

This abject reaction to menstruation appears again when he goes to meet Bobbi. She says, “Listen. I’m sick tonight.... I forgot about the day of the month when I told you Monday night” (188). When Christmas comprehends what she is telling him, he has a violent reaction and hits Bobbi. He cannot accept the natural cycle of female fertility and instead feels violent and sick when he thinks about it. This violence is seen again when he engages in a rape with his friends. He is not able to consummate a sexual relationship with the “womanshenegro” but instead “kicked her hard, kicking into and through a choked wail of surprise and fear” (156-57). Furthermore, when he is with the “womanshenegro” the narrator says, “there was something in him trying to get out, like when he had used to think of toothpaste” (156). He has a vague recollection of the feeling through which he associates this sexual encounter, but he cannot connect the memories in a conscious or rational way to understand his own behavior.

This rejection of the maternal makes it clear that all of these men are disabled not just mentally, but physically as well. Not only are they unable to socialize and interact with the world in accepted and meaningful ways, but they are also unable to engage in normal heterosexual relationships or accept the maternal process in order to procreate and aid in the fertilization of the American landscape. Moreover, because they are unable to view women in terms of sexual volition, they are also unable to fulfill their own sexual agency. The reoccurrence of this inferiority is primarily depicted through the symbol of the shadow throughout these texts.

VII. The Shadow

Shadows occur in several of the texts to punctuate disabled sexuality and heritage. One way to interpret the meaning of the shadow can be found in "Psychology and Religion" by Carl Jung. Jung is considered the first modern psychiatrist, and his studies closely align with James's and Freud's. Jung's understanding of the personal unconscious is situated within the theories of James and Freud, and thus serves as a useful tool for this study. In relation to shadows Jung says:

Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected. (131)

The analysis of the shadow as a symbol for an inferiority can be applied to these texts. Because these males all seem to have a disabled consciousness, they also are

unable to correct their own inferiorities and thus are constantly connected to their shadows.

Here, Jung's theory can be applied to the study of Faulkner since the characters under discussion have disabled consciousness and their shadows function as projections of their unconscious inferiorities. In these works shadow is read as darkness and therefore is always in opposition to lightness or whiteness. There are no grey areas, no fusion, no streams of connection, just black and white, light and dark, shadow and light. The present and future will become the past, but it is the fusion of these things and an understanding of the relationship between the three that is necessary for progression. However, these disabled characters' nostalgia for the past, focus on the future, or inability to conscientiously think in the present moment prevents them from making connections. Significantly, the shadow highlights their inferiorities so the reader can trace their decline. The shadow serves as the constant reminder of inadequacy, and these characters neglect to face these shortcomings and bring these inferiorities to the surface. The shadow is the symbol for the forever boy, unable come to terms with the changing gender roles in modernized society, and likewise unable to accept and respect female sexuality and fertility. He never fully becomes a man; therefore he exists instead as a shadow, as a dim haze that resembles life, because he will eventually fade away with the declining civilization.

In *Peter Pan*, the connection to the shadow is prevalent throughout the story. Pan is always chasing his shadow but he can never capture it or understand himself and therefore comprehend the notion of a future. The maternal figure takes shape when Wendy sews his shadow on for him. Mother figures are man's link to the past

as a physical connection to heritage and a symbolic link to history. However, because Peter doesn't have a mother he lacks the connection he seeks throughout the story. The shadow is only reattached because Wendy sews it on. He cannot have a connection to the past without a mother, so he hopes to force that role onto Wendy. His shadow serves as a constant reminder of this lack of mother, which is an idea that he cannot grasp. Peter's shadow exists as a constant reminder that he will forever remain a shadow due to his inability to connect to history to mature within the modern world. Ann Wilson argues that Peter is dead and this is why he is a shadow, which works in relation to this argument. However, the suggestion here is that the "shadow" of a boy is the death of progress. He is the shadow of a man, and once he dies he will not leave a legacy or family of his own.

Like Peter Pan, Benjy is also related to his shadow. By the second page of his chapter he says, "We went along the fence and came to the garden fence where our shadows were" (4). Not only is Benjy discussed in relation to a shadow, but the shadows are on the garden fence. The position of his shadow outside the fence symbolizes his inability to discover his role in modern society. There is no longer a place for men in the garden; therefore, his shadow remains on the outside, struggling to understand identity in the modern world. Benjy's inability to enter the garden symbolizes his inferior role in relation to progress. He is described in relation to shadow again when he says, "we went down the steps, where our shadows were," (35) and "the grass was buzzing in the moonlight where my shadow walked on the grass" (46). Immediately afterward he says, "Caddy came fast, white in the darkness" (47). The image of Benjy's shadow walking on the grass compared to Caddy's form

as “fast, white in the darkness,” makes it clear that the disabled male functions as a shadow of heroes of the past and are becoming dimmer and less important, while women are portrayed against their inferiority as light and fast, demonstrating their mobility and progress.

Finally, Benjy says, “Our shadows were on the grass. They got to the trees before we did. Mine got there first. Then we got there, and then the shadows were gone” (54). In relation to the tree, their shadows disappear, which symbolizes the decline of civilization for those men who are inferior and fail to adapt. Because the tree is a symbol for nature and women, it is obvious that the tree overshadows the men and obtains the dominant role in relation to them. Benjy says, “there was a flower in the bottle,” which serves as a symbol for Caddy and the flower of her fertility. When Luster puts the flower behind his back Benjy’s limited consciousness cannot connect Luster’s movement to the placement of the flower; therefore, he says, “they went away” (55). Benjy begins to cry because the symbol for progress “went away,” and only upon conjuring the memory of Caddy does it return. The interconnectedness of these images -the shadows, the tree, and the flower, in relation to Caddy- demonstrates the inferiority of men in contrast to the fertile and superior nature of women in the modern world.

Similarly, shadows occur throughout Quentin’s chapter. For Quentin, the shadow exists as a constant reminder of the fading presence of the values of the past. His shadow represents his inability to cope with the progression of time or anticipate a future. Quentin measures the last day of his life by shadows and says, “I stopped inside the door, watching the shadow move. It moved almost perceptibly, creeping

back inside the door, driving the shadow back into the door” (81). It is as if he is watching himself being driven back into history as a shadow of the past. He goes on to say, “The shadow on the stoop was gone. I stepped into sunlight, finding my shadow again” (82). What’s important here is that Quentin, like Benjy and Pan, obsesses over his shadow and is constantly aware of its presence as he steps into the sunlight just to regain the shadow.

In a direct foreshadowing of his suicide, he says:

The shadow of the bridge, the tier of railing, my shadow leaning flat upon the water, so easily had I tricked it that would not quit me. At least fifty feet it was, and if I only had something to blot it into the water, holding it until it was drowned, the shadow of the package like two shoes wrapped up lying on the water. Niggers say a drowned man’s shadow was watching for him in the water all the time (90)

He wants to trick and drown his shadow, which signifies his desire to drown his inferiority and any notion of himself in the future. Just as “niggers say a drowned man’s shadow” watches for him in the water, Quentin is both obsessed with his shadow and the past. Moreover, because he is aware of his inferiority, he is looking for a way to extinguish his shadow. He goes on to say, “... I leaned on the railing, watching my shadow, how I had tricked it. I moved along the rail, but my suit was dark too and I could wipe my hands, watching my shadow, how I had tricked it. I walked into the shadow of the quai” (92). He thinks he has tricked his shadow and that he can trick time and his consciousness, but all he has done is tricked himself by moving into the shadow of something else. Quentin’s attempt to trick his shadow relates to his obsession with the past insofar as he has tried to rid himself of his own shadow, but he too will only become a shadow of the past and will not progress in

any type of future. He continues to reference how he “tricked” his shadow, “Trampling my shadow’s bones into the concrete with my hard heels” (96). It is obvious that by trying to liberate his physical self from his shadow he is trying to get rid of his inferiority. He later “walks upon the belly” of his shadow (96), treads his shadow into the pavement once again (100), “stood in [his] shadow” (105), and gets off the tramcar “into the middle of” his shadow (112), “tramping [his] shadow into the dust” (112). These persistent references make it clear that he is both obsessed with his own weaknesses and also determined to prevent his future by ridding himself of his shadow. He wants to trample both himself and his own memory into dust in order to prevent a future.

In relation to this concept, Joe Christmas is also constantly referred to as a shadow. Shadow is mentioned over twenty-five times throughout *Light in August*, almost always in relation to Christmas. One description of Joe says, “In the wide, empty, shadow brooded street he looked like a phantom, a spirit, strayed out of its own world, and lost” (114). He goes on to describes himself walking down the street and seeing people on their front porches, “heads in silhouette, a white blurred garmented shape; on a lighted veranda four people sat about a card table, the white faces intent and sharp in the low light...” to which he is juxtaposed as “His steady white shirt and pacing dark legs died among long shadows bulging square and huge against the August stars...” (116). He says, “That’s all I wanted, That don’t seem like a whole lot to ask” (115). He wants to belong and to have a family, but they are light and he is shadow. He was denied a past from his birth and he rejected it throughout his life, which makes him incapable of joining a community. Even as a child he is

“like a shadow, small even for five years, sober and quiet as a shadow” and, the narrator goes on to say, “still silent as a shadow” (120). His existence as a shadow makes him quiet, sober, silent, and barely noticeable to the outside world. The barely visible nature of Joe prevents his identity from forming properly, and therefore prevents him from developing a social self and any sense of community.

In addition, when he sneaks out to visit Bobbi the narrator says, “For as Joe, descending on his rope, slid like a fast shadow across the open and moonfilled window...” which depicts Joe as “the other,” the shadow lurking amongst the light (202). Additionally, when he first enters Joanna Bundren’s house “he seemed to flow into the dark kitchen: a shadow returning without a sound and without locomotion to the allmother of obscurity and darkness” (230). Again he is juxtaposed to the images of “lightness” to which he is the shadow. Like the other disabled characters, Joe is constantly related to shadows because he lacks a connection to his mother and therefore to the interconnected flow of histories and progress. Instead, Joe lives an obscure and fading existence. Bobbi views him “as he faded on down the road, the shape, the shadow” (189). He is described here not “like a shape” or “like a shadow” but concretely as “the shape,” “the shadow.” That is what Joe’s existence is. And upon being arrested for Joanna’s murder people surround the courthouse trying to get a glimpse of Joe: “A lot of them stayed there, looking at the jail like it might have been just the nigger’s shadow had come out” (357). Like Quentin, as Joe gets closer to his death he is not even a body with a shadow, but just a shadow. He is physically fading, like his existence, which demonstrates that his legacy will not carry on into the future.

So it seems that these men are unable to progress with modernity and instead exist as shadows of the past, while women are able to adapt and progress. Therefore, these men reject female sexuality and fertility because they not only are unable to consciously function within the modern world, but also because they are unable to accept the capabilities of women. Without a mother, these characters never come to terms with female affection or sexuality and therefore fail to develop romantic relationships with women. Their inability to properly understand the notion of family or a mother prevents them from respecting the maternal process. They do not connect to their own mothers as women, as natural maternal figures, and cannot come to terms with menstruation or female sexual agency. They feel rejected by the maternal process and consequently have no respect for women in a sexual or motherly sense. These feelings of rejection disconnect these emasculated characters' from their heritage, which allows the reader to see the changing role of women in regards to the progress of civilization.

Industrialized technologies are changing the role of men, and the ability of machines to do labor is making gender roles more closely align. Therefore, men must respect the beauty in female sexuality and understand its connection to progress. The female characters throughout these works are able to thrive in the modern world, accept their role as sexual agents and as means of fertility for the land and civilization. Instead of fixating on themselves as individuals, they respect the life process and the progression of families, the land, and the modern world. The juxtaposition of these fertility symbols to the disabled male characters points out the inferiorities of the modern man. Without coming to terms with transitioning gender

roles while respecting histories and heritage, men fail as modern day heroes and women reclaim the land and serve as agents of progress and heroism.

VIII. The Continued Legacy of the Disabled Male and *My Ántonia*

Upon reaching these conclusions regarding Faulkner's disabled male characters, one begins to consider the ways in which disabled masculinity is portrayed throughout twentieth-century literature. Significantly, this disabled male character is also important in Willa Cather's *My Ántonia*, which introduces a story of an immigrant family in the American South. Antonia's brother, Marek, is strikingly similar to Benjy, as portrayed in the following description:

Even from a distance one could see that there was something strange about this boy. As he approached, us, he began to make uncouth noises, and held up his hands to show us his fingers, which were webbed to the first knuckle, like a duck's foot. When he saw me draw back, he began to crow delightedly, 'Hoo, hoo-hoo, hoo-hoo!' like a rooster. (20)

The physical description of Marek does not indicate an able-bodied male, and the references to crow and rooster suggest a character less than human, incapable of communicating through language. Not only is he disabled like Benjy, but he is also described like an animal, which is reminiscent of Joe Christmas. Upon recognizing the co-occurrence of these debilitated male characters, one begins to recognize a trend. The similarities between Benjy and Marek point towards a pattern throughout the literature of this period. Cather's work, written before Faulkner's, can be read through the same lens, which opens up numerous other works in search of this archetypal character. Markedly, because Cather's novel also centers on a female character seen through a male perspective, one can apply the above reading of

Faulkner to this novel in order to understand the ways in which Cather also explores disabled masculinity.

Significantly, Singal says, “In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner began using Freudian concepts not only to get access to his characters at the unconscious level of their minds but also as tropes symbolizing larger trends within the culture” (135).

The trend examined here is the shift of gender roles due to industrialized society and the occurrence of disabled masculinity juxtaposed to progressive femininity. Just as Faulkner uses Pan as a trope for the eternal boy, Faulkner’s disabled males can serve as a trope for the modern man. This analysis of Faulkner can be applied to Cather’s work through an analysis of her characters. Ambrose Shimerda’s “knowing” smile suggests the same egotistical attitude that Jason embodies; Mr. Shimerda and Mr. Compson both serve as injured figures of the “old world” who knowingly accept progression, but not without cynicism and sadness; Yulka, the younger sister, seems to be a representation of Young Quentin; and Jim Burden, the narrator, demonstrates similar traits to all of Faulkner’s disabled male characters as well as Peter Pan.

Similarly, Marek marks Jim’s inabilities, just as Benjy marks Quentin’s. Likewise, Ántonia and Caddy clearly inform the role of fertility in the modern world and demonstrate the ways in which female sexuality and fertility allow for progress.

Ántonia, who approaches Jim and “[holds] out her hand coaxingly” demonstrates the same strong will and passionate nature as Caddy. Likewise, Ántonia is portrayed as fertile and full of life, in contrast to Jim Burden. Like Faulkner’s disabled characters, Jim also has an obsession with the woman figure and demonstrates disabled masculinity in relation to sexuality. The inability of men to realize their role in the

modern world leaves them emasculated and therefore unable to progress and perform in socially or sexually appropriate ways. They are ashamed of their disabilities and therefore repress them beyond conscious recollection.

Significantly, the title of the novel “My Ántonia” demonstrates the necessity of all men to have an Ántonia, or a maternal figure in their lives. Without this figure there seems to be no chance for progress. Additionally, the interruption of an immigrant family on rural American soil represents an age of modernity, where new ideas will be spread and change the fate of the South and West. The fusion of old world ideals on America soil signifies an adherence to Wilson’s notions of modernity and portrays this fusion as a positive understanding of progress.

Ántonia fulfills the same role as Wendy, Caddy, and Lena; Ántonia pursues her role as a maternal force. Jim says, “She wanted to give me a little chased silver ring she wore on her middle finger. When she coaxed and insisted, I repulsed her quite sternly. I didn’t want her ring, and I felt there was something reckless and extravagant about her wishing to give it away to a boy she had never seen before” (Cather 21). Ántonia’s desire to give her ring to Jim demonstrates her willingness to embrace her role as a wife and reminds the reader of Wendy’s attempts to receive a kiss from Peter Pan. Likewise, when Jim is threatened by her “reckless and extravagant” ways it is easy to picture Quentin’s relationship to Caddy. Moreover, just as Wendy embraces her role as a motherly figure, “Ántonia loved to help grandmother in the kitchen and learn about cooking and housekeeping” (23).

Additionally, Jim’s fear of sex is just as obvious as Joe Christmas’s. When confronted with a snake he says, “His abominable muscularity, his loathsome, fluid

motion, somehow made me sick” (31). This phallic symbol, in its abominable muscularity, makes Jim sick and he proceeds to destroy the snake and cut off his head. When Jim decapitates the snake it reminds readers of Christmas’s experience with the sheep, and it is in this scene that Jim confronts masculinity and cuts off its head, demonstrating his inability to accept a masculine role. The absence of masculinity reoccurs throughout the novel when the narrator says, “next to getting warm and keeping warm, dinner and supper were the most interesting things we had to think about. Our lives centered around warmth and food and the return of the men at nightfall” (41). Since Jim is the narrator, it is interesting to note how he separates himself as “other” and awaits the return of the men, suggesting that he is not of the group of “men.”

Moreover, after her father’s suicide, *Ántonia* takes on much of the responsibility of the house. She is in the *fields* from sunup to sun down, working the land, and Jim says, “she was now grown up and had no time for me” (72). Just as Wendy and Caddy mature before Peter and Quentin, so does *Ántonia* mature before Jim. This can be seen when Jim’s Grandfather says, “She will help some fellow get ahead in the world” (72). From this point, it is obvious that *Ántonia*’s abilities as a woman far surpass Jim’s abilities as a man. Not only does she work the land and learn about keeping a house, but also she will aid in the progression of “some fellow.” *Ántonia*’s ability to take on numerous roles is depicted as a positive quality and implies that women are needed to aid in the progression of men.

Similarly, Jim returns after an absence and sees *Ántonia* “out in the fields ploughing corn. All that spring and summer she did the work of a man on the farm; it

seemed to be an understood thing” (167). *Ántonia* continues to work the land and ensure the survival of her family. Jim witnesses her physical vitality and by the end of the chapter says, “About us it was growing darker and darker, and I had to look hard to see her face, which I meant always to carry with me; the closest, realest face, under all the shadows of women’s faces, at the very bottom of my memory” (172). The connection of all the shadows of women’s faces indicates the maternal connection that women share, as well as the connections between generations. This image lives at the bottom of Jim’s memory because he cannot come to terms with the transitory state of life and the connection of those who have come before and those who will come after. He says he will return and *Ántonia* says, “But even if you don’t, you’re here, like my father. So I won’t be lonesome” (172). *Ántonia* carries the memory of her father with her, and she is able to understand the natural connection of all life in ways that Jim is unable to do.

By the end of the novel *Ántonia*’s maternal vitality is barefaced if not deliberate. Jim returns after twenty years and is invited in for supper with *Ántonia* and her family. Despite Jim’s initial fears, he says that *Ántonia* has not lost her inner “spark.” Upon first appearing she is not exactly the image of her former self, but Jim claims that the inner fire within *Ántonia*’s character is still alive. She seems very happy with her family and her life as it has developed. After supper the two of them proceed into the parlor and “*Ántonia* went first, carrying the lamp” (183). *Ántonia* is the light that leads the shadow of the past and she symbolizes progression through family, who will continue the progression of the American South. *Ántonia* is still the dominant force in contrast to the men, as she seems to be in control of the family.

Similarly, just as *Ántonia*'s capabilities, strength, and maturation surpassed Jim, her daughters also surpass her son, Leo. The description of Leo as a "faun-like," boy, one who is always getting hurt and is "sensitive to the light," reminds the reader of Jim when he was a child. Leo represents the stilted progress of masculinity, as he cannot keep up with the other boys physically. What is more, the description suggests that he cannot accept the adult world, as his sensitivity to the light can be related to the symbol of the shadow. As *Ántonia* carries the lamp and leads the way, her son's sensitivity to the light suggests that he, perhaps, will also fail to realize his masculinity. Also, *Ántonia* goes on to describe her daughters' success and skills, demonstrating their ability to adapt, mature, and progress in the modern world. Although it may seem that *Ántonia* has deteriorated, as a woman she has made a successful step towards securing a future for her daughters.

In addition to the description of Leo reminding the reader of Jim as a child, it also can also be connected to the descriptions of Quentin. Quentin is the stilted boy who cannot "pass" with the other boys and cannot progress as he is meant to. He does not pass as a man because he is immortalized as a virgin. Conversely, Caddy is able to mature, grow, and understand her role in the larger context of societal expectations. The feminine ability to endure and survive is demonstrated by all of these female characters, and as "mothers" they are symbols of progress.

In the scene of reunion Jim recalls the first time he encountered *Ántonia* and her family. He says that although she is now a battered woman, she still fires the imagination. She still has the inner spark and the inner ability to navigate society and fulfill her role. As Jim describes *Ántonia* among nature and as a mother-nature

figure, her connection to the land is made clear. He says all of the her strong traits come out of her heart and her body, which signifies that Antonia has discovered her place in the world and fulfilled her role in society. Her connection to the earth, to tending and planting and harvesting, signifies her connection to the natural world. The modern world presents many obstacles in the way of machinery and advancement, but Antonia uses these tools when necessary while also maintaining the ability to recognize her connection to the land and her role as a mother. She signifies the fertility goddess, whose contribution to the world is furthering progress. As a child she was harvesting the land, and as a woman she harvests children. She has accepted her place in society and is contributing to the progress of the modern world. Conversely Jim is still in a state of flux, traveling by train, unhappy in his marriage (as seen in the prologue), without children, and unable to progress.

Finally, his description of her as a “rich mine of life, like the founders of early races” further demonstrates her connection to not only the land, but as a perpetuator of progress. As a first generation immigrant, she must found new lands for her family and navigate the world to assist in their progress. Without the ability to adapt to the changing landscape, one cannot exist in the modern world. The reader is able to see that Antonia has progressed her family at least one step further than the generation previous, and that strength and endurance will transfer to her children and allow that progress to continue. This analysis of *My Antonia* urges one to consider the ways in which the trope of the disabled male, as first discovered in Faulkner applies to other works of twentieth-century literature. The recurrence of the disabled male serves as a

commentary on modernity and portrays the empowerment of women as fundamental to the transition of gender roles in society.

IX: Conclusion

Just as Faulkner uses Pan as a trope for the eternal boy, Faulkner's disabled males serve as a trope for the modern man who cannot adapt to socio-cultural shifts. The following passage from Quentin's chapter in *The Sound and the Fury* reaffirms the potency of this analysis. While walking through Boston Quentin says:

At last I couldn't see the smoke stack. The road went beside a wall. Tree leaned over the wall, sprayed with sunlight. The stone was cool. Walking near it you could feel the coolness. Only our country was not like this country. There was something about just walking through it. A kind of still and violent fecundity that satisfied even bread-hunger like. Flowing around you, not brooding and nursing every niggard stone. Like it were put to makeshift for enough green to go around among the trees and even the blue of distance not that rich chimera. *Told me the bone would have to be broken again and inside me it began to say Ah Ah Ah and I began to sweat* (113).

This passage embodies every element of disabled masculinity. Specifically, the convoluted way that Quentin communicates his experience demonstrates his disabled consciousness. The smoke stack symbolizes the machine in the garden and when the smoke stack leaves Quentin's view he can see nature and the wall working as one. He can feel the coolness of the wall and see the tree leaning over the wall with sunlight spraying on it, signifying the work of man and the work of nature successfully interacting. However, he says, "our country was not like this country," referring to the opposition of industrialized North to the pastoral South. Quentin draws a distinction between the two because he fails to accept that the modernization

of the North will trickle down to the South as American civilization progresses. Nevertheless, through the connection of man and nature Quentin senses the violent fecundity of progress. He says, "The bone would have to be broken again" to signify the breaking of patterns from the past to create a new future. Although this is a necessary step, Quentin rejects progress because he cannot deal with the pain of this breaking off of the past to advance with the modern world.

However, as the analysis of the materials above clearly demonstrates, the modern world is changing and men need to adjust to the moving world in order to progress. The theme of disabled masculinity in the twentieth century is obviated through the psychoanalysis of Faulkner's male characters and the application of this character type onto other works of literature. These men fail to adapt and evolve, while Wendy, Caddy, Lena, and Antonia all reveal the power of the fertile mother earth figure, bursting with life, connected to nature, working the land, climbing trees, and then birthing children and formulating progress. The female characters do not obey the needs of their personal consciousness as the disabled men do, but instead socialize in consideration of their natural instincts and function as forces of progress and adaptation. The relationship between female sexuality and sexual mobility, juxtaposed to the disabled male, signifies a cultural shift of gender roles and the necessity of women to reclaim the land and ensure functioning communities.

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