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Balancing the power of the patriarchy : the evolution of self-determined identity for women in Josephine Humphreys' Dreams of sleep and Rich in love

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"Balancing the Power of the Patriarchy: The Evolution of Self-Determined Identity for Women in Josephine Humphreys' *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love.*"

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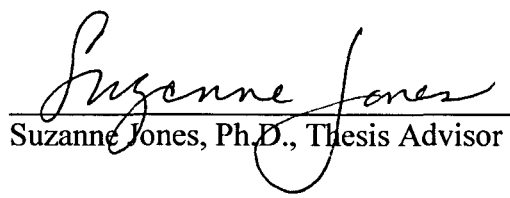
ABSTRACT: Fifty years after William Faulkner wrote *Absalom, Absalom!* Josephine Humphreys revisited the patriarchal metaphor of failure of the Old South in her first novel, *Dreams of Sleep.* In this novel, and again in her second novel, *Rich in Love,* Humphreys examines the ambivalent state of gender relations in the contemporary South brought on by the destabilization of a traditionally patriarchal society increasingly under economic, social, and political pressure to conform to a more egalitarian national standard. Using intergenerational relationships between women, Humphreys demonstrates how the devolution of patriarchal identity becomes the catalyst for the evolution of a self-determined female identity strong enough to balance the power of the patriarchy.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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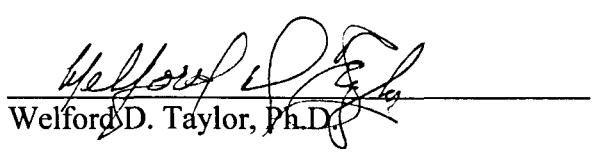

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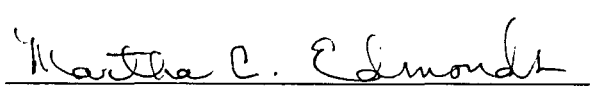

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Balancing the Power of the Patriarchy: The Evolution of Self-Determined Identity for Women in Josephine Humphreys' *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love.*

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For Chuck, the reluctant patriarch

I would like to thank my husband, Chuck, without whose love and support I could never have finished this thesis. I would also like to thank Sarah, Paul, and Claire for encouraging me to take my own advice and follow my dreams. I would like to acknowledge the profound influence of two women who have been my teachers, mentors, and friends. First, Martha Clay Edmonds, who made William Faulkner first accessible, then fascinating, and finally fun, I would like to thank you for giving me a tour (both figuratively and literally) of the South. You helped me discover the literary treasures in my own backyard. And, Suzanne Jones, who gave me a push in the right direction at the right time, and who helped me embrace what everyone else already knew about me, i.e., that I *am* a feminist. And finally, I would like to thank Josephine Humphreys, whose female characters are so well-written that I only had to listen to hear their voices.

Fifty years after William Faulkner wrote *Absalom, Absalom!* Josephine Humphreys revisited the patriarchal metaphor of failure of the Old South in her first novel, *Dreams of Sleep.* Although certainly heir to Thomas Sutpen's legacy, Will Reese is more closely related to Walker Percy's Will Barrett,[1] a character whose historical context roughly approximates a father figure for him. The continuity of failure ties all three characters together, each one representing the various stages in the devolution of the patriarchal figure in the South. *Dreams of Sleep* examines the implosion of a marriage and a family whose structure is similar to the failed design of Faulkner's patriarch,[2] but Humphreys' narrative shifts both perspective and theme from male to female. In *Dreams of Sleep* and again in her second novel, *Rich in Love,* Humphreys examines the ambivalent state of gender relations in the contemporary South brought on by the destabilization of a traditionally patriarchal society increasingly under economic, social, and political pressure to conform to a more egalitarian national standard. In *Dreams of Sleep,* the patriarch remains very much in the foreground of Humphreys' exploration of identity, indeed causing some speculation as to which character is her primary focus, Alice or Will. In addition to Will Reese, Humphreys includes two other patriarchal figures in the novel, Owen Moon and Danny Cardozo, who represent patriarchal corruption and rehabilitation respectively. But in her second novel, *Rich in Love,* the patriarch, Warren Odom, is barely visible in the text, serving only as a reminder of patriarchal failure. She decisively moves her female characters to the center of the philosophical debate from which Faulkner and Percy excluded women. Using intergenerational relationships between women, Humphreys' demonstrates how the

devolution of patriarchal identity becomes the catalyst for the evolution of a self-determined female identity strong enough to balance the power of the patriarchy. Like Faulkner, Humphreys uses a family to represent the failure of traditional southern patriarchal ideals, but by shifting perspective from male to female and theme from devolution to evolution, she provides readers with new insight on two pertinent issues in southern literature with particular impact on women's identity, i.e. past and place. *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love* are the literary vehicles in which Josephine Humphreys reveals the struggle of contemporary white southern women to balance the power of the patriarchy with a self-determined identity that meets the demands of a South that continues to evolve politically, economically, and socially.

In *Absalom, Absalom!* William Faulkner uses the patriarchal character of Thomas Sutpen and his failed design as a metaphor for the Old South to demonstrate that the collapse of a society in which so much power is invested in so few is inevitable. Faulkner's portrayal of women demonstrates that the identity, both personal and cultural, of women in the Old South is inextricably tied to the patriarch, and while he invests each female character in *Absalom, Absalom!* with various strengths, none is either individually, nor are they collectively strong enough to compensate for the collapse of the patriarchal power by which they are defined. [3] This failure of women to develop and sustain an identity independent of patriarchal determinism contributes to the failure of the society. In *The Last Gentleman,* Walker Percy picks up the subject of the failing patriarch with the story of Will Barrett, a character who inherits the legacy of Thomas Sutpen. Will Barrett pays the price for Sutpen's crime, i.e., he is divested of a power that he never really held. If *Absalom, Absalom!* is the story of the fall of the patriarch and the

Old South, then *The Last Gentleman* marks the beginning of his redemption and the rise of the New South. In Percy's novel, the evolution of an independent identity for women, albeit small and slow, begins within the power vacuum left by patriarchal failure and is driven by social and economic changes in the South in the wake of two World Wars. And, although Percy has been much-criticized for failing to consider the impact of philosophical questions on female characters,[4] in *The Last Gentleman,* he empowers them with both vision and the will to act,[5] providing convincing evidence that the balance of power in gender relations in the contemporary South has already begun to shift.

In *Requiem for a Nun,* William Faulkner inserts what many critics believe to be his personal sentiments in these words of Gavin Stevens: "The past is not dead. In fact, it's not even past" (Ford 33). Southern literature has a long tradition of reflecting the strong pull of the past on the present, and in *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love* Humphreys acknowledges its specific impact on the development of female identity in the South. Because white women in the South historically defined their identity through relationships within the domestic sphere, they were limited to the traditional roles included under the umbrella of the southern lady, leaving them little, if any opportunity to develop an identity outside them. But, while male southern writers, most notably Faulkner, rarely created female characters who took meaningful steps to challenge their domestic confinement and the identity dictated by it,[6] Humphreys intentionally emancipates her female characters from the bedroom, kitchen, and parlor without losing the focus on human relationships, often using images of transportation to symbolize freedom. In *Dreams of Sleep* Alice Reese's relationship with her car reflects her increasing independence: she shuns driving after a minor traffic accident, drives again

when she goes to meet her babysitter, Iris, and then again when she flees her home and husband. Iris, without benefit of a driver's license, easily assumes control of the car and the responsibility for turning it around to bring Alice's daughters back home safely. Ironically, in *Rich in Love* Helen Odom abandons her car to gain her freedom. Her husband's suspended driving privileges become the tipping point that compels Helen to desert her family. Although she relinquishes the driver's wheel when she abandons her car and becomes dependent on buses, she retains control because she is able to choose which bus she rides. Helen's oldest daughter, Rae, relinquishes the keys to her beloved Impala to Lucille (after resigning herself to a domestic fate), who suggests that she "try the exercycle" (*RIL 223)*, which is, of course, stationary. Helen's younger daughter, Lucille, reluctantly graduates from bicycle to car, but in either she is in control, ultimately choosing to return to her bicycle when she is no longer responsible for driving for her father. Finally, Humphreys ends *Rich in Love* with baby Phoebe (representing the next generation of white southern women) riding on the back of Lucille's bicycle. Although obviously too young to drive or even ride a bicycle alone, this image of Phoebe suggests vision and the potential to control her course. The only scene in either novel in which the female characters are passengers in a car driven by a man is in *Rich in Love* when Billy drives Lucille and Phoebe to pick up Rae from the psychiatric hospital. Even though Billy is in the driver's seat, it is Lucille who holds Phoebe. This creates a powerful symbol for the balance of power over the future of the young girl.

According to Peggy Prenshaw, "For the female character in modern Southern literature, the effort to interpret her history and discover her place in the world has led inevitably back to the role of the lady. . ." (78). As the domestic corollary to the

patriarch, the southern lady existed in the ambivalent state of both servant and mistress. Within the patriarchal order, she was second only to the patriarch, but as such she relinquished her power of self-determination to him. Josephine Humphreys' female characters in *Rich in Love* and *Dreams of Sleep* embody the conflict of expectation and reality for contemporary southern women who must live with the ghost of the southern lady. The persistent expectation to conform to the lingering image of the southern lady in a cultural and economic environment that increasingly compels women to abandon the domestic sphere leads many white southern women to question the "design" of contemporary southern society. Like Thomas Sutpen, they ask themselves: "Where did I make the mistake in it [the design], what did I do or misdo in it?" (Faulkner 212). Like their male counterparts, white southern women share in the legacy of the Old South, but the significant difference lies in the inverse trajectories of their empowerment necessary to create a more balanced social order for the South.

While her patriarchs remain mired in the search for the answers to Sutpen's questions, Humphreys creates female characters, heiresses of Percy's women, who discover answers and take decisive action. What Percy began by introducing empowered female characters, Humphreys continues by shifting the focus from the philosophically searching male character to female characters that can no longer depend on the patriarch to determine their identity.[7] In both novels she creates a central, intergenerational relationship in which the struggle for self-determination is played out: between thirty-three-year-old housewife and mother, Alice Reese and her seventeen-year-old babysitter, Iris Moon, in *Dreams of Sleep;* and between forty-nine-year-old Helen Odom and her seventeen-year-old daughter, Lucille, in *Rich in Love*. All of them attempt to resolve the

conflicting messages of patriarchal confinement and social emancipation faced by women of both generations. While it is within this dynamic that female identity is explored, it is important to acknowledge the persistent power of the patriarch, whose presence lingers even when he is, like Warren Odom and Owen Moon, barely visible in the text. In both *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love,* Humphreys inverts the traditional confinement of patriarchal determinism to become the means by which all four women are emancipated. Male ambivalence created by conflicting cultural messages that alternately concede and challenge patriarchal power generates both the opportunity and means by which women assume the power of self-determination as the first step in creating balance in a society whose social order has been resistant to change.

Both Alice Reese and Helen Odom seem to tolerate their traditional roles of wife and mother until each one's husband relinquishes the patriarch's most important asset, i.e. his power. Will Reese's obsession with his lover, Claire, and his philosophical search for answers to Sutpen's questions strip him of his power and compel him to abandon Alice and the girls in the middle of the night. Although he has left them many times before to spend time with his lover, never before has he done so when he was at risk of being rejected. Claire's need for him had always precluded that possibility before her marriage to Danny, but after seeing the casual intimacy of them sleeping together, Will decides that Danny and Claire's marriage is ". . . a permanent arrangement" (*DOS 191),* and that neither needs him any more, so he returns to Alice and the girls, who do. Warren Odom vacates his patriarchal power more gradually than Will: first retiring from his job, then losing his driving privileges, and eventually abdicating his parental and personal responsibilities after Helen leaves him. Without the clearly defined roles of

businessman and husband, Warren's only clear remaining role is that of father, but it alone cannot sustain his faltering sense of personal identity, so he abandons it as well.

The power vacuum created by these patriarchal failures provides Helen and Alice with the opportunity to assume the power abandoned by their husbands. They do so, however, in very different ways: Helen's initial reaction is to flee (literally) the patriarchal failure that has destabilized her home, while Alice's is to remain, but to retreat into a depression that renders her inert and incapable of acting on behalf of herself or her children. Both abdicate their domestic responsibilities, exaggerating the power vacuum created by patriarchal failure. But, while the physical and emotional desertion of the older women compounds the effect of patriarchal failure on their children, Iris Moon and Lucille Odom respond by actively assuming the domestic responsibilities abdicated by Helen and Alice. Iris assumes responsibility for her mother and brother after her first exposure to patriarchal power. At eight years old, she does not understand the mysterious power her father has over her mother, or why it leads Fay to abandon her and her brother for four days and nights. This sudden and shocking exposure to patriarchal power is compounded when Fay comes home with a bruised face. Without example or explanation from her mother, Iris confuses patriarchal corruption and love: "It was Iris's first look at the work of love" (*DOS* 23). But, by empowering Iris instead of allowing her to succumb to fear or despair, Humphreys sets a clear example for all women exposed to patriarchal failure and corruption.

After her mother's abrupt disappearance, Lucille assumes responsibility for her father who has been rendered powerless by shock and confusion. Ironically, Lucille is protecting her father from his own failure. She feeds him and drives him all over town

looking for Helen. And although Lucille initially blames the failure of her family on her mother, she eventually comes to understand that it is her father's failure that compels her mother to desert the family. After stepping into her mother's shoes, Lucille begins to see her father as "a man with a breakable heart. . . an innocent person who took the world as it appeared and never questioned motives or suspected ulterior designs" (*RIL* 19). Humphreys' intent to demonstrate the oppressive power of his weakness seems clear in the opening scene of *Rich in Love* when she juxtaposes Helen's goodbye note with the image of Warren, not yet aware that she is gone, innocently re-baiting a fish hook. Lucille is determined to "soften the blow" (*RIL* 18) that her mother's desertion will surely deliver to her father. She is not yet aware of the ironic power of his weakness or how it impedes her mother's already compromised independence. Ironically, both teenage girls benefit from desertion, both maternal and patriarchal because it forces them to act independently. The older women learn a similar lesson about the opportunity to gain independence inherent in patriarchal abdication, but theirs comes only after the responsibility of motherhood precludes them from acting solely on their own behalf. For all of them, the absence of the old, clearly delineated gender roles of powerful patriarch and submissive southern lady frees each one to explore their identity outside these traditional roles.

Critical to the development of a self-determined identity for women in Humphreys' novels is the progressive deterioration of the patriarchy precipitated by ambivalent contemporary cultural expectations that destabilize gender roles in a region in which these roles have traditionally been clearly defined. In *Within the Plantation Household: Black & White Women of the Old South,* Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

undertakes an expansive exploration of gender and racial relationships in which she traces the development of female identity in the South within the context of a slave-holding society. She asserts that slavery constituted a social system that emphasized the private over the public spheres of social and economic life in the South where "gender, race, and class relations constituted the grid that defined southern women's objective positions in their society, [and] constituted the elements from which they fashioned their views of themselves. . ." (Fox-Genovese 43). White southern women, therefore, increasingly identified themselves in relation to a patriarchal definition focused on domesticity and reinforced by slavery. Likewise, white southern men were subjected to patriarchal definitions dictated by familial and economic position within the slave-holding society. Susan Tracy describes the patriarchal family in which the head of the household (white patriarch) exchanged "protection and economic security" for "the submission, respect, and grateful love" of his dependents (141). Families in the South adopted the patriarchal design of slavery including the clearly defined gender-based roles described by Fox-Genovese, ensuring the power of even the most modest of patriarchs. Like those of Faulkner and Percy, Humphreys' male characters inherit the task of reconciling historical and contemporary expectations of their gender roles in an evolving society no longer based on slavery. The erosion of patriarchal power emancipates both women and men from the constraints of traditional roles that are no longer socially or economically valid, but the process of conceding power is difficult for men accustomed to holding it. The result is a progressive struggle to find an appropriate balance of power between genders that meets both the individual and societal expectations of all white southerners.

The male characters in *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love* represent the stages in the progressive loss of patriarchal power that becomes the genesis for the development of new gender roles for both white men and white women. As I have already said, the philosophically searching white male southerner is well-represented most notably in the fiction of William Faulkner and Walker Percy, among others, but what sets Josephine Humphreys' fiction apart is her focus first, on the effects this search has on patriarchal dependents (especially female), and second, the application of this genre to female characters (Alice Reese). Kathryn McKee argues that the introspective patriarch is often appealing to readers who relate to the struggle for self understanding (242), and while I would agree, I would also argue that Humphreys' female perspective diverts the reader's sentiment from the patriarch to the women and children who suffer the consequences of his ambivalence and abandonment. In fact, both texts are dominated by female characters including all of the dependent children, except Randall Moon, whom Humphreys quickly moves from the story's center by having him spirited away by his father to Florida, a not-too-subtle implication of Humphreys' intent to focus on the impact of patriarchal impotence and abandonment on women.

In *Dreams of Sleep,* Will Reese is a physician specializing in the care of women and children whose Percian search for the answers to Sutpen's questions progressively alienates him from his own wife and children. Although he remains at home, Humphreys makes his emotional abandonment very clear. He has unresolved issues of abandonment for which he blames his mother,[8] allowing him to avoid dealing with the more painful and permanent abandonment resulting from his father's sudden death. Itself a strong indictment of patriarchal abandonment, Edmund Reese's death exemplifies the

progressive deterioration of patriarchal power. Will is left with only a ghostly reminder of both his father and southern manhood. The male character that appears in the novel to represent the possibility of patriarchal rehabilitation is Danny Cardozo, whom Will believes to be a failure. Danny's failure as husband and father motivates him to reexamine his personal relationships, including the one he has with Will, and to acknowledge his failure and renegotiate his role in each one. But Will is not yet willing to acknowledge responsibility for Claire's abortion (his most serious patriarchal failure), and here, in Danny's attempts to hold him accountable, Humphreys' interjects her most stinging criticism of patriarchal failure: "Instead of seeing into it you looked past it and hardened your shell even more" (*DOS* 163). Danny Cardozo emerges from the "Old South" as Humphreys' symbol of patriarchal ruin and rehabilitation.

Will cannot accept Danny as a role model because he has not yet acknowledged his own ruin, choosing instead to wrestle with the ghost of his father in the vain attempt to recover an outdated patriarchal role model. And, while numerous critics have pointed to Edmund's riddle as the question that haunts Will, I would argue that the ghostly presence of his father's desk and its hidden compartment indicate a more important riddle for him:

> A man has to have a treasure in his heart, whether it is a god or an art or a love, something he can turn his inward eye on as consolation for the rest. But Edmund had no god. He was an old Episcopalian. And his work was nothing but a pleasant pastime, chosen over banking to allow him time out-of-doors. As for love, who was there for him to love, really love?. . . Edmund Reese lived out his life without ever explaining himself. He

never told his son where his treasure was. (*DOS* 31 – 32)

Will, the failing patriarch, is himself a victim. By refusing to let go of his father's desk and because he uses it to surreptitiously exchange love notes with Claire, Will draws his unresolved feelings of abandonment into his relationship with his lover. He searches the desk for the answer to the question he asks about his father: "who was there for him to love, really love?" (*DOS* 32). Like his father, he confuses need with love. His mother, Marcella, was a poor girl without family from the mountains for whom a marriage to a southern gentleman like Edmund Reese was at the very least advantageous, and most likely rescued her from a life of poverty and obscurity. Edmund's choice of Marcella demonstrates his desire to be needed, not loved. Within the historical and social context in which the power and prestige of the patriarchy is eroding, choosing a wife whose social and economic status is so obviously below his own strengthened Edmund's position in the marriage.

Will's choices are similarly designed to bolster his patriarchal power. First, his choice of obstetrics, a profession he chose after deserting Alice while she is suffering a miscarriage, ostensibly to get medicine but more likely because he was frustrated at his abject powerlessness to relieve her pain or save his child (as an obstetrician, he is in control of not only women, but also their children, a strong symbol of patriarchal power). Second, his choice of wife, Alice, who "sat quietly . . . and let him talk. . . was aloof in a shy way . . . [and] not particularly interested in lovemaking. . . but more than tolerant" (*DOS* 38 – 39). Alice willingly gives up her college, her family, and her profession to live in a house he chooses because she fears for his academic career, and she reacts to his infidelity by falling into a depression so severe that her need for him is exacerbated

instead of alienated. Third, his lover, Claire, is similarly disconnected from family and friends, and whose psychological devastation over the death of a young patient constituted the need which he was able to exploit. And finally his mother, Marcella, whom Will chooses to reject after she remarries and establishes a career in real estate. He interprets her actions as deliberate attempts to sever her ties to his father, and therefore, to him. All of these choices reflect Will's repetition of his father's mistaken assumption that those who need you love you. Edmund's sudden death leads Will to ask, "As for love, who was there for him to love, really love?" (*DOS* 32) unanswered. The obvious answer that Humphreys leaves unsaid, but that Will must have felt was, *me!* The treasure hidden in Edmund's heart should have been the love he felt for his son. But after finding the love note he left for Claire unread and abandoned in the hidden compartment of Edmund's desk, Will concludes that "Love rots" (*DOS 32)* when you are no longer needed. So he returns to Alice, whose need for him is tied to what remains of his patriarchal role, i.e., husband, father, and provider.

At the conclusion of *Dreams of Sleep,* Humphreys reunites Will and Alice Reese, apparently to offer hope for the traditional family in the South. Both have learned that the marriage of the powerful patriarch and the southern lady is no longer a valid model for marriage in the contemporary South, and that they will have to redefine themselves both individually and as a couple in order for their marriage to survive. Humphreys picks up the story of marriage in the South in *Rich in Love,* this time examining a marriage in which both parties have failed to recognize and/or adapt to the lesson of *Dreams of Sleep.* Although her marriage to Warren Odom began for Helen as almost an act of open defiance of traditional gender roles in the South, after twenty-five years both she and her

husband have drifted into the respective roles of southern lady and patriarch. Humphreys examines how and why this happens in *Rich in Love.* Beginning with the opening scene in which Helen Odom's actions set the plot of the novel in motion, Humphreys deliberately signals a shift in both power and perspective from male to female. If Alice Reese is inertia, Helen Odom is action. In the end, Alice Reese acquiesces to the domestic role that she openly admits fragments her identity while Helen Odom rejects it to pursue a unified, individual identity exclusive of marriage and motherhood. While Alice tacitly accepts Will's choice of her to be his wife, in *Rich in Love,* Helen does the choosing, actively defying the expectations of all:

> As a girl, Mother had been marooned in old Charleston [Old South], looking at a sea of debutante parties, Yacht Club dinners, Junior League placement; and along had come a man representing the whole world of chance and risk. He had no money, he worked in the midst of danger, he flew an airplane. Those were the things she married him for. *(RIL 193)*

In *Rich in Love,* Humphreys introduces Warren Odom as a patriarchal figure whose power is attenuated over time from a youthful, unattached pilot who loves to fly blindly into a cloud to a married man whose fear for the security of his wife and children transforms him into a symbol of permanence[9] instead of possibility to his wife. Warren's transformation demonstrates the oppressive nature of the patriarchal model that dictates the loss of individual identity for both men and women. The result is that both become entrenched in ill-fitting roles from which they seek escape: Warren, through the gradual concession of patriarchal power; and Helen, by physically fleeing the marriage. Helen's desertion stuns Warren because "he thought of himself as having successfully reached the

end of the road without mishap" (*RIL 20).* He sees an end where Helen desperately craves a new beginning, or at least the possibility of change. But like Sutpen, Barrett, and Reese, Warren Odom imposes the patriarchal design by which he lives on his wife because he fails to see her as an equal partner. Patriarchs often see themselves as nobly accepting their God-given responsibility to take care of women and children because they *need* it. By convincing themselves of this need, contemporary patriarchs like Will Reese and Warren Odom justify their domination of women much the same way antebellum patriarchs justified slavery. And, although Warren Odom was not a religious man, his childhood experience as the son of a man whose failure to provide for his mother profoundly impacted his belief system. Warren acknowledges this impact to Lucille, describing his "formative moment" (*RIL 55)* after a very Sutpen-like experience as he and his parents walked along a highway during the Depression.[10] After marriage, Warren gradually constructs his design which includes "money in the bank, a clean chest X ray, two fine daughters, [and] a lovely wife" (*RIL 20).* Ultimately, however, the fear, powerlessness, and passivity of this patriarch compel his daughter to relinquish the dependence of southern ladyhood in order to assume power and avert the collapse of the family. So the erosion of patriarchal power Humphreys begins with Will Reese continues with Warren Odom, whose sole remaining patriarchal role is provider.

Having abdicated the roles of husband, father, and provider, Owen Moon represents the complete corruption of patriarchal power in *Rich in Love.* Visible only sporadically in the text, Humphreys emphasizes his self-absorption and total disregard for the welfare of Fay and her children, which provides the strongest impetus in either novel for the development of strong, independent female identity. Humphreys juxtaposes this

self-absorbed, immature, and apparently impotent patriarch with a strong daughter who recognizes his failure. The only one over whom Owen seems to exert any power is Fay, a character who represents the complete corruption and abdication of maternal power. Because Iris believes her father is not "a grown-up man," (*DOS 20)*, and her mother cannot even care for herself, much less her children, Iris actively assumes the roles and responsibilities of both, including a strong desire to nurture the next generation of children. Of her Humphreys writes, "But Iris is planning a new future. You have to if you want anything at all to happen to you. She doesn't desire more than life in a warm climate with some good children" (*DOS* 16). Like Helen Odom, Iris Moon is a female character of action who chooses the Reese children because she senses their need and because she believes that "no one can love those children as much as she could" (*DOS 17).* By suggesting that Iris would be a better mother for the Reese girls than Alice, Humphreys demonstrates her intent to designate women of action, not inertia as the mothers of the next generation of white southern women. Not until Alice moves from inertia to action does Humphreys once again entrust her with the responsibility for Marcy and Beth.[11]

In *Dreams of Sleep,* Humphreys uses Will Reese in much the same way Faulkner used Sutpen and Percy used Barrett, but includes Alice Reese as a character worthy of philosophical introspection. By setting Alice's struggle for personal identity alongside Will's philosophical search, Humphreys further creates a balance in the text that reflects her hopes for more equal gender relations in the contemporary South. McKee has already noted that Humphreys is the first writer who extends the "introspective southern male" (241) character who is intellectually restless and socially alienated to include a

woman, Alice Reese. While both Will and Alice share the qualities of the introspective southerner, much of the novel is dominated by Alice's internal monologue, a deliberate shift by Humphreys to the female perspective. And as McKee points out, Alice succeeds where her husband fails in their respective efforts to gain an awareness of self and others, even going so far as to call Alice "the novel's sustaining force[s]" (241). I concur with McKee's characterization of Alice as a character of action (ultimately) and would add that Humphreys inverts the traditional patriarchal power structure. Returning to the metaphor of driving reinforces this notion because, while Will drives in circles along familiar streets, Alice makes a beeline for the unfamiliar highway. Although she eventually returns, her act of leaving compels Will for the first time to consider the consequences of his ambivalence and *inaction,* i.e., his failure to actively assume the responsibilities of the husband and father.

In *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love* Josephine Humphreys acknowledges the challenges faced by both men and women as ambivalent participants in a faltering patriarchal society. Ironically, a major obstacle they encounter is marriage, which is detrimental because it constrains individual identity and imposes out-dated expectations on gender roles. The development of individual identity in Humphreys' novels for both men and women seems to require at least a temporary escape from marriage: Will has an extramarital affair; Alice leaves Will briefly; Helen leaves Warren; Warren finds Vera; Marcella is widowed; and Danny is divorced. Indeed, the only happy marriage in either novel is Marcella and Duncan's, which is the union of a white southern woman and a northern man (Cincinnati, Ohio), a strong indication from Humphreys of the inevitability of the Americanization of the South. Each of these characters eventually redefines

themselves, but Humphreys is clearly more focused on the specific challenges faced by female characters like Alice Reese and Helen Odom.

As the wife of a successful Charleston gynecologist, Alice Reese enjoys the economic and social position to which many women aspire in contemporary American culture. Married to a doctor, she does not work (inside or outside her home), but hires a teenage girl to care for her children in the afternoon. After her mother-in-law tells her that her husband is having an affair with his office nurse, Alice spirals into a depression from which she eventually emerges only after confronting and conquering the constraints imposed by the vestigial influence of the Cult of True Womanhood[12] that prescribes a role based on piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Initially rendered inert, Alice pushes Will further away because "A sad woman can trigger disaster, and Will doesn't want disaster. All his life he has feared it: something bad from the stars—catastrophe, cataclysm, [and] calamity" (*DOS* 98). Here, Humphreys suggests that a woman who is *too* passive pushes her husband into the patriarchal role. In a relationship built on need and not love, Alice's submission to Will's need for her to play the role of the southern lady initially bolsters his crumbling self-image as the patriarch, but later intensifies his sense of alienation and failure. By eliminating traditional sources of support from family and friends for Alice, Humphreys' emphasizes *her* alienation. While Will has his wife, mother, lover, and life-long best friend for support, Alice has no siblings, her mother is dead, and Humphreys' only mention of her father is to say that "When she moved in [with Will] she left behind a math scholarship at Hollins, and her father never forgave her" (*DOS 39).* Ironically, Will's infidelity makes her withdraw from the companionship of other women who could potentially provide vital objective

perspective,[13] a clear indication that a valid identity for women cannot be developed without other women. Alice's fragile new individual identity develops only after she emerges from a crippling depression with the help of Iris Moon, whose survival from patriarchal abandonment sets an example for her to follow.

Clearly aware of her tenuous grasp on reality, Alice struggles to remember who she was before marriage and motherhood.[14] Once a gifted mathematician, she abandons her domestic language and reverts to the more familiar language of mathematics in order to explore and interpret her sadness. In the opening scene of the novel, she imagines herself trapped in a mathematical equation with two variables, neither of which she can control:

> She loves the quiet light and its mutable geometry, as those wizards did who chinked and slit their stones to let in messages from the sun gods. The message to Alice is, Don't move. Not till that first stamp of light touches the wide crack in the floorboards. Till then she is frozen. The room is frozen. Only two things may move—the slow light, and his feathery perfect breath between her shoulder blades. (*DOS 1)*

Alice's sense of entrapment is enhanced by the house in which she lives. It is chosen for her by her husband and reflects the ambivalent state of their existence together:

> Alice's house is in the middle, a transitional neighborhood where the Jews used to live before they moved out to Harborside in the fifties. Blacks moved in, now whites are moving in again; and the neighborhood has no real neighbors in it. . . The Reeses are the only people on the block who live in a family . . . (*DOS 7)*

The threat of abandonment, coupled with the relinquishment of her identity as a single woman [single girls are "all in one piece" (*DOS* 2)] results in the fragmentation of what little power Alice has in her relationship with her husband, a power she tries desperately to regain when she flees with her children. Ironically, Iris, a seventeen-year-old girl whose most valued asset is her independence, helps Alice regain her self-confidence and begin to reassemble her fragmented identity. After handing over the responsibility of driving to Iris, whose only experience with driving has been in a parking lot, Alice describes the sense of empowerment she felt as a young, unmarried woman hailing a cab in New York or driving to Virginia or North Carolina. Iris tries to convince Alice that she can still do these things, but Alice explains the damage done to her self-confidence by years of domestic confinement: "I used to be able to do things when I was twenty that are impossible to do now . . . ." It's more than the physical task. It's . . . a vision of yourself. If you don't see yourself as being able to do it, then you can't, no matter how easy it is" (*DOS 203).* Alice flees because she cannot see herself being able to save her marriage. She drives away without any clear destination; Savannah, Beaufort, or maybe even Jacksonville, it really does not matter. In her mind, it is not important where she stops; only that she has regained the power to go, and she has done so by stepping outside her marriage, albeit briefly, to gain a new perspective from which to define her identity.

Clearly, the old design has once again failed in *Dreams of Sleep*, but Humphreys' view of her beloved South is not without hope. By any measure, Iris Moon is everything Alice is not. Poor, uneducated, and unmarried, she is nonetheless empowered by the same patriarchal failure that leaves Alice Reese depressed and powerless. While the

threat of patriarchal abandonment pulls Alice further into the domestic sphere and down into depression, it propels Iris out into the world where she takes control of not only her own life, but also that of her mother, her boarding-house neighbors, and eventually, the Reese girls. As the daughter of a man for whom fatherhood seems strictly biological and almost certainly unintentional, Owen Moon represents the complete corruption of the patriarchy. Iris' response to patriarchal abandonment suggests the means by which contemporary white southern women should define themselves, i.e., independent of patriarchal determinism. Armed with a strong sense of personal identity and purpose, Iris Moon is in the driver's seat when she and Alice turn the car carrying Marcy and Beth back towards Charleston. In spite of Iris' youth, Alice recognizes that she knows what is best for the girls. She willingly submits to Iris' judgment, signaling once again that Iris is Humphreys' most desirable maternal role model: "She had trusted that Iris would make things turn out right" (*DOS 205).* Still unable to marshal enough power to make this decision, Alice realizes "you didn't need to imagine it; you needed to *do* it" (*DOS 204).* Action, Humphreys implies, is essential in order for women to have any meaningful impact on the next generation.

In her search for a self-determined identity, Alice Reese moves from inertia to action after a long, introspective process and exposure to Iris, a new model for white southern womanhood, but in *Rich in Love,* Helen Odom disappears so abruptly one afternoon that her husband suspects foul play. Her car is left carelessly parked in the driveway with the door ajar and ice cream melting in the seat. Even her purse is left behind, something a southern lady would never do, so Humphreys leaves little doubt that Helen's decision to leave was impulsive. Like Alice, who retreats into depression to

avoid participating in her patriarchally-determined life, Helen hides in an unfinished house with the same intention. Both desperately desire to reconnect to their identity as individuals, something both have lost. They reflect on their lives as single women and discover that marriage and motherhood have stripped them of the freedom to act independently. In order to regain their identity, both temporarily step away from motherhood and marriage, but remain mindful of their maternal responsibilities. Helen leaves only when she is convinced that Lucille no longer needs her and returns when Phoebe does, and when Alice finally leaves, she takes the girls with her. As substitute maternal figures, Iris and Lucille become the critical link between generations with the ability to see both backward and forward, ensuring that the lessons learned by Alice and Helen will be passed on to Beth, Marcy, and Phoebe.

Humphreys insists on women of action as role models for the dependent female children in both novels. Like Iris Moon in *Dreams of Sleep*, in *Rich in Love* Helen Odom serves as a role model because she knows where she wants to go. In the years since her marriage, she has lived the life of a traditional white southern matron, focusing on her domestic responsibilities as wife and mother. But, with the end to her maternal responsibilities to her seventeen-year-old daughter within sight, Helen sees her opportunity for emancipation slip away because of her husband's increasing dependence: "It sounds horrible however I say it, but what I want to get away from is the whole package, the house, everything. The family. Let me get away from it, I've been in it so long, Lucille. We did it for so long!" (*RIL 210).* Helen Odom wants to return to a time and place in which she is free of the southern lady's ghost. She willingly relinquishes the

economic security of her patriarchal husband in exchange for an opportunity to escape domestic confinement:

> People say that as you get older time passes faster, she said. But in our house it wasn't even moving. Nothing was ever new. Nothing! I don't mean it was his fault, his fears were not his fault, they came from the Depression and his mother and father—but he wanted to protect everything. That was his goal. To protect me, the children, the house, even the dogs. And from what, I wanted to know! From the world. But people should not be protected from the world, Lucille, and I always loved the world. I loved travel and politics and art; you never even knew that about me, did you? I was crazy for the world, at one time. (RIL 205-205)

Here, Humphreys uses Helen to dispel the patriarchal notion that women must be protected from the world, a notion that allows men to contain and control women, especially when they have dependent children. A significant difference between Alice Reese and Helen Odom is the perception each has of her responsibilities toward her children. Helen, who tells her seventeen-year-old daughter, "I assumed you'd be fine. . . because you haven't needed me for anything since the sixth grade," (*RIL 204)* finds it far easier to abandon her family than does Alice, whose daughters are still young enough to need the physical care of their mother. Alice emotionally abandons her children to Iris Moon, but remains confined by a sense of obligation instilled by nature and reinforced by a patriarchal society. Both women desperately seek a balance that preserves the safety of their children while allowing them the freedom to experience the world.

Just as in *Dreams of Sleep,* Humphreys creates a generational dynamic in *Rich in Love* in which her female characters struggle to develop individual identity. Central to this process in *Rich in Love* is the relationship between Helen Odom and her daughters, especially seventeen-year-old Lucille. While Helen Odom seems to have prematurely projected domestic responsibilities onto her daughter by abandoning their home, this exposure to a patriarchally determined identity proves to be critical to Lucille's development of individual identity. What, Humphreys seems to ask the reader, can one generation of white southern women teach another about understanding who they are and how they can successfully integrate a self-determined identity with what is expected from them by southern society?

In *Rich in Love* Humphreys uses the bildungsroman as a literary vehicle in which each Odom woman's quest for a self-determined identity evolves. Although the trajectory of each follows the predictable cyclic female pattern of the genre described by Mary Anne Ferguson,[15] Humphreys re-writes it in *Rich in Love* to specifically address the gender and cultural issues faced by contemporary white southern women. The bildungsroman is well suited to answer these questions; however, in order to understand the significance of this work, one must consider what Ferguson identifies as the gender-related difference of spiral vs. circular trajectories. Ferguson asserts that the circular trajectory of the traditional female bildungsroman allows women to escape domestic confinement, only to return and replicate the lives of their mothers. Humphreys, however, interprets the circular trajectory of Ferguson's model literally as circular, meaning that her female characters do not necessarily return to the home *permanently.* Instead, Humphreys suggests the possibility of a fluid movement back and forth that

accommodates the needs of each woman and her family. This fluidity creates a continuum along which each woman accumulates experiences as individuals, as well as those dictated by domestic responsibilities that help to shape her identity. Humphreys' female characters in both *Rich in Love* and *Dreams of Sleep* appear to have the circular pattern of development Ferguson describes for the female bildungsroman, but using Helen Odom and Iris Moon as spokeswomen, Humphreys interjects *possibility* in place of *permanence*. Although each character finds her greatest tests in a domestic setting and learns her lessons through her relationships with family, each one is either given or seizes the opportunity to explore the world. Some, like Alice Reese and Rae Odom, return to their domestic responsibilities, but others do not. Helen Odom returns home only long enough to ensure the stability and health of her granddaughter before returning to her little house in the woods. Iris Moon creates her own domestic space, but refuses to enter into any domestic relationship that she cannot control. And Lucille easily walks away from her first love and looks forward to leaving home to go to college, strong evidence of the benefit of experience in the development of a strong individual identity.

In *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love,* Josephine Humphreys expands the female bildungsroman beyond the traditional structure that includes a singular, defining challenge, triumph, and eventual return home to include the varied challenges that arise for female characters both inside and outside the domestic sphere. Although the initial challenge for each of the major characters arises from the ambivalence and abdication of power by male characters, Humphreys is careful to construct the text so that the development of female identity that begins as a result of patriarchal ambivalence and abandonment actually arises after a philosophical and intellectual search that equals that

of her male characters. She also includes a significant amount of internal monologue for each of the four major female characters of the two novels, (Alice, Iris, Helen, and Lucille) suggesting the power of intelligent thought that is reflected in their actions. She empowers, in particular, the Odom women by creating a scenario for each that allows for opportunities for self examination both in and out of the home. Helen goes to live in an unfinished, one-room cinderblock house of her own choosing rather than the spacious, antebellum house she shares with her husband and daughter. The Odom's house is a static environment filled with antiques that Lucille (not Warren) steadfastly refuses to allow Helen to change. She won't even allow Helen to change the paint, something she later tries in vain to use as a concession in exchange for her mother's return. What Lucille has not yet learned, however, is that the external trappings of a house reflect the internal desires of its inhabitants. It is as if the house conspires with her family to reinforce her confinement. The unfinished cinderblock house reflects the unfinished state of Helen's evolution along with her potential for self determination. In it, she tells her daughter, "I'm recovering myself. Some people go to spas and ashrams, but I'm in this ruined house of Sam Poole's on the Long Point Road, a ghost house on a piece of *no-man's*—land [italics added]; and it's working. I'm recuperating" (*RIL 209).* Humphreys' deliberate choice of language suggests that Helen's identity can evolve freely only in an environment that excludes her husband. His retirement and intrusion into her domestic space makes this impossible, so she flees.

Helen's oldest daughter, Rae, moves to Washington after college but returns, married and pregnant, after Helen leaves. Arguably the most troubled of the Odom women, Rae represents the developmental space between Helen and Lucille. At eight

years older than Lucille, Rae not only recalls the circumstances of Lucille's birth (and survival from a failed abortion), but she also assumes responsibility for her care after what seems like a vague suggestion that Helen may have suffered from post-partum depression. What is most significant about this is that Rae's own bout with post-partum depression reinforces the cyclical pattern of the traditional female bildungsroman with the intent to warn women of the danger, but not the inevitability of repeating the mistakes of their mothers:

> . . . sometimes I get the feeling that I've had a baby before. It's all kind of familiar. I have memories of objects. A loose-woven baby blanket with a satin ribbon running through it . . . a mobile with wooden animals of some sort, um, *lambs,* I think, hung on invisible wires, . . . and a smell, peppery sweet-and-sour . . . I remember holding a baby, rocking it to sleep.
>
> (*RIL* 152)

In Rae, Humphreys' intent seems to have been to create a transitional character whose future remains unsettled in order to represent the continuing struggle of contemporary white southern women to reconcile maternal responsibilities with those of self.

In Helen's absence, her younger daughter, Lucille, is forced to emerge from the internal monologue she calls "invision," (*RIL* 7) to confront the power vacuum left by both her parents. Doing so forces her to appreciate what Helen sacrifices in order to fit into the roles of wife and mother. Her belief that "the human heart needs to be confined" (*RIL* 15) is tested when she must see her father through her mother's eyes:

> . . . the work of it, was debilitating, requiring me constantly to imagine the world from his point of view. . . .It was like looking through someone

> else's eyeglasses; you can do it if you squint down to the exact right point and tighten the tiny muscles behind your eyeballs, but it hurts, and when it's over you can't see with your own vision for some time. *(RIL 78)*

Lucille, the adolescent narrator in *Rich in Love* for whom the bildungsroman seems the most appropriate literary vehicle with which to explore the development of personal identity, initially is driven deeper into the domestic sphere, an apparent contradiction. But, Lucille combines her "invision" and her domestic reality to gain insight much like Alice Reese. Fully cognizant of the difficulty facing any woman who challenges the deeply-ingrained patriarchal influence on women to assume an exclusively domestic role, Helen forces Lucille to face the reality of domestic confinement with the hope that doing so will accomplish two things: first, Lucille will develop a deeper understanding of why Helen abandoned their home; and second, that she will emulate Helen's rejection of domestic confinement to experience the outside world. Humphreys once again uses an intergenerational dynamic to illustrate the means by which women are empowered to balance the power of patriarchal power, i.e. the power to influence the next generation. But, as seen in this passage in which Lucille speaks to Rae after she balks at assuming her maternal responsibilities, in the beginning Lucille willingly adopts the patriarchal rhetoric from which both her mother and sister flee: "Get used to all the things you don't want to get used to, like the thought of staying in one place, having somebody depend on you, living with the same man for a long time. You chose it. It's time for you to settle down" *(RIL 151)*. Humphreys places this female adolescent character whose vision, like Iris Moon's, is both forward and backward, at the center of a traditional white southern family that is clearly falling apart. As such, she is the pivotal female character of the

novel, representing the choices available to white women in contemporary southern society. Humphreys has indicated a personal identification with the character (Lucille) that she describes as "the girl that didn't fit in"[16] , and one might deduce that each of the Odom women represents some aspect of Humphreys (or any other southern woman living a role traditionally defined by the patriarchy) along her personal trajectory toward self-determination.

The circular trajectory of female development in *Rich in Love* can be defined by the various roles of the southern lady that each character is called upon to fulfill. At various times, each one is daughter, sister, friend, lover, wife, and most importantly, mother, within the family. In this context, motherhood is determined by the responsibility each woman assumes for the care of her family, and not by the physical act of giving birth. Helen, Rae, and Lucille all fill the role of mother at various times in the novel, suggesting its inevitability for any woman living within a family: At the beginning of the novel, Helen has abandoned the role, returns at the birth of her granddaughter, only to abandon it again when Rae returns. Rae mothers Lucille as a young child, escapes the South to build a career in social activism in Washington only to return pregnant and married, assuming the role again for her own daughter. Lucille begins as a child, but assumes the role at her mother's disappearance and relinquishes it at the end of the novel to attend college. And finally, Phoebe, the youngest of the Odom women, represents the uncertainty of what will be expected of mothers of her generation and the hope for change. By the conclusion of the novel, only Rae, the mother of a young child is actively engaged in the role, apparently revealing Humphreys' belief that the responsibilities of motherhood are most appropriate in this relationship between a

dependent child and her mother. However, Humphreys leaves open the question of how Rae will handle motherhood. Although she seems content to be Billy's wife and Phoebe's mother by the end of the novel, one has to wonder if she may be destined to follow a trajectory similar to Helen's, eventually succumbing to her earlier desire for freedom and independence. The literal interpretation of the circular trajectory for her development allows for this possibility without compromising her maternal responsibilities.

In addition to the pull of the past on white southern women in *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love,* Josephine Humphreys also demonstrates the impact of place[17] on their struggle to define their identity. There can never be any doubt that the setting of both novels is the South, a place in which the conflicting cultural messages for women are exacerbated by the region's stubborn resistance to change. Numerous historians, including Fox-Genovese have documented the economic impact of the institution of slavery on the formation of female identity in the South. Fox-Genovese asserts that it was the driving force behind the divergence in female identity in the two already distinct regions of nineteenth century America, and as such, could not be ignored in the development of female identity (40). Ann Firor Scott asserts a link between the South's attachment to the idealized southern lady and the institution of slavery. She argues that the agrarian tradition of a landed aristocracy propped up by the work of slaves easily lent itself to the patriarchal system that dictated a subordinate role for women (16). And finally, LeeAnn Whites[18] argues that, by allowing the region to be drawn into the Civil War, the responsibility for the ". . . rupturing of elite gender relations was the result of the hubris of planter-class men rather than the insubordination of planter-class women"

(153). All seem to concur that the institution of slavery in the South created a disproportionate impact on gender roles in the South.

In spite of this, in "Casualties of the Feminine Mystique," Dawn Drzal includes Alice Reese in a group of heroines from the 1980's whom she believes are caught between the conflicting cultural expectations of the past and present without consideration of place. While she acknowledges the impact of the historical context within which Humphreys is writing,[19] and that Alice Reese is one of many female characters confronted with this dilemma, she fails to appreciate the disproportionate effect of place on women in the South. For Drzal, these so-called "daughters of the feminine mystique," (451) women born into an era when the cultural expectation was that their role was primarily domestic, but who came of age after the women's movement has encouraged, and even demanded a more public role, place doesn't matter. Ironically, while she acknowledges that male characters shared in the cultural ambivalence that confronted these women (452), Drzal fails to appreciate its special impact on women in the South whose political, economic, and social position within the society has been historically determined by men. The progressive weakening of the patriarchy then, renders women in the South either confused and powerless like Alice Reese, or propels them out into the world in search of a new way to define their identity, like Helen Odom. The breakdown of the political, economic, and social hierarchy dominated by the patriarchy accelerated during the 1970's when once again, women demanded the individual rights won by blacks.[20] While I agree that the social movements of the 1960's and 1970's had a significant impact on how most women defined their role in society, I would argue that white women in the South faced a far greater challenge in reconciling

the demands of the past and present than those in other parts of the country.[21] The problem with Drzal's argument is her failure to take into account what Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has described as "New Englandization" [22] of American women. By collapsing the identity of women from different regions, races, and social and economic classes, historians have created (and Drzal has here adopted) definitions of women that are incomplete at best and openly biased at worst (Fox-Genovese 40). The heroines for whom Drzal has identified a common cultural conflict actually come from several different regions of the country, and of those women, only Alice Reese lives in a state with an undisputed history as a slave-holding patriarchy.[23] By failing to even mention this factor's impact on the personal development of identity for Alice Reese, Drzal ignores crucial differences in social and economic pressures that are well-documented.

As a female writer who lives in the South, Josephine Humphreys knows first-hand the impact of history and geography on the development of white southern women's identity. Ever-mindful of the South's history as a slave-holding patriarchy, Humphreys demonstrates how the erosion of patriarchal power in the progressively Americanized South becomes a catalyst for the development of female identity strong enough to allow women to negotiate a more equitable balance of power in their relationships with men. Using intergenerational relationships between women, Humphreys explores how women obtain and use this renegotiated power to benefit themselves and their families. In addition to a new definition of white southern womanhood, Humphreys also expands the definition of family beyond the patriarchal model to include those with varied configurations that Lucille concludes is family, nonetheless: "'Family' meant people in a house together. But that was in a language so far back that all its words are gone, a

language we can only imagine" (RIL 260). By asserting expanded definitions of white southern womanhood and family at the same time she laments the passage of small, distinct southern towns like Mount Pleasant, Humphreys reveals her own conflicted desire for things to both change and remain the same. Like Faulkner, Humphreys uses the family to represent the failure of traditional southern patriarchal ideals, but offers readers rehabilitation instead of ruin, and possibility instead of permanence. *Dreams of Sleep* and *Rich in Love* are the literary vehicles in which Josephine Humphreys seeks to transport contemporary white southern women from the Old to the New South. Her use of adolescent girls as contemporary maternal role models that incorporate self-expression and independence offers an optimistic outlook on the future of both white southern women and the contemporary society in which they live. And, by focusing on the evolution of female identity and its impact, both real and potential, on contemporary southern society, Humphreys invests women with the power they need to balance the power of the patriarchy.

Notes

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[1] Numerous scholars have documented Percy's impact on Humphreys' writing, particularly her emphasis on the urban southern setting and the philosophically confused patriarchal figure. But, Farrell O'Gorman points out a significant difference, describing *Dreams of Sleep* as "a novel of satirical social commentary that meditates in its own subtle manner upon the past, while it is certainly the work of a *female sensibility*" [italics added] (103). O'Gorman argues that Humphreys' novel reflects Percy's focus on a character "who is—in Percy's terms—onto something she has not fully noticed before about the reality of her here and now world" (Percy qtd. in O'Gorman 103).

[2] *Absalom, Absalom!* Thomas Sutpen's design included "money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife" (212).

[3] Diane Roberts describes the women of *Absalom, Absalom!* as "specters. . . inhabiting, frustrating, [and] held hostage to, Sutpen's 'design'" (27). Roberts argues that Faulkner uses this novel to explore southern iconic figures including the lady as part of his "struggle with limits—racial, gender, and class—" (27). Faulkner acknowledges the confinement of antebellum with the character of Judith Sutpen, who embodies

the southern lady, Faulkner's "tribute to the plantation patriarchy" (Roberts 25). At various times Judith fills several of the roles of the lady including the "dutiful daughter, faithful sister, forgiving lover, surrogate mother, and nurse . . ." (25), all prescribed to her by the patriarchy. But, like her father's carefully crafted design, the image of the lady is flawed and the questions both must answer are, *where did I go wrong?* and *where do I go from here?*

[4] Mary Grabar quotes Gary Ciuba's assertion that "although Percy's typically male seekers seem more open to discovering their life in God, the women they have loved are never clearly shown to have come as far in their wayfaring" (119).

[5] In a vehicle aptly named Ulysses by a *female* character, Will Barrett sets out to find answers; but ironically, it is the women in the novel that control his search. He allows himself to be manipulated by two women, both of whom have developed identities outside the control of the patriarchy. They are Rita, the estranged wife of another failed patriarch who manipulates the circumstances by which Will is accepted into the Vaught clan; and Val, the self-styled champion of poor children who circumvents patriarchal power by becoming a nun (thus shielding herself from marriage), who projects responsibility for Jamie's salvation onto Will. So, Percy has created a situation for Will in which Val determines his mission and Rita directs his course.

[6] Drucilla Hawks in *The Unvanquished* is a notable exception, and according to Roberts, represents Faulkner's struggle to reconcile the Confederate Woman with the southern lady.

[7] In "Rewriting Southern Male Introspection in Josephine Humphreys' *Dreams of Sleep*" Kathryn B. McKee argues that in Alice Reese, Humphreys has created a character that is "one of the first of her sex to appropriate the characteristic formerly associated with the thinking Southern man" (241).

[8] On his first day of school, Marcella is not home when Will returns and he becomes convinced that "something has happened to my mother" (*DOS* 99). Afterwards, he resolves never to need her again.

[9] "Why did you leave?" I [Lucille] said. "What was wrong with the way it was?" [Helen responds] "It was permanent" (*DOS 204).*

[10] After being turned away at the front door of the plantation house by a "monkey nigger," Sutpen leaves his family and forms his design: "to combat them you have got to have what they have that made them do what he did. You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with" (Faulkner 192).

[11] After Iris calls Will to let him know that they are on the way back to Charleston, she turns over control of the car to Alice because she is unsure of her ability to drive in the city: "I drove fine at night, she says. But now I'm not so sure I can do it, with more than me and the road to take into account" (*DOS* 209).

[12] Barbara Welter describes the Cult of True Womanhood: "The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power" (21).

[13] Instead, "She doesn't see other women much, especially since her husband took up with one. She doesn't have much to do with them, or with men either, or with what is called the world (restaurants and schools and offices).She has drawn back to a tighter world" (*DOS 3).*

[14] Alice describes her responsibilities as a mother as "a duty that weighs on her mind like a concrete block tied to sink something in a sea" (*DOS 9)* and her marriage as "a place where the language is not her native tongue" (*DOS 8).*

[15] Mary Anne Ferguson describes a fundamental difference between the traditional male and female Bildungsromans: "The male novel of development or *Bildungsroman* usually ends when the hero reaches adult self-awareness after having tested his inner sense of self against reality by a series of adventures in the world. . . the circular journey is spiral, the ending a new beginning on a higher plane. . . The pattern for the female novel of development has been largely circular, rather than spiral: women in fiction remain at home. Instead of testing their self-image through adventures in the outside world, they are initiated at home through learning the rituals of human relationships, so that they may replicate the lives of their mothers" (228).

[16] Humphreys said in an interview with Hugh Howard published in 2005 that she and Lucille shared a love of books, ineptitude in sports, and a strong sense of shyness that probably contributed to her insightfulness (148).

[17] In this often cited essay, Eudora Welty argues for the importance of place in fiction to convey "the real, the present, the ordinary day-to-day of human experience" (117) that lends credibility to fiction.

[18] LeeAnn Whites concurs with Fox-Genovese's assertion of patriarchal determinism and places the responsibility for Southern women seeking emancipation from their prescribed domestic sphere to the failure of the patriarchy. She argues that the responsibility for the ". . . rupturing of elite gender relations was the result of the hubris of planter-class men rather than the insubordination of planter-class women" (153).

[19] According to historian Sara M. Evans, "Twice in the history of the United States the struggle for racial equality has been midwife to a feminist movement. In the abolition movement of the 1830s and 1840s, and again in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, women experiencing the contradictory expectations and stresses of changing roles began to move from individual discontents to a social movement in their own behalf' (24).

[20] The marriage of two social movements united in pursuit of individual rights for blacks and women would eventually give both unprecedented opportunities for personal freedoms. Sara M. Evans documents the tenuous connection between the two movements that yielded powerful results. However, both movements encountered political, economic, and cultural resistance in the patriarchal South. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler notes the relative success of the women's suffrage movement in the North and West compared to the South, asserting that "the South was distinctive — indeed notorious— in the annals of the woman suffrage movement as the region that afforded the movement the greatest resistance and the least success" (4). Wheeler provides the following explanation for the resistance of the patriarchal southern society (both male and female): "A key element of this Southern civilization was a dualistic conception of the natures and responsibilities of the sexes that precluded the participation of women in politics and cast the Southern Lady in the role of guardian and symbol of Southern virtue" (4).

[21] Fox-Genovese traces the development of female identity for antebellum southern women from republican motherhood to the so-called *southern lady,* describing "a discrete social system and political economy within which gender, class, and race relations shaped their lives and identities" (37). Southern women, therefore, increasingly identified themselves in relation to a patriarchal definition focused on domesticity and reinforced by slavery. LeeAnn Whites concurs with Fox-Genovese's assertion of patriarchal determinism and places the responsibility for Southern women seeking emancipation from their prescribed domestic sphere to the failure of the patriarchy. She argues that the responsibility for the "rupturing of elite gender relations was the result of the hubris of planter-class men rather than the insubordination of planter-class women" (153). Like Fox-Genovese, Whites emphasizes the impact of economic pressures that supplant the power of patriarchal determinism as the basis upon which southern

women built their identity. She says, "For women of the planter class, the decline of male protection and women's exposure to economic hardship was inextricably fused through the crucible of the Civil War (153).

[22] Fox-Genovese describes "New Englandization" as the tendency to generalize the experiences of a small subset of American women belonging to "the emerging bourgeoisie" (40) as a basis for the development of a homogenized version of identity for all American women. According to Fox-Genovese, such a generalization necessarily favors the educated and the affluent and excludes marginalized women of lower social and economic class, both black and white (37).

[23] The heroines of the other novels in Drzal's article reside in Pennsylvania (A *Wrestling Season*, 1987, by Sharon Sheehe Stark), Illinois (*The Good Mother,* 1986, by Sue Miller), and Missouri (*The Time of Her Life,* 1984, by Robb Forman Dew).

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