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The 1936 Map of Yoknapatawpha as an Ideological Space

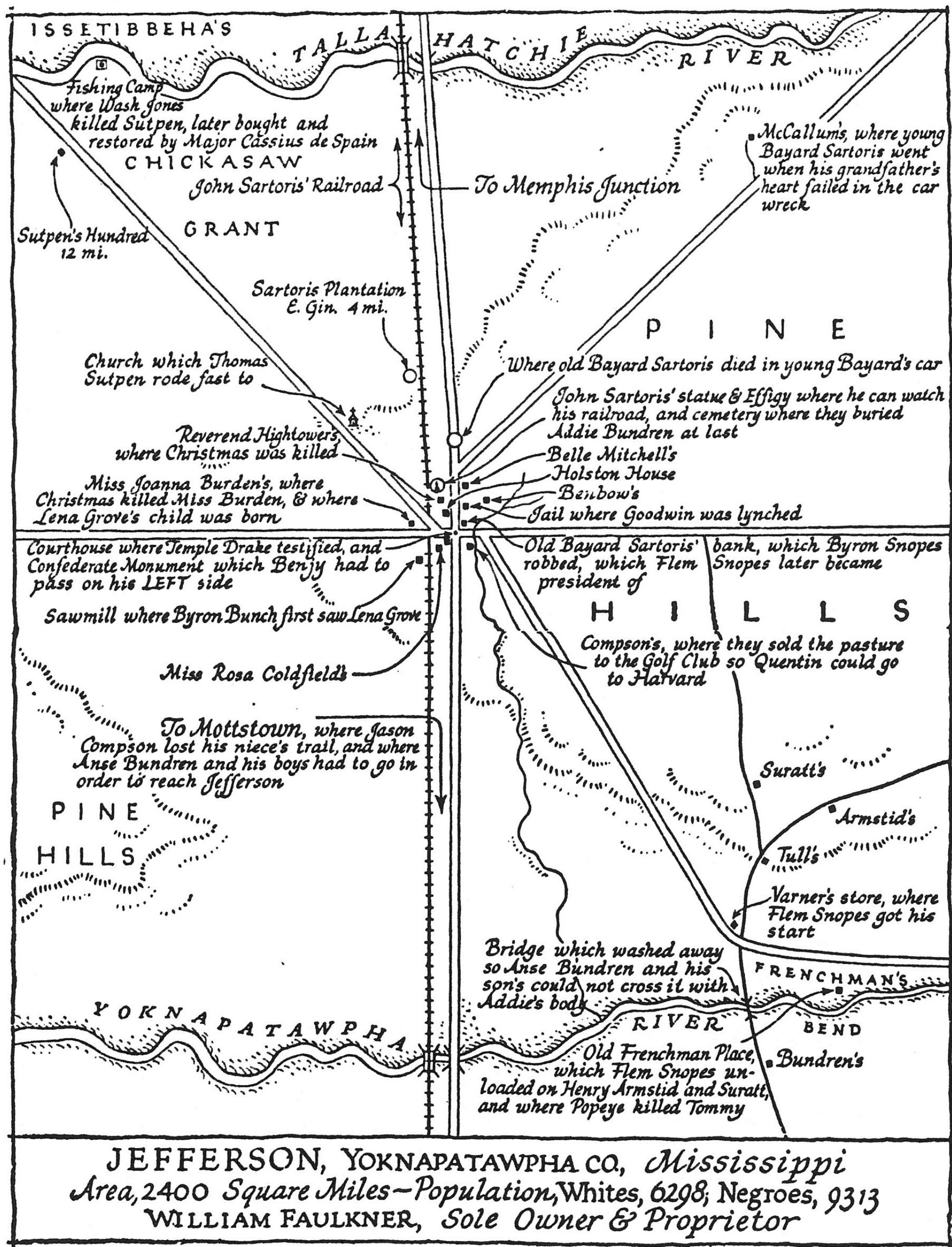
The map below, drawn by William Faulkner, was originally published with the first edition of *Absalom, Absalom!* in 1936.[1] As it happens with literary maps, it was treated by the publishers as an unnecessary supplement, and is not to be found in many later editions.

The present analysis of the 1936 map will make use of an apparatus that would have been impossible for either the readers or the writer at the time of the publication of *Absalom, Absalom!* It will focus on the ideological struggle embedded in the map which represents a dysfunctional world composed of the old antebellum social order and a rapacious modernity of the early twentieth century. Because of the limited space, certain crucial aspects of the significance of Faulkner's map will have to be omitted, such as the relation between the cartographical image of Yoknapatawpha and Faulkner's home county, Lafayette, or the similarity of the map to the medieval *T-O mappa mundi* maps.

There have been critical discussions of the symbolic orders signified by the 1936 map, usually based on the novels themselves without referencing the map, while this article explores, precisely, the map itself and uses the novels to provide clarification, to identify necessary details, and to expose omissions or, in a few instances, errors and inconsistencies. The aim of the present study is not to prove that the map is more "real" or "true to life" than the novels, but rather to show that it is an inherent part of the literary universe created by Faulkner and as such it is related, in complicated ways, to the narrative works of the great writer. It is characterized by the presence of re-workings, re-articulations, borrowings, amendments and alterations. The 1936 map is a representative, complex, ever-revised text by Faulkner. There were in fact two 1936 maps, and just as in the case of *Sartoris* and *Flags in the Dust*, the original version intended by the author was published at a much later date.

When we look at the elegant lettering and think of the amount of work Faulkner must have invested in the map to give it a recognizable aesthetic shape, we can only agree with Thomas L. McHaney who states that the image of Yoknapatawpha gave the reading public a clue to the work of an incredibly protean writer who, viewed through the prism his individual novels, continually changed his literary forms and thus, at least to less sophisticated readers, did not

[1] The 1936 map was not the only cartographical representation of Yoknapatawpha created by Faulkner. A second one was drawn for *The Portable Faulkner* (1946) and depicts a significantly different reality, which, sadly, cannot be analyzed within the limits of this text.



The 1936 Map (Regular Edition) (*Absalom, Absalom!*) (by permission of Random House)

produce a "brand name" kind of writing. McHaney ultimately finds Faulkner's creation a "joke, or… misappropriation of the device" that "resembles the kinds of cartography often seen in re-issued classics, where they help the reader 'see' the action" (521). This may be the case, but the map allows us to see no action if we are not familiar with the novels, and was probably created, as McHaney admits, "for his own purposes, perhaps to recall how much of the territory he had used or to scout out new ground" (525). It is therefore an important source for examining Faulkner's attitudes, stereotypes and methods connected both to the reality and the invention.

The date of publication of the 1936 map places it close to the chronological beginning of Faulkner's famous literary project, seven years after the first Yoknapatawpha publication and twenty six before the last one. However, the map should not be mistaken for an early or insignificant creation, as it is based on some of Faulkner's best work and even references a number of stories and novels that still had to be published at the time.

As Małgorzata Grzegorzewska observes, "[r]ecent cartographic criticism informs us that each map is but a version of the Barthean myth, perceived as innocent speech: although readers tend to mistake it for a record of 'facts,' what it really conveys is a set of values" (149). In other words, we should "accept that maps act as a visual metaphor for values enshrined in the places they represent" (Haley 47-48). Due to their figurative meanings, maps are "a part of a discourse that intends to persuade and convince, are never impartial and hence they can be conceptualized as inherently rhetoric images" (Ziarkowska 119). Seen in this way, the 1936 map becomes one of the ways in which Faulkner describes the fall of the South and its inevitability. In his discussion of the images of women and African-Americans in Faulkner's writing, Philip M. Weinstein emphasizes the usefulness of such cartographic assumptions and readings: "Like doodling, marginalia may comprise less examined markings: more able to escape the mind's censorship, more likely to accommodate fugitive energies not welcome within the central enterprise" (44). This statements points to three crucial concepts: "marginalia," "fugitive energies," and "central enterprise". Marginalia are, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "marginal notes," "written or printed in the margin of a page," "of, on, or pertaining to the edge of the field of consciousness." They allow the unspoken to surface and the problematic to be visible. "Fugitive energies" is an expression taken from Michel Foucault and related to his idea that "knowledge is always a form of power" and "is not an 'object' that can be seized, held or lost, but a network of forces in which power always meets with resistance" (Macey 134). "The central enterprise," in turn, presupposes a "margin," creating the tension, resistance and space for the rebellious marginalia.

The dichotomy at the heart of the 1936 map is the center vs. margin opposition: the struggle between the defunctive Antebellum South (center) and its abnormal modernity

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(periphery) tainted by the past sins. The old system is represented by a number of imperishable, meaningful landmarks. The modernity is shown through lost and atypical people trying to uphold the values of the old, dead system (e.g. Quentin or Rosa), fighting against its momentum (e.g. Joe or Joanna) or deliberately exploiting its weakened state (the Snopeses).

The Old South: the Courthouse and the Confederate Monument

No matter how defective was the world of Faulkner's design, its founding ethos is presented on the map in a lofty, powerful and static manner. It is lofty because its main markers are the Courthouse, the Confederate Monument, and the effigy of (Confederate) Colonel Sartoris, the three epitomes of values lasting, unchangeable and sustained by law, tradition and people larger-than-life. The power of these spatial elements has to do with the fact that they occupy the center of the "known world." They remain invariably static: buildings, statues, and names standing for their own imperishable nature, even if they are reduced to but empty signifiers. They speak of the old world while, interestingly, its downfall is not mentioned directly. They commemorate a conquered civilization and reflect its governing rules. They are opposed by the active layer of the "individual signs" on the map.

The legal system of the antebellum South, emblematized by the Courthouse, is presented in a way that suppresses its greatest sin – slavery, its greatest fear – miscegenation, and, in general, any sign of the fall after the Civil War. The historical events have been erased, and only ghosts like Rosa Coldfield or ruins like the Old Frenchman Place have been left of history. The significance of the Courthouse is best expressed in *Requiem for a Nun*, published fifteen years after the 1936 map: "But above all, the courthouse: the center, the focus, the hub… musing, brooding, symbolic and ponderable, tall as cloud, solid as rock, dominating all" (35). The Courthouse is a symbol of the laws of the Old South, of the idea of an organic society where each class and each race had a specific, predetermined place. The whites were the guardians and protectors of the childlike blacks. White women were chaste and ethereal, white men brave and just. The actualities of the 1936 map are strikingly different from such imaginings: there are no African Americans, the women are far from being ladies, and the men are abusive and unpredictable.

The Women

The antebellum women were placed on a high pedestal where they could "be pious and pure, domestic and submissive" (Williamson 345). The seven female inhabitants implied on the 1936 map are far from such an image. They share a set of common characteristics: they are all white, all single (or dead), all located close to or heading for Jef-

ferson, none of them conforming to the ideal of a "chaste lady" and none endowed with an inherently active subjectivity.

Faulkner's most famous statement about women is the following: "I think that women are marvelous, they're wonderful, and I know very little about them" (Deborah Clarke 126). The female characters in Faulkner's fiction are invariably symbols of the Other, with the powerful and silent ciphers like Caddy Compson or Lena Grove. There is little space on the map for women to achieve self-fulfillment, as they are objectified by the male gaze. None of them is black, as pointed out by Beth Widmaier: "female subjectivity and racial identity are kept separate, as if the two forms of Otherness conjoined would prove too subversive" (23). This seems to be an understatement in the case of the 1936 map, which altogether excludes African Americans. The point is that in Faulkner's fiction we find important and powerful black or partly-black women who are not included in the map. For example, there is no place there for Dilsey Gibson from *The Sound and the Fury*, "one of Faulkner's noblest characters, chief among those who 'endure'" (Kirk 32), or Clytie from *Absalom, ABsalom!*, "protector and avenger" who "figuratively embodies the forces which defeat white southern patriarchy and literally sets in motion the final stage of the fall of the house of Sutpen" (Deborah Clarke 127).

All the women included in the map are single or dead, and none of them appears to be involved in any kind of stable or "typical" relationship. There are two "Misses," one an old spinster (Rosa Coldfield), and the other dead (Joanna Burden). Belle Mitchell in *Sartoris* is referred to by the name of her first husband, not the name that she will have received later (Benbow). She is also one of the characters in *Sanctuary*, and her presence as Horace's wife is implied by the "Benbow's" household. The problem with Belle in *Sartoris* is that she is absent through most of the novel and seems to be completely indifferent to her husband, which suggests a rather dysfunctional marriage. Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* "is kidnapped and raped by a Memphis bootlegger and then succumbs to the immorality of the underworld" (Hamblin 107). Lena Grove in *Light in August* escapes from her family and travels the country in search of a man who made her pregnant and promised to "send for her." Miss Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* has no "legitimate" relationship either, as she "runs away with Charlie, the carnival man in the red tie" (Kirk 32). The only character that seems to have been in a rather stable relationship is Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying*, but the map indicates her death, thus, in the end, in the design there is not a single female character involved in a stable relationship. Apparently, the map illustrates, in a striking way, a certain deficiency, seen by the critics as prominent in Faulkner's fiction, namely the failure of marriage and the failure of the family: "Faulkner's major characters lived and moved upon a marital and sexual landscape that was in shambles" (Williamson 369).

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Faulkner drew the map, placing Jefferson, or more precisely, “the Courthouse” and “the Confederate Monument” at its very heart. If we consider the spatial distribution of the women we clearly see that they are located near the center of this symbolic space. Even Addie, whose journey starts forty miles South-East of Jefferson, is buried in the cemetery near the center of the map. A number of farms and estates are also included in the map, like “Tull’s” or “McCallum’s,” which signifies the presence of whole families or at least the possibility of such presence. However, these are located outside the center, near the borders of the county. It would appear that Faulkner did not want a typical family to occupy the space in the center of his world and narration. The only female character that is clearly not in the center is Miss Quentin Compson, whose trail was lost in Mottstown, a place outside the map. She is, however, a character that breaks the most important rule that the map’s symbolic order imposes on women. She is active and therefore cannot be allowed to appear near the center. Joanna Burden, who tries to be true to her own beliefs and acts on them is killed. The center does not permit any violation of its standards.

None of the women is close to the ideal of the lady that was “rooted in slavery” and “persisted long after Emancipation” (Widmaier 25). In short, this ideal represented a chaste, modest, privileged, white woman. Of the six living women present on the map one gives birth out of wedlock (Lena), one elopes with her lover (Miss Quentin), one is killed by her lover (Joanna), one remains a spinster (Rosa), one can be suspected of nymphomania (Temple), and one “is repeatedly associated with rank sexuality: filth, unpleasant smells, heat, flesh, and rottenness” (Belle) (Hamblin 254). The women may be white, but they do not live up to the primary requirement for the Southern lady, which is chastity. The ideal of the Southern woman was dissociated from male sexual desires, which were mostly projected onto the animal-like black females. In Faulkner’s world, the women never embody the traditionally defined chastity, although they are not asexual. Symptomatically, hardly ever are they caring mothers, which is very much in keeping with Faulkner’s interest in dysfunctional families (the Compsons, the Sartorises, the Sutpens, the Benbows).

Last but not least, the female characters of the 1936 map are inactive and have been denied proper subjectivity; they are obedient, objectified beings. This is a reductive view of Faulkner’s women, who are often complex literary characters, but such a view is justified by the map alone, a “text” much simpler and more direct than the novels. The objectification of the female characters has an interesting grammatical dimension. There are altogether seven instances in which women are noted on the map. In four cases, there is a total of six sentences concerning women, all in the past tense and casting the women as objects: “could not cross it with Addie’s body,” “where they buried Addie,” “where

Christmas killed Miss Burden," "where Jason Compson lost his niece's trail," "where Byron Bunch first saw Lena Grove," and "where Lena Grove's child was born." In three instances, the women are recognized only as owners of property: "Belle Mitchell's," "Miss Rosa Coldfield's" and "Miss Joanna Burden's," and the contexts point to the property, not to the women. There is only one instance where a female character is active, but it serves as a crowning moment in the map's objectification of the women: Temple Drake's act of testifying.

The statistics regarding the use of the past tense and the number of sentences with the women as objects lead to conclusions which may seem far fetched, but remain quite telling, especially in the light of the amount of information about men. There are twenty two sentences with male subjects and only one with a woman in the same function. The only sentence in the present tense evokes a great dead male figure, Col. Sartoris. The patriarchal system is in full force here, creating a world which forbids women to act and leaves them dead, fugitive or unmentioned. The women are not only marginalized, but also contained within a set of tropes, such as the identification of property. The map tells us nothing about Miss Joanna's attempt to kill Christmas, Addie's insistence that her body be transported to Jefferson, or Dewey Dell Bundren's presence among Anse's "sons." In two instances, the women are clearly denied subjectivity despite their direct involvement in the events described: Lena Grove is not an agent when she gives birth to a child, and Miss Quentin Compson is not a fugitive person, but only a trail that has been lost.

Paradoxically, the most revealing caption as far as the objectification of women is concerned is the only instance of female activity: "Courthouse where Temple Drake testified." This is the only time when a woman is allowed to act, to be a subject and an agent at the very heart of the patriarchal symbolic order. The subjectivity, however, is not her own; it is temporarily and specifically required, determined and granted by the Law. On the map, apart from the testimony, Temple is but an invisible part of "Old Frenchman Place… where Popeye killed Tommy," and it is only in the novel *Sanctuary* that she achieves a literary incarnation. The women of the map can be active when so required; it would appear that from the point of view of the Sole Owner and Proprietor women do not possess a general right to be active. The situation of men is strikingly different.

The Men

Out of thirty characters mentioned on the map twenty three are male, which obviously accounts for their prominence. It is impossible to describe them all within the limits of this article. The men of the 1936 map are: John Sartoris (*Sartoris*), (old) Bayard Sartoris

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II (*Sartoris*) (young) Bayard Sartoris III (*Sartoris*), Byron Snopes (*Sartoris*), Flem Snopes (*Sartoris*), V.K. Surrat / Ratliff (*Sartoris*, *As I Lay Dying*, possibly *Lihgt in August*), Benjy Compson (*The Sound and the Fury*), Jason Compson (*The Sound and the Fury*), Quentin Compson (*The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*), Anse Bundren (*As I Lay Dying*), the Boys / Sons of Anse Bundren (*As I Lay Dying*), Henry Armstid (*As I Lay Dying*), Will Varner (*As I Lay Dying* and *Lihgt in August*), Lee Goodwin (*Sanctuary*), Popeye (*Sanctuary*), Byron Bunch (*Light in August*), Joe Christmas (*Light in August*), Gail Hightower (*Light in August*), Cassius de Spain (*Absalom, Absalom!*), Thomas Sutpen (*Absalom, Absalom!*), Wash Jones (*Absalom, Absalom!*) and Issetibbeha (*Absalom, Absalom!*). It is noteworthy that the number of male characters for each of the novels indicated is no fewer than three, while the biggest number of women was two and it was for a single book – *Sanctuary*. The men function both as subjects: "Old Frenchman's Place which Flem Snopes unloaded on Henry Armstid and Surrat," and as objects: "where Christmas was killed." That they are both destructive and creative: "where Christmas killed Miss Burden," "Fishing Camp… bought and restored by Major Cassius de Spain"; both victims and perpetrators: "where Popeye killed Tommy"; able to move both inside the County: "Church which Thomas Sutpen rode fast to" and outside its borders: "To Mottstown, where Jason Compson lost his niece's trail." The men enjoy a certain degree of freedom and do not need any "special" circumstances to become agents.

Similarly to the women, the men of Yoknapatawpha share a number of characteristics, and despite the diversity of the group, they are evidently opposed to the antebellum ideology. The main male feature in common is that the characters "do whiteness wrong, sometimes flamboyantly, spectacularly wrong" (Watson 10). The antebellum South believed that its men "should be protectors. Like knights of old slaying dragons, they should protect their ladies physically. Also they should be the material protectors, the providers who 'bring home the bacon' day by day for the comfortable support of their families" (Williamson 365). There are virtually no functional families in Faulkner's fiction and women are much more likely to be assaulted and abused by men than protected by them. The only characters resembling, in some degree, the antebellum male ideal are the two Sartorises, the nestor of the clan John Sartoris and his son Old Bayard. The map presents them in the same way as it does the only "normally" married woman – Addie: they are both dead. The other men fail to create a normal family (Young Bayard, Horace Benbow, Hightower, Sutpen), show no such need, or are simply unable to start families (Joe Christmas, Jason Compson, nearly all the McCallums). They all belong to a social landscape where traditional families or "protective" males are of the rarest kind. Even the most romantically inclined character on the map, Byron Bunch, does not create

a family or homestead, and instead, he passively follows the object of his affections, and at some point he even attempts rape.

The scope of activities available to the men on the 1936 map is considerable in comparison with women and includes: becoming, buying, crossing, dying, failing, getting, going, killing, losing, lynching, needing, passing, restoring, seeing, selling, riding, robbing, unloading and watching. Out of the twenty verbs used in the map's captions, eight are connected with loss or death, and only four with creation or acquisition. While the Yoknapatawphian women are destined to have things done to them, the males are fated to lose and die. Though some of the achievements marked on the 1936 map seem durable, Faulkner's later fiction undermines their lasting significance. For example, the Fishing (& Hunting) Camp, bought and restored by Major Cassius de Spain, ceases to be a bridgehead into the wilderness, as "the paths made by deer and bear became roads and then highways, with towns in turn springing up along them" (*Go Down Moses* 325), and ultimately vanishes "thirty feet below the surface of a government-built flood-control reservoir" (*Big Woods* 170), covering also the remnants of Sutpen's Hundred. The railroad built by John Sartoris stops functioning by 1935, as indicated in *The Mansion* (1959): Mink Snopes must hitch a ride to Jefferson as "there had not been a passenger train through Jefferson since 1935" and the line "was now a fading weed-grown branch line" (406). The achievements of Flem Snopes, who with the aid of his clan displaces and dispossesses the old aristocracy of the County, are not permanent either, as he is killed in revenge by his own kinsman and "appears immobile and even detached, too, until the blast sounds that ends his life" (Kirk 193).

Other male characters from the 1936 map are less creative, but more active. Joe Christmas kills and is killed, Young Bayard crashes his car, causing his grandfather's heart failure, and escapes Eastward, Jason Compson travels to Mottstown and back, etc. All of these actions, whether criminal or not, are always related to the hub of the old symbolic order. While the spatial distribution of men on the 1936 map is far less restrictive than the apparent centralization of women, the actions of the male characters are mostly connected to Jefferson, which is either the setting or a point of departure / return. An analogous example is Thomas Sutpen's "riding fast" towards the church located at the outskirts of the town. Importantly, all but one movements presented on the map indicate loss and oppose the old system. Young Bayard flees the crash scene acting against the pride and honor of his ancestors. Jason is forced to chase after his niece, who by the old code should be kept at home and closely guarded. Sutpen rides to the church with his family but in a way that has little to do with piety or respect for tradition. Moreover, he is killed on the outskirts of the map, which also signifies his detachment from the values of the old system. Flem Snopes, though apparently successful – moving from a store subject to a bank president – heralds

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and brings about the ultimate fall of the antebellum values. Only the movement of Anse and his boys seems to be motivated and justified by the old "protective" social order, with its respect for the will of women, but it is, in fact, a selfish enterprise on the part of Anse who wants to get a new set of false teeth. The dynamics of male movements indicated on the map arises from a pervasive sense of failure and desperation.

Some of the characters remain relatively separated from the hub, for example Wash Jones in Fishing Camp and Popeye in Old Frenchman Place. These two are, however, murderers who avoid punishment. Popeye leaves the country and an innocent man is lynched for his crime. Wash Jones is not "properly" punished by the law, but simply gunned down, having attacked the sheriff with a scythe. These instances are a far cry from what the idealized order of the South demanded, namely that crime or injustice be followed by quick and relevant punishment, as suggested by the elements in the middle of the map. The central area marks two reactions to the violation of order and the subsequent mob justice. In both cases women are victimized. Joe Christmas is lynched and castrated after killing Miss Joanna Burden, and Lee Goodwin is lynched for the alleged rape of Temple Drake. In these two situations, the timocratic system tries to protect women, but its interventions take place only after the harm has been done.

Contrary to the women named on the 1936 map, the men possess inherent subjectivity, but their actions bespeak very little of "a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance" (Hoffman 348) that Faulkner talked about in his Nobel Prize speech. Their actions illustrate the collapse of the "old constructions of masculinities" (Rogers 126), and male subjectivity is essentially connected with death and loss.

The African-Americans

The most interesting aspect of the ideological significance of the 1936 map is has to do with its missing elements. Faulkner dubbed himself the "Sole Owner and Proprietor" of Yoknapatawpha, but the exclusions from the map imply that he was uncertain about the "ownership" of some elements. If we treat the cartographic representation of Yoknapatawpha as a frame of reference for the later works or an artistic statement of the writer saying "this is the conflicted world that I have created," the empty places become the signifiers of the hidden, undefined and problematic issues.

There is a census at the bottom of the 1936 map, and it reads: "Population, Whites 6298; Negroes 9313." These two numbers with the accompanying racial distinction are probably the most puzzling part of the map. There is but one presumed African-American on the map – Joe Christmas – and there are a few other hints of the black

presence, but no African American is directly recognized. This erasure suggests that while slavery and miscegenation were the original sins of the South, the white inhabitants of the region needed no external racial incentive to create a repugnant and destructive social order, or perhaps that its emergence was due to the lack of such an incentive. The reality where "black and white intimately coexist so as to make up the discursive racial economy of Faulkner's texts" (Weinstein 44) is not reflected on the 1936 map. The 9313 African Americans exist only as a number, as if they had no influence on the conflicted reality within the map. Their possible influence is beyond representation.

The 1936 Maps as a Language of Power

The New Historicists assumes that "maps are pre-eminently a language of power, not of protest," which helps to "conceal from the popular gaze the secret knowledge of the state: *arcane imperii*" (Grzegorzewska 153). The process of map-making consists of "selection, omission, simplification, classification, the creation of hierarchies, and 'symbolization'," which are inherently and invariably "rhetorical" (Harley 11), and create "symbolic structures" "seek[ing] to 'impose' themselves 'upon space'" (G.G.N. Clarke 455).

The 1936 map presents a historical turning point when the old discredited system makes way for a new social reality. The "civilization" of the antebellum South of the 1936 map is unable to impose its values upon the people mentioned on the map; it becomes reduced to historical landmarks (the Confederate Monument) and desperate actions, such as lynching, which cannot prevent its downfall. The old system of the 1936 map fails to safeguard its people; the old aristocracy gradually loses its possessions and influences (the Compsons sell a pasture to send Quentin to Harvard; the Sartorises lose the presidency over the Bank). This dramatic social change coincides with the emergence of a rapacious and brutal modernity marked by murder, rape, cheating. The final collapse of the antebellum South – concomitant with the rise of the white trash – is also signaled on the 1936 map. Flem Snopes gets "his start" at "Varner's Store," a peripheral and insignificant location, and later becomes the president of a bank president, placed at the very heart of the old symbolic system. The causes of the social change reflected in the 1936 map are not identified. The original sins of the South, slavery and miscegenation, and the reason for its downfall, the Civil War, remain invisible. While the map's cartouche indicates that African-Americans outnumber the white inhabitants of Yoknapatawpha, there are no "black" characters on the map (except for the allegedly black Joe Christmas). The map is an instance of the "language of power, not of protest," with white people holding power in the antebellum as well

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as in the modern South. The absence of African-Americans from the map may signify that neither modern Yoknapatawpha and nor the remnants of the Old South can be saved. On the 1936 map, the representatives of the antebellum South, or their descendants, have ultimately failed, while no characters that have "endured," many of whom are African-Americans, are presented. The disintegration suggested by the map has no recognizable cause and no discernible cure, turning the Faulkner's cartographic creation into a doomed and violent world.

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