

“Female Silence in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and “A Rose for Emily”’: Crossing the Borders of the Speakable”

Mourad Romdhani
University of Sfax, Tunisia

Abstract

In William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury (1929), Caddy Compson moves outside the borders of language and resides in silence. In “Hearing Caddy’s Voice” (1990), Minrose Gwin admits that despite her disbelief in Caddy’s silence, she does not fully understand what she is saying, for “she is something more than we can say” (36). Likewise, in her single monologue, in As I Lay Dying (1930), Addie Bundren reveals a skeptical standpoint about language, stating that “words are no good. [. . .] Words don’t even fit what they are trying to say at” (159-60) and dreaming of “the dark land talking the voiceless speech” (163). Caddy’s and Addie’s silence is indeed an experience that crosses the confines of a masculine-biased linguistic system and that can arguably be read in Sociocultural feminist theories that question ethnocentric assumptions which privilege voice as the only medium of intelligible communication and try to draw attention to the silences spoken words are preloaded with. Tillie Oslen’s ‘natural silences’, Adrienne Rich’s conception of silence as a ‘historic presence’, bell hook’s silence as a ‘talking back’ process, Suzan Gubar’s and Sandra Gilbert’s ‘exclusionary silence’ and ‘palimpsest’ stories, Elaine Showalter’s ‘silent plots’, highlight silence as a border crossing medium of expression that overcomes the confines of a patriarchal language and celebrates ‘female zones of experience’.

Overcoming the borders of a dominant language and moving toward silence, Caddy’s, as well as Addie’s act, can readily be reiterated in Julia Kristeva’s notion of the semiotic being ‘unspeakable’ and ‘unavailable to conscious verbalization’ and Hélène Cixous’s feminine voice that “can only keep going without ever inscribing or discerning contours” (Cixous 89). Similarly, the women’s silence may be read in Luce Irigaray’s language of their own that “asserts women’s difference and names her identity as not-man” (Roberts 15) and Monique Wittig’s ‘pre-gendered’ new expressive identity that ‘crosses back’ toward the mirror stage as a way of articulating the multiplicity of female desire.

The present paper reads the matriarch’s movement from the speakable to the unspeakable in Faulkner’s texts and studies the motives of this mobility regarding sociocultural and psychoanalytical feminist theories.

Keywords: Myth, politics, poetics, postmodernism, centre, intertextuality, linguistic experimentation.

Introduction:

From anthropological, historical, social and geographical research to critical theories, the term 'mobility' is strongly resonant. Migration studies use the term to describe long-term migration movements as well as short-term movements like travelling to work or going on holiday (Sharp & Mc Dowell 168). Feminists criticize the employment of the term in migration studies for ignoring the gender of those who perform the act of mobility, scrutinizing the issue only from a masculine perspective and obscuring the complexity and variety of female mobility¹. Other studies concentrate on mobility from a social perspective, suggesting the term "social mobility" to refer to changes in a person's social status (168). Studies of social mobility are equally criticized by feminists for measuring status solely from a masculine outlook, focusing on a son's social status in relation to his father's status and obscuring the status of daughters, wives and mothers (168). In both cases, feminists criticize the study of the term 'mobility' which privileges a particular identity and marginalizes others.

Defining mobility as a movement from one space to another, much research attributes a major role to physical space in the analysis of mobility. However, little has been said about symbolic mobility which does not require physical space. In this respect, the present paper aims to concentrate on symbolic mobility implicitly advocated in feminist theories. Symbolic mobility highlights a female endeavor to overcome the confines of a masculine-biased linguistic system and reach a more fulfilling medium of articulation residing in silence. The central argument of this paper is to read the matriarch's deliberate movement from the speakable to the unspeakable in sociocultural and psychoanalytical feminist theories with a particular focus on William Faulkner's three female characters, namely Caddy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and Miss Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily" (1930).

Classically evoking denigrating associations as absence, powerlessness and negation and interpreted as the failure of verbal communication, silence is paradoxically loud, empowering and expressive, for it can signify a state of fullness and presence rather than of absence and negation. In "The Aesthetics of Silence," Susan Sontag stresses the significance of silence as a non-verbal medium of articulation which "remains, inescapably, a form of speech [. . .] and an element in a dialogue" (11).

Feminist theories overlap with psychoanalytical theories in dealing with the theme of silence as both theories agree that official and dominant discourses are deeply grounded in a closed linguistic system that represses and confines the individuality and subjectivity of the 'other'. Feminist critics like Elaine Showalter argue that the patriarchal discourse dominates the female voice, confining it into a system of representation that defines women as 'objects'. Conversely, feminists like Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Elaine Showalter and Hélène Cixous see patriarchal silencing strategies as a good opportunity for female sedition and a movement toward voice and articulation. Defying invisibility and silencing, feminists suggest silence² as a functional instrument of resistance and a medium of mobility toward voice and identity.

¹ Feminist Geography critically approaches research on Human Geography, arguing that it is characterized by a predilection toward the patriarch, reinforcing a masculine bias. For instance, the writing of landscape is traditionally equated to the feminine. Subsequently, it is subordinate to male geographers' interference and authority (Johnston & Sidaway 312).

² The terms 'silencing' and 'silence' should not be taken as synonymous for they have totally different meanings. Silencing refers to direct prohibition like traditional censorship of woman's voice in religious and sociopolitical

1. Silence in feminist theories: a border-crossing medium of articulation:

1.1. Sociocultural feminist perspective:

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir talks about the situation of confinement and abnegation women have to face in patriarchal cultures, pointing out that a woman is a prisoner of her body for she is locked in a process of natural functions – fulfilling male sexual desires and giving birth – and imprisoned in her bodily cycle of life. Any attempt to change such a natural cycle will otherwise be thought of as a source of “fear” and “anxiety” as it represents a threat to patriarchal laws and orders. De Beauvoir conceives a series of oppositions that revolve around the duality Subject/Other. For instance, while the masculine is culture, the feminine is nature; while he is human she is less than human; while he is voice and presence she is silence and absence and while he is mobility she is immobility.

Likewise, in *Silences*, Tillie Olson states that female creativity is thrown into forgetfulness and silence. Olsen states that “women’s books of great worth suffer the death of being unknown, or at best, a peculiar eclipsing, far outnumbering the similar fate of the few such books by men” (40). “Eclipsing,” “devaluation,” “neglect” and silencing are the outcome of a cultural judgment built upon a male vision that “women’s experience and literature written by women are, by definition, minor” (40) and, consequently, ought to be silenced and eliminated from consideration and analysis.

Olson’s contemporary Adrienne Rich deals with the relationship between voice, gender and silence. In her book *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* Rich records the struggle of women to have a heard voice. She describes silence as an oppressive patriarchal means imposed on females, stating that “in a world where language and naming are power, silence and oppression is violence” (204). Accordingly, Rich suggests a “revisiting” process built upon an “act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction” (35) so that women can overcome the chains of silence and acquire an independent voice.

In “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” Elaine Showalter sees in silence a potentially subversive element that enables women to move outside the contours of a male-dominated discourse and celebrate “female zones of experience.” Similarly, in “Talking about Ourselves,” Canadian feminist critic Barbara Godard asks: “How can we be an object, be constructed by a ruling discourse and still constitute an opposition to it, be outside enough to mark an alternative? If outside, how can one be heard at all?” (Birch 167). Godard concludes that the answer is “to redraw the circle for us, shift the relationships of centre and periphery of authoritative word and marginal silence” (167).

Like Showalter who suggests a return to the mother’s body as a way of finding a lost voice, Audre Lorde believes that, in order to survive, a woman needs to return to the poetry within her, “for we are not only casualties but also warriors. We need to reach out to transform silence into language and to share a commitment to reclaiming language that has been made to work against us” (41-42). Lorde adds that silent poetry inside the woman is what gives her voice, power and life.

contexts or indirect prohibition through ridiculing female speech as meaningless (Spender 1980, Cameron 1990, Olson 2003). However, silence refers to a feminist endeavor to break with patriarchal silencing strategies suggesting female speechlessness as a resistive instrument constructed upon the dynamics of the body and meant to be uncontainable by a masculine based language.

Without that inner poetry, a woman “cannot name the nameless and so cannot think the nameless. Without poetry, without women’s language, she gives up the core of power. Without poetry, a female sees the world only through the perception of the patriarch and perpetually speaks in a foreign tongue (39). Although it is a dangerous and revolutionary act, Lorde believes, speaking ‘from and into silence’ is a vital necessity for women’s existence and identity (37).

Silence becomes a woman’s way of resistance for, unable to find a place in mainstream language, women’s return to silence becomes fulfilling and liberating: “There [. . .] we take the oppressor’s language and turn it against itself. We make our words a counter-hegemonic speech, liberating ourselves in language” (hooks, *Teaching* 175). hooks suggests listening to voices silenced and suppressed by white patriarchal “master” discourses:

I suggest that we do not necessarily need to hear and know what is stated in its entirety, that we do not need to master or conquer the narrative as a whole, that we may know its fragments. I suggest that we may learn from spaces of silence as well as spaces of speech, that in the patient act of listening to another tongue, [. . .] we may disrupt that cultural imperialism that suggests one is worthy of being heard only if one speaks in Standard English. (186)

hooks asserts that the English Language carries power structures that are employed to silence voices of the marginalized. Certain slang, colloquial or ethnic speech is silenced and eliminated from Standard English because it is not understood in a dominant culture. Such a linguistic practice, hooks remarks, perpetuates the same patriarchal power structures that elevate certain people and suppress others.

1.2. Psychoanalytical feminist perspective:

In *The Revolution of Poetic Language*, Kristeva states that language has two aspects namely the semiotic aspect, which comes from the maternal body and which is closer to nature and the unconscious, and the ‘symbolic’ aspect which is more closely identified with the father figure and is rather associated with culture and conscious behavior (4). Kristeva describes the infant as possessing a sense of self closely attached to the mother. She describes the Freudian mirror stage as a metaphor for the change from the ‘semiotic’ to the ‘symbolic’ stage, pointing out that language favors the symbolic over the semiotic since, as speaking subjects, all we acquire is a ‘phallic position’. Subsequently, “in women’s writings, language seems to be seen from a foreign land [. . .]. Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak” (Kristeva, *Oscillation* 118). Kristeva argues about the necessity of finding a new form of articulation that subverts the masculine symbolic order and favors the more feminine semiotic which is more closely connected to the rhythms of the body, to the mother’s figure and to the nonverbal.

Following the Freudian model, Kristeva’s semiotic is constructed on bodily origins, for it draws upon corporeal memories commonly referred to in psychoanalysis as ‘mnemonic traces’ or “a reminiscence of the play of energy and drives –both destructive and pleasurable– experienced in the body with great intensity before the achievement of real and symbolic separation from the mother” (Smith 16). The semiotic aspect of language, Kristeva argues, is unspeakable and unavailable to conscious verbalization. It can be made manifest in “tone, timbre, intonation, modulation of voice and in tears [. . .] relating to emotion, pleasure and pain” (22).

The access to language and identity signals a 'symbolic' break with the maternal body and a passage into a masculine language grounded in phallogocentrism. Kristeva claims that in the pre-oedipal semiotic stage, there is no opposition between the masculine and the feminine. Such an opposition and the overt privileging of the masculine over the feminine are not natural. They are rather a cultural and linguistic practice in the symbolic order. As such, within the Kristevian perspective, silence can be regarded as a pre-oedipal purely natural condition that ensures equality between the feminine and the masculine.

Women are silenced in the 'symbolic' stage because they are totally alienated from the discourses constructing their body. A woman is bound to voice her body through the medium of a phallogocentric linguistic system that excludes her. Subsequently, her body remains 'unspeakable' and unspoken in the symbolic realm. A woman's body becomes "the state of a contradictory and unlivable state, a body in crisis" (174). If a woman attempts to articulate her body and her desire, she might overpass the borders of the symbolic linguistic system, for she is impelled toward new signifying structures that destroy the 'Law of the Father' and the phallogocentrism of the symbolic order.

As such, woman's silence becomes a medium of expression that constitutes a threat to a patriarchal linguistic system. In this respect, Kristeva comments on the importance of silence as a way of resisting the symbolic order which negates the feminine, claiming that through silence the feminine moves beyond the linguistic definition of the symbolic: "the belief that one is a woman is [. . .] absurd, for a woman cannot be [. . .]. She is something that cannot be represented, something that is not said" (qtd. in Brewer 32). To Kristeva, it is only through the nonverbal that the feminine can achieve mobility and articulation.

In the same vein, Hélène Cixous argues that women should learn to make use of the semiotic aspect of language so as to write their bodies as a form of resistance against phallogocentric cultures. Like Kristeva, Cixous thinks that a feminine writing can build upon the semiotic nonverbal experiences of the mother's body to break with the restrictions of the symbolic cultural systems. Cixous is for the idea of constructing an idiosyncratic feminine medium of expression. In *The Newly Born Woman*, she argues that "we must do so for what will become of women if we are forced to use a master discourse, where only one kind of knowledge is transmitted, a knowledge tied up in male power" (38). Cixous claims that if women rely on the patriarchal discourse of the symbolic order, they will end up linguistically disabled and incapable of articulating themselves. To find new ideological mediums, women need to reject phallogocentric discourses and find a new feminine medium of articulation. Cixous suggests a backward movement to the mother's body so as to explore its potentialities and overcome the rigid binary oppositions established by a phallogocentric symbolic order. If the feminine "explores her body with its thousand and one thresholds of order, she will make the old single-grooved mother tongue reverberate with more than one language" (84).

Moreover, in *This Sex which is not One*, Luce Irigaray claims that "Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters" (23). Accordingly, female desire is deliberately repressed within the patriarchal linguistic system and it can be "recovered only in secret, in hiding, with anxiety and guilt" (30). Articulating her desire within the contours of a patriarchal language, Irigaray insists that a woman's desire is not her own. Reiterating Woolf's statement that a woman needs a room of her own, Irigaray suggests a woman is required to seek a desire of her own. Therefore, a woman "is urged to assert her difference, to name her identity as *not-man*" (Roberts 15). In this case, women face the necessity of substituting the patriarchal linguistic system, alien to the feminine, by a new language of their own that functions outside

patriarchal parameters. Respectively, silence is presented as an alternative to male-biased discourses. However, it is not silence that originates from a position of powerlessness, marginality and absence. Rather, it is an expressive medium that signals female resistance and full presence.

In an article entitled “Veiled Lips,” Luce Irigaray similarly evokes the female’s inevitable reverberation of the masculine speech, describing this as the male “economy of the same.” She states that “only the father’s daughter, she repeats his discourse without much understanding, carries out his law, spreading it everywhere, in the middle of everything; intermediary for all to the point of intrigue, where her charm takes the place of violence” (99). As the mother fails to offer a voice and a language of their own, a daughter finds no other way of articulation but the Symbolic medium of expression in which the patriarchal “God” of Speech dominates.

Irigaray suggests that women should cross back toward the mirror stage³ so that they could articulate themselves. Irigaray postulates that women are required to move back in time as a way of regaining articulation and voice. Such a crossing back process into the semiotic stage can be achieved through silence as a way of undermining male discourses. In this respect, Christian Makward in “To Be or not to Be: A Feminist Speaker,” suggests mobility as a main feature of the feminine writing from a French feminist perspective, describing it as “open, fluid, exploded, [. . .] attempting to speak the body i.e. the unconscious, involving silence, incorporating the simultaneity of life as opposed to [. . .] masterly or didactic language” (96). By the same token, in *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler stresses female mobility outside the contours of a masculine-biased language as the sole way to articulation, stating that “the possibility of another language or signifying economy is the only chance at escaping the ‘mark’ of gender which, for the feminine, is nothing but the phallogocentric erasure of the female sex” (35).

Irigaray’s contemporary Monique Wittig equally argues that patriarchal language is a powerful hegemonic medium that subordinates and excludes the feminine. Language is “among the concrete and contingent practices and institutions maintained by the choices of individuals and [. . .] weakened by the collective actions of choosing individuals” (35). To Wittig, language is a system established in an effort to restrict and obscure the production of identities outside the axis of the patriarchal hegemony. Wittig underrates the patriarchal linguistic system in which the mark of gender is evident. She calls for a feminine “pre-social” and “pre-gendered” linguistic identity which substitutes the language and the Law of the Father and gives voice to a feminine silent/silenced identity.

2. Female Silence in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and “A Rose for Emily”’: Crossing the Borders of the ‘Speakable’

In William Faulkner’s texts, female migration outside the margins of patriarchal language is concretized by women characters whose resistive silence signals their mobility. Among many others, Caddy Compson’s silence in *The Sound and the Fury*, Addie Bundren’s silence and her critical attitude toward a patriarchal language in *As I Lay Dying* and Miss Emily Grierson’s deliberate forty-year silence in “A Rose for Emily” testify to the credibility of the claim that

³ According to Lacan, the mirror phase occurs when the child learns to know him/herself as reflection of the mother. This stage takes place in the imaginary/semiotic order before the separation from the mother’s body and the inscription into the male symbolic order.

Faulkner's women escape the confines of language and reside in silence as a border-crossing act of sedition and resistance.

In *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Caddy Compson is not allowed to a voice, for she never appears as a free direct speech, being told and retold by three brothers or three masculine tongues. Nevertheless, she figures so prominently in the novel as she is the main topic of her brothers' talk and thought. In "Hearing Caddy's Voice," Minrose Gwin admits that despite her disbelief in Caddy's silence, she does not fully understand what she is saying, for "she is something more than we can say" (36). Likewise, in her single monologue, in *As I Lay Dying* (1930), Addie Bundren's silence proceeds from a critical stand point about language. Addie overtly states that "words are no good. [. . .] Words don't even fit what they are trying to say at" (159-60) and dreams of migrating to "the dark land talking the voiceless speech" (163).

Likewise, in a "Rose for Emily," Miss Emily's voice is suffocated and her concerns are silenced by a patriarchal narrator. Even when allowed to voice herself, Miss Emily opts for very short utterances giving the impression that she deliberately refuses to speak. However, Miss Emily's imprisonment in her father's house has an empowering role, for the more silent and introverted the lady is, the more obsessed with her the townspeople become. Thus, the silence of Faulkner's females can arguably be described as an act of mobility that enables them to overpass the limits of patriarchy and reside in eternity and timelessness.

Miss Emily's silence adds to her portrayal as a character with divine attributes and thus her movement beyond the human. Several times in the story, Miss Emily is referred to as an idolized angel: "When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl with a resemblance to those angels in colored church windows" (52). The lady's deliberate confinement in her house and her total absence in Jefferson is equally reminiscent of the silence of the divine: "After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all" (50). Miss Emily lives as a recluse in the town for a period of almost forty years. However, by virtue of her physical absence and silence, Faulkner's female achieves total presence in Jefferson's thought like a divine power whose absence and silence reflect omnipresence and eternity.

Caddy Compson's, Addie Bundren's and Miss Emily Grierson's deliberate refusal of words falls within what Elaine Showalter terms as a potentially subversive element of silence that enables women to move beyond a patriarchal language as a way of expressing themselves in a male-dominated culture. Showalter argues that in every explicit theme articulated by a woman, there is always a hidden silent theme that is not expressed. To Showalter, any woman's form of communication can be read as "double voiced" or as a "dialogic discourse," containing a dominant and a silent story or a "palimpsestic" story, to use Sandra Gilbert's and Suzan Gubar's term. Showalter emphasizes the possibility that different discourses constituting a story can simultaneously tell two stories to the reader. One is a voiced dominant masculine-focused story while the other is a subversive feminine-based narrative or an *écriture féminine*. Seen from Showalter's perspective, Faulkner's Females' stories as silent women dressed in white and always in need of patriarchal custody is the dominant masculine-biased story while their story as ladies who resist the patriarch by virtue of their voicelessness is a "palimpsestic" narrative that escapes the confines of a patriarchal language and celebrates the unarticulated female body, constructing them as goddesses of silence and resistance.

Caddy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, Addie Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* and Miss Emily in “A Rose for Emily,” are Faulknerian women characters who have bodies uncontainable and uncontrollable by a phallogocentric society (Clarke 4). Their maternal power and their linguistically uncontainable bodies construct them as a feminist counterforce against the Law of the Father in the same manner French feminists like Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous criticize Lacanian assumptions about the Law of the Father and suggest a backward mobility toward a mother figure rather than a prohibiting father figure.

This attachment to the mother figure is abundantly referred to in Faulkner’s texts. In “A Rose for Emily” although the mother figure is missing, as there is no reference to Miss Emily’s mother, the whole town’s interest in Miss Emily’s silence and introversion ironically turns her into a mother figure which fulfills the townspeople’s pre-oedipal desire obscured by the dominance of patriarchal culture. In the same way, the Compson brothers’ obsession with their absent sister in *The Sound and the Fury* and the Bundrens’ journey, talk and thought, in *As I Lay Dying*, revolving around their matriarch’s wish to be buried in Jefferson reflect the remarkable presence of a pre-oedipal attachment to the mother figure in Faulkner’s texts, a presence that enables the female characters to move beyond the confines of panoptic patriarchal spaces and engage in an overflowing process of motion and openness.

Female characters’ remarkable silence throughout Faulkner’s texts meets Kristeva’s argument about the necessity of finding new forms of articulation that resist the masculine Symbolic order. Miss Emily’s intentional silence can arguably be classified as a Semiotic aspect of language which can be manifested through “tone, timbre, intonation, modulation of voice and in tears [. . .] relating to emotion, pleasure and pain” (Kristeva, *Revolution* 22). Miss Emily’s ‘cold’ and ‘dry’ voice, her wordless tears when she admits her father’s death and her silent stare to the druggist disclose a resistive medium of articulation which is unspeakable and unavailable to conscious verbalization (22).

In an article entitled “Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science,” Kristeva uses the term “silent production” to account for such a nonverbal medium of articulation: “This concept of a ‘work’ that means nothing and of a silent production that marks and transforms while remaining prior to all circular speech, to communication, exchange or meaning” (83). Kristeva uses the term in a deconstructive manner which revises the dichotomy language/silence in a way that the mere act of opposing silence to speech is no longer relevant. Instead, “silent production” becomes synonymous with an “unquiet silence, one that inhabits and disrupts sound” (Walker 95). Respectively, Miss Emily’s silence becomes a “silent production” which compels the townspeople, as well as the readers, to reevaluate a resistive medium that is anything but silent in the strict patriarchal sense.

Besides, Kristeva argues that in the pre-oedipal Semiotic stage of language, there is no opposition between the masculine and the feminine. Such an opposition and the overt privileging of the masculine over the feminine are not natural. They are rather a culturally-based linguistic practice in the Symbolic order. The role of patriarchal culture in establishing the superiority of the masculine over the feminine is concretized in “A Rose for Emily” in the tableau analogy where the masculine “spraddled silhouette” overwhelms the feminine and turns her into “a slender figure” (51) and in Homer Barron’s description as a “big voice” (53). As a reaction to a culturally constructed male superiority, Miss Emily applies her silence as a pre-oedipal natural condition that ensures equality between the feminine and the masculine. In this respect, the lady’s silence is “a semiotic

kind of unquiet silence. A silence that speaks” (Walker 173) and tells about a contradictory and unlivable female condition of crisis and alienation in a patriarchal Symbolic stage. Bond to voice her body through the medium of a phallogentric language that excludes her, Miss Emily resorts to a silent life that not only contains her unspeakable state of body crisis but also overpasses the ‘Law of the Father’ and the phallogentric order of the Symbolic stage.

Similarly, Hélène Cixous claims that women are required to learn how to make use of the Semiotic aspect of language, marked by non-verbal experiences of the mother’s body, to overcome the restrictions of the Symbolic order. To Cixous, women are incapable of appropriately articulating their concerns and their body through a masculine constructed Symbolic language. Hence, the rejection of phallogentric discourses is to Cixous a new medium of articulation that crosses the borders of the linguistic. In “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Cixous argues that phallogentric language is written in “black ink” with its totalitarian and rigid structures whereas feminine modes of articulation are produced in “white ink” or “the water from the body,” the endless source that flows freely and spontaneously.

In “A Rose for Emily,” the note Miss Emily sends to the mayor is of archaic shape “in a thin, flowing calligraphy in fade ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment” (48). Miss Emily’s note mirrors the lady’s body for it is as archaic and thin as its sender. Besides, it is written in “fade ink,” reflecting a fading body, a dying sexuality and, most importantly, the tax notice standing for the Law of the Father receives no comment from the part of Miss Emily, which is an indication of the lady’s adoption of a Semiotic language that favors the unspeakable and overcomes the patriarch’s Symbolic language.

Hélène Cixous adds that even when she speaks, a woman’s voice is kept in silence because she speaks in a masculine-constructed tongue that is alien to her. In the same way, a woman cannot be heard as her words fall upon deaf male ears which hear only the masculine (82). Besides, if a woman dares to speak in a patriarchal Symbolic order, she becomes an emblem of desire of the pre-oedipal semiotic order and a threat to the settlement of the Law of the Father. Consequently, a woman becomes doubly alienated in the language of the Symbolic that does not voice and allow the expression of her body. In the same spirit, Juliet Mc Cannell talks about the daughter’s silence and the wifely echoing of her man’s language which are “the only channels open as she closes her mother’s voice” (107).

Accordingly, Faulkner’s females’ silence is in an attempt to overcome the confines of the Symbolic language and a crossing-back toward a pre-oedipal stage highlighting the mother figure and the silent potentials of the female body. Talking about her body before its invasion by Anse Bundren, Addie recurs to silence as a better medium to voice its purity in the semiotic order and to overpass the contamination of a Symbolic linguistic sign: “The shape of my body where I used to be a virgin is in the shape of a and I couldn’t think Anse, couldn’t remember Anse. It was not that I could think of myself as no longer unvirgin, because I was three now” (161). The blank typography describing Addie’s body is indeed a silent moment celebrating a pre-sexual prelinguistic state that cannot be contained by words. In this instance, silence results in a textual absence which is, on one hand, an evocative and tempting beauty for the reader, telling about virginity and purity and, on the other, representing the lady’s struggle with the word and her resistive powers of silence. In this vein, Arnold Weinstein, in *Nobody’s Home: Speech, Self, and Place in American Fiction*, talks about Faulkner’s females “plenum of silence” constructed upon a poetics revisioning and resistance:

The plenum of silence has often been thought to be at the center of Faulkner's poetics, a plenitude unmarred by language's tricks, a fullness [sic] essentially undeliverable but there nonetheless, beyond the words, seemingly daring the writer to come at it, to yoke it into his operation, actually damning him to failure. (161)

Though "the plenum of silence" is visually concretized as a textual gap, it is indeed pregnant with meanings moving back the female body to a pure semiotic order which patriarchal language fails to translate.

It is face to phallogocentric control of the Symbolic language that the disruptive presence of women's silence emerges "with the potential to redefine established conventions and to suggest different methods of creativity" (Clarke 5). Miss Emily's silent life which haunts the patriarchal town of Jefferson as well as Addie Bundren's conclusion, in *As I Lay Dying*, that "words are no good; that words don't even fit what they are trying to say at" (159) fall within what Hélène Cixous describes, in "Laugh of the Medusa," as the feminine endeavor to "un-think the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battle field" (81). Through their resistive silence, Faulkner's women move outside the Symbolic aspect of a masculine-oriented language, rewriting their body in a new medium of articulation which Deborah Clarke terms, in *Robbing Mothers*, as "not-language" (6).

Additionally, Luce Irigaray suggests that women should resist the masculine-biased language of the Symbolic order and cross back to a "mirror stage" which better enables them to articulate themselves. This stage takes place during the prelinguistic Imaginary Order. Miss Emily's hair which was cut short, making her look like a girl (52) concretizes the woman's wish to cross back to a prelinguistic mirror stage after the death of her father. The same wish to escape from a Symbolic linguistic system is reiterated with female characters in Faulkner's texts.

Through her silence, Caddy Compson escapes from the Symbolic Order and resides in a pre-oedipal, pre-social Imaginary order in which she is remembered by a child-like brother, Benjy, via the smell of flowers, trees and leaves rather than linguistic signs (13-17). In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren rejects the Symbolic aspect of words and finds in silence her best medium of articulating her body. Faulkner's female characters exhibit a readiness to escape to a mirror stage or a pre-gendered, pre-social, pre-Symbolic order, to use Monique Wittig's terms, where silence substitutes the Symbolic Law of the Father and provides female characters with a chance of mobility beyond the confines of a Symbolic language controlled by the Law of the Father.

Conclusion:

Overcoming the borders of a dominant language and moving toward silence, Faulkner's women characters echo bell hook's notion of silence as a border-crossing "talking back" process, Kristeva's movement from the confinement of patriarchal language toward a semiotic sphere which is unspeakable and uncontainable by patriarchal verbalization. They also reverberate Hélène Cixous' feminine voice that "can only keep going without ever inscribing or discerning contours" (89), Luce Irigaray's language of their own and Monique Wittig's pre-gendered new expressive identity that crosses back toward the mirror stage as a way of articulating female identity.

Silent throughout Faulkner's texts, Caddy, Addie and Miss Emily remain quoted or referred to as the "other." Nonetheless, silence constitutes an empowering instrument and a resistive female

agency. In *The Most splendid Failure*, André Bleikasten highlights the resistive element of female voicelessness, arguing that Faulkner's silent females are an “empty centre” which in our attempts to fix it, we find ourselves overwhelmed by it in it and to it (57). Female silence in Faulkner's texts signals the matriarch's movement from the speakable to the unspeakable; a mobility aiming at crossing the borders of a patriarchal language and celebrating linguistically uncontainable female zones of experience.

IJHCS

References

Primary Sources:

-Faulkner, William. "A Rose for Emily". *Selected Short Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House Inc. 1993. [47-59]

- - -, *As I Lay Dying*. London: Vintage, 1996.

- - -, *The Sound and the Fury*. London: Penguin Classics, 1987.

Secondary Sources:

-Bleikasten, André. *The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury*. Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1976. Print.

-Brewer, Mary F. *Exclusions in Feminist Thought: Challenging the Boundaries of Womanhood*. Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2002. Print.

-Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminine and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.

-Cixous, Hélène and Catherine Clément. *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1986. Print.

- - -. "Laugh of the Medusa". *Women and Language Debate: A Sourcebook*, eds. Camille Roman et al. New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1994. [78-94] Print.

-Clarke, Deborah. *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner*. Mississippi: Mississippi U. P., 1994. Print.

-De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London: Picador, 1988. Print.

-Godard, Barbara. "Talking about Ourselves: the Literary Productions of Native Women of Canada". *Language, Literature and Critical Practice: Ways of Analyzing Text*. Ed David Birch. New York: Routledge, 1989. [165-177] Print.

-Gwin, C. Minrose. "Hearing Caddy's Voice". *The Feminine and Faulkner: Reading (Beyond) Sexual Difference*. Knoxville: U. of Tennessee P., 1990. [34-62] Print.

-hooks, bell. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989. Print.

- - -. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1996. Print.

-Irigaray, Luce. "Veiled Lips". *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): 93-131. Print.

- - -. *This Sex which is not One*, trans. Catherine Porter. New York: Corwell U.P., 1985. Print.
- Johnston, R.J. & J. D. Sidaway. *Geography and Geographers*. London: Arnold, 2004. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Oscillation between Power and Denial". Interview. Trans. Marilyn A. August. *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron. New York: Schocken Books, 1981 [117-118]. Print.
- - -. *Revolution in Poetic Language*. New York: Columbia U.P., 1984. Print.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. California: Crossing Press Feminist Series, 2007. Print.
- - -. "Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science". Trans. Sean Hand. *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi. New York: Columbia U. P., 1986. [74-88] Print.
- Makward, Christiane. "To Be or Not to Be: A Feminist Speaker". *The Future of Difference*, ed. Hester Eiseinstein & Alice Jardine. Boston: G. K. Halls, 1980. [90-104] Print.
- Mac Cannell, Juliet Flower. "Things to Come: A Hysteric's Guide to the Future female Subject". *Supposing the Subject*, ed. Joan Copjec. London: Verso, 1994. [106-32] Print.
- Olson, Tillie. *Silences*. New York: Feminist Press, N.Y. City University, 2003. Print.
- Rich, Adrienne. *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York: Norton, 1995. Print.
- Roberts, Nancy. *Schools of Sympathy: Gender and Identification through the Novel*. Québec: McGill Queen's U.P., 1997. Print.
- Sharp, Joanne and Linda McDowell, eds. *A Feminist Glossary of Human Geography*. London: Routledge, 2014. Print.
- Showalter, Elaine. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness". *Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory*. Ed., Robyn R. Ward and Diane Price Herndl. New Jersey: Rutgers U.P., 1997. [213-33] Print.
- Smith, Anne-Marie. *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable*. London: Pluto Press, 1998. Print.
- Walker, Michelle Boulous. *Philosophy and the Maternal Body*. London & New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Weinstein, Arnold. *Nobody's Home: Speech, Self, and Place in American Fiction from Hawthorne to Delillo*. Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1993. Print.