



Getting Mother's Body

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Parks admits to being captivated by Faulkner's novel *As I Lay Dying*, a work told through multiple points of view. *Getting Mother's Body* uses a similar technique as well as some of Faulkner's other structural and plot devices. Just as Faulkner's tale is one of travel (the family is returning mother's dead body to Jefferson County for burial), so is Parks's (Billy Beede, with the help of her friends and relatives, must travel to Arizona to exhume her mother's body before her burial site is destroyed by a new shopping center complex). In Faulkner's book, the mother speaks from her coffin; the same is true in Parks's novel, only in this instance, the mother, Willa Mae Beede, sings her thoughts since she had been a blues singer in life. As in the Faulkner original, the voices of the characters in Parks's novel are clear and distinct, capturing the essence and variability of multiple narrations that Faulkner introduced.

In 1963, when Billy Beede, the sixteen-year-old pregnant heroine, learns that her mother's body is to be moved before the shopping-center developers begin clearing the land where she is buried, she determines to make the trip from West Texas where she lives to Arizona, not to rescue her mother's body but to secure the "treasures" that had been buried with her: a pearl necklace and a diamond ring. She is joined by a remarkably diverse cadre of relatives, all on the quest for varying reasons, most being of a money-grubbing nature. Billy's journey and her motivations for making it shift the closer she gets to her destination as well, as her true feelings not only for her mother but also for all those around her become apparent. The trek is filled with unexpected occurrences and humorous developments. The final resolution is rare for Ms. Parks in that it is satisfying and complete within itself.

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