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FAULKNER'S VERITIES: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN YOKNAPATAWPHA

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ILLUSTRATIONS IN YOKNAPATAWPHA

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ABSTRACT

FAULKNER'S VERITIES: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ILLUSTRATIONS IN YOKNAPATAWPHA

by Beverly Bailes Christopher

The fourteen novels that William Faulkner set in Yoknapatawpha County illustrate his belief in the eternal verities. The presence of these qualities enables man to endure and sometimes to prevail; their absence explains his failure to find life meaningful.

Chapter one examines Faulkner's beliefs and identifies Yoknapatawpha as the proving ground. The quality of love is the primary virtue; honor and pride are essential also. Possession of the virtues is not enough; they must be expressed in positive action. Closely related is the emphasis on the individual. Faulkner presents the spectrum of humanity; those possessing the virtues as well as those violating them are drawn with great diversity. In general, the order of composition is followed.

Chapter two focuses on Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury. Both treat decaying aristocratic families of Jefferson. Major characters rarely exhibit the verities, but Jason Compson provides a dramatic negative example.

Chapter three examines less prestigious groups. A low-class white family exhibits strong determination and endurance in As I Lay Dying. Sanctuary treats degeneracy and perversion; Ruby Lamar reveals active virtue. The protagonist of Light in August experiences alienation; his associates provide negative examples. Other characters reveal man's essential goodness.

Chapter four investigates codes that govern men's lives yet deny the sacredness of life. The protagonist of Absalom, Absalom! is totally lacking in the primary virtue. The protagonist of The Unvanquished realizes the hollowness of an inherited code.

Chapter five shows Faulkner's most sustained negative example, tracing the virtueless Flem Snopes from The Hamlet to The Town and finally to The Mansion.

Chapter six considers four novels with unlikely characters who endure and prevail. Go Down, Moses shows the secondary virtues dominating the primary virtue. Intruder in the Dust depicts an unusual trio performing daring, positive action. In Requiem for a Nun, a black prostitute exhibits sacrificial love. In The Reivers, a child experiences the virtues in an assumed negative environment and from questionable characters.

Chapter seven concludes that knowing Faulkner and understanding his affirmations can be accomplished by knowing the Yoknapatawpha characters.

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Chapter I

FAULKNER'S BELIEF IN THE VERITIES

William Faulkner, the man and the writer, is fascinating to the readers of his fiction. However, Faulkner was adamant about his privacy and was frequently uneasy when questioned about his craft. He was always reluctant to grant interviews, although following the Nobel Prize recognition and especially in the last decade of his life, his growing literary reputation and his subsequent role as a public figure brought more demands to reveal the author. Trying to defend his tendency "to react violently to personal questions," Faulkner emphasized to an interviewer in 1956, "The artist is of no importance. Only what he creates is important."[1] Calvin Brown, who grew up with Faulkner in Oxford, Mississippi, recalls the early privacy established by the author, ten years Brown's senior. Impressed that Faulkner, then a young man, was never dominating nor condescending to a group of teen-age boys, Brown describes Faulkner's own independence

[1] Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," in Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1969), p. 67.

and his respect for the independence of others.[2] At the 1977 Conference on Faulkner at the University of Mississippi, Albert Guerard, analyzing the mature author and his work, identified a similar temperament in speaking of the inward self, "notably aloof, evasive, ironic, involuted, infinitely complex, unmistakably self-protective . . . Faulkner . . . maintained considerable distance between himself and his fictional world, and between himself and his reader."[3]

Although not quite so secretive of his craft of composition as he was of his private life, Faulkner often responded to direct questions vaguely, flippantly, or by focusing on character rather than composition. Faulkner in a rare interview in the late thirties told Robert Cantwell of Time magazine that when halfway through the writing of Sartoris, "suddenly I discovered that writing was a mighty fine thing--you could make people stand on their hind legs and cast a shadow."[4] In the late fifties,

[2] Calvin S. Brown, Jr., "Billy Faulkner, My Boyhood Friend," in William Faulkner of Oxford, ed. James W. Webb and H. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 46-47.

[3] Albert J. Guerard, "The Faulknerian Voice," in The Maker and the Myth: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. of Mississippi Press, 1978), pp. 26-27.

[4] Robert Cantwell, "The Faulkners: Recollections of a Gifted Family," in Three Decades, p. 56.

while writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia, Faulkner fielded numerous questions on writing technique. When questioned on the importance of style, he responded: ". . . anyone who is busy writing about people hasn't got time enough to bother with style."[5] Discounting an audience or a particular reader, Faulkner commented that he wrote "for years before it occurred to me that strangers might read the stuff, and I've never broken that habit."[6] Discounting critics also, Faulkner insisted, "Mine is the standard which has to be met."[7] Yet asked his purpose in writing when he first appeared for university lectures in the late forties at the University of Mississippi, Faulkner recognized the worth of the question but said he could not answer. He did admit, however, that it was "probably because of the hope that someone somewhere might say 'Yes, that's true.'"[8] Joseph Blotner, author of the most comprehensive biography, cites Faulkner's recognition and

[5] William Faulkner, "Session Ten: Visitors from Virginia Colleges," in Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 88.

[6] Faulkner, "Session Two: Press Conference," in Faulkner in the University, p. 14.

[7] Stein in Three Decades, p. 72.

[8] A. Wigfall Green, "First Lectures at a University," in William Faulkner of Oxford, p. 130.

awe of his own talent. Blotner, who knew Faulkner both professionally and personally during his time at the University of Virginia, speaks of Faulkner's awareness of what he had and quotes his comment to the mother of a friend, "I'm a genius"[9] and also from a personal letter to an intimate friend:

> And now, at last, I have some perspective on all I have done. I mean, the work apart from me, the work which I did, apart from what I am . . . And now I realize for the first time what an amazing gift I had: uneducated in every formal sense, without even very literate, let alone literary, companions, yet to have made the things I made. I don't know where it came from. I don't know why God or gods or whoever it was, selected me to be the vessel. Believe me, this is not humility, false modesty: it is simply amazement. I wonder if you have ever had that thought about the work and the country man whom you know as Bill Faulkner--what little connection there seems to be between them.[10]

What Faulkner did offer, late in his writing career, to provide some connection between the writer and his work was a profound statement of his beliefs. The most significant and dramatic presentation of his views came on December 10, 1950, in his "Address Upon Receiving the Nobel

[9] Joseph Blotner, "The Sources of Faulkner's Genius," in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1980), p. 253.

[10] Blotner, "Sources of Genius," in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, pp. 248-49.

Prize for Literature." Other speeches followed, two to graduating classes of which his daughter Jill was a member, acceptance speeches for other awards, addresses during diplomatic service, particularly the Nagano Seminars in Japan, and at one of his last appearances, West Point. Supplementing these formal statements are the recorded question and answer sessions during two extended visits to the University of Virginia. In both the formal and informal statements of his creed, Faulkner's firm belief in man's ability "to endure and prevail" is the dominating principle. His foundation for this belief rests on two points of emphasis: a cataloging of virtues which he calls the "old verities and truths of the heart" and a reliance on the individual, as opposed to groups or man in the mass.

Accepting the Nobel Prize, Faulkner addressed particularly the young writer who might someday stand where he then stood and challenged him to return to the "problems of the human heart in conflict with itself" and to leave "no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed--love and humor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." He closed the brief address with the strong affirmation that man will "not merely endure: he will

prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." He defines the writer's duty, "to write about these things" and as a result, his privilege, "to help man endure by lifting his heart" as he reminds him of the virtues.[11] Blotner records Faulkner's response to a congratulatory letter from Bob Haas, a publisher-friend; referring to the speech, Faulkner said simply that it was "what I believe and wanted to say, though I might have said it better with more time to compose it. But then, maybe not; I might have lost its thread in trying to make literature out of it."[12]

Several years later Faulkner spoke to the youth of Japan with the same faith in man's prevailing. Beginning with references to war and its hopelessness experienced a hundred years ago in his own homeland and more recently in theirs, Faulkner pointed to the compassion taught by anguish and expressed the wish for someone to answer the

[11] William Faulkner, "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature," in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, ed. James B. Meriwether (New York: Random, 1965), pp. 119-20.

[12] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), II, 1373.

painful questions: "Who can tell . . . how to hope and believe?" His reassuring answer was:

> that man is tough, that nothing, nothing--war, grief, hopelessness, despair--can last as long as man himself can last; that man himself will prevail over all his anguishes, provided he will make the effort to; make the effort to believe in man and in hope--to seek not for a mere crutch to lean on, but to stand erect on his own feet by believing in hope and in his own toughness and endurance.[13]

When questioned in Japan about his address there as well as the Nobel speech, Faulkner's responses frequently emphasized the individual. Voicing his skepticism about belonging to groups, Faulkner stated: "I think the salvation of man is in his individuality, that he has got to believe that he as [sic] integrity is important and not as a group is important."[14] He had spoken on much the same theme to his daughter's high school graduating class:

> It is not men in the mass who can and will save Man. It is Man himself, created in the image of God so that he shall have the power

[13] William Faulkner, "To the Youth of Japan," in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, p. 83.

[14] William Faulkner, "Plot Complications Result of His 'Ignorance': Faulkner," in Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random, 1968), p. 192.

> and the will to choose right from wrong, and so be able to save himself because he is worth saving;--Man, the individual, men and women, who will refuse always to be tricked or frightened or bribed into surrendering, not just the right but the duty too, to choose between justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, sacrifice and greed, pity and self;--who will believe always not only in the right of man to be free of injustice and rapacity and deception, but the duty and responsibility of man to see that justice and truth and pity and compassion are done.[15]

Noel Polk discusses Faulkner's view that it is difficult to be an individual in the modern world because of its tendency to dehumanize, and he turns for support to Faulkner's speech at his daughter's junior college graduation.[16] Here again Faulkner discredits group organization and calls for individual effort: "It is us, we, not as groups or classes but as individuals, simple men and women individually free and capable of freedom and decision. . . ."[17] Several years later Faulkner replied to questions posed by University of Virginia students in much the same vein. Asked about the loss of individualization, he told them if he ever became a preacher, he would

[15] William Faulkner, "Address to the Graduating Class, University High School, "in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, p. 123.

[16] Noel Polk, "Faulkner and Respectability," in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, p. 131.

[17] William Faulkner, "Address to the Graduating Class, Pine Manor Junior College," in Essays, Speeches and Public Letters, p. 138.

do so in order to preach against "man, individual man, relinquishing into groups." He admitted that he was a member of fraternities when their age, but insisted, ". . . now I don't want to belong to anything except the human race."[18] He agreed that he favored individual rather than organized religion, and he also answered affirmatively when asked if "man must work out his own salvation from within rather than without."[19] Questions on how to fight Communism received much the same answer. He stated the first point, ". . . to believe in 'me,' in 'I,' rather than 'we,' to be oneself, to resist the pressure to relinquish individuality. That's the first thing and maybe that's all anyone has to do to combat Communism."[20]

The public Faulkner, constantly advocating his faith in man and his belief in the individual posed a dilemma for numerous critics, who during the author's silent years had interpreted his fiction from a diametrically

[18] Faulkner, "Session Thirty-Two: Department of Psychiatry," in Faulkner in the University, p. 269.

[19] Faulkner, "Session Nine: Graduate Course in American Fiction, Undergraduate Course in the Novel," in Faulkner in the University, p. 73.

[20] Faulkner, "Session Twelve: Graduate Course in American Fiction, Undergraduate Course in the Novel," in Faulkner in the University, p. 100.

opposed position. Although much early criticism had been attacks on his obscure style, many charges had been leveled at his degenerate view of man, and much analysis had focused on the family, the clan, the class, the section and time, usually the past, with rare acknowledgement of any optimistic thought, individual worth, world view, or universal nature. For example, Maxwell Geismar, one of Faulkner's most hostile critics, categorized him with American authors of the twenties in the attack on the modern world. He suggested that Faulkner may be the supreme example of "a hatred of life so compelling with him that there almost seems to be an inability in the writer to reach maturity itself."[21]

More current critical attention is given those early critics who recognized potential and positive meaning. For example, George Marion O'Donnell labeled Faulkner a "traditional moralist" in his 1939 essay, "Faulkner's Mythology."[22] Two years later Warren Beck insisted that any criticism of worth must first recognize "the coherent

[21] Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis: The American Novel, 1925-1940 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), p. 168.

[22] George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in Three Decades, p. 82.

rationality and humanity of Faulkner's point of view."[23] Frederick J. Hoffman indicates that the real examination of Faulkner's work has come since 1950. He suggests Faulkner was then "'rediscovered' as a man peculiarly suited to the examination of specifically modern aspects of the human situation."[24] In tracing the progress of Faulkner criticism, Hoffman acknowledges the deserved reputation beginning in 1939, the boost provided by Malcolm Cowley's Portable Faulkner in 1946, and most significant, the Nobel Prize in 1950. According to Hoffman, the Nobel Prize meant that Faulkner must be dealt with, not simply dismissed. Some of the cult-of-cruelty critics remained, but many were silenced, and others admitted erroneous evaluations.[25] As Hoffman describes critical response, "The wonder grew that the man who had described so powerfully and so frequently the ugly, chaotic, miserable, obscene, irrational world of man should have meant all along that he was upholding the

[23] Warren Beck, "Faulkner's Point of View," in William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage, ed. John Bassett (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 275.

[24] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), p. 17.

[25] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part Two: The Nobel Prize and the Achievement of Status," in Three Decades, pp. 112-13.

'eternal verities' and had, therefore, been without qualification on the side of the angels."[26] Lawrance Thompson also comments on the bewilderment following the Nobel speech. Faulkner's statements implied he was not "a determinist or cosmic pessimist" as many had claimed. The occasion was used, according to Thompson, to take issue with existentialist writers who were predicting the end of man doomed by the bomb.[27]

Robert Penn Warren upholds the positive position and eliminates the limitation of time and place. Responding to the charge of "backward-looking," Warren says "the answer is that the constant ethical center is to be found in the glorification of human effort and of human endurance, which are not in time." Recognizing Faulkner's deep commitment to a locality, Warren emphasizes, nonetheless, the importance of regarding the work "in terms of issues which are common to our modern world." The legend is not merely of the South but of "our general plight and problem."[28]

[26] Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 104.

[27] Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 2.

[28] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Three Decades, pp. 112-13.

Thus, the existence of man's plight and his problems found in Faulkner's work cannot be denied, but the recognition of light in a dark world took on much more significance. Blotner describes Faulkner as "affirming the other half of man's duality, the capacity for nobility to match the baseness."[29] Thompson explains that Faulkner's "thematic coin had always been two sided," that positive idealism had been defined in terms of negatives.[30] Warren also admits the presence of man's doom but insists that "his manhood in the face of doom is what is important."[31] Lewis Leary explains the negative nature as Faulkner's outrage: "Outrage at what man has done is balanced by conviction that man can do better. For though Faulkner often spoke of man's tragic fate, his is not the tragic view."[32]

To find the verity of Faulkner then, one must apply the basic statements he made and the interpretations of

[29] Blotner, Biography, II, 1367.

[30] Thompson, p. 2.

[31] Warren in Three Decades, p. 110.

[32] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 199.

his best critics to a representative portion of his work. To focus on any one work in its totality would be to go in many directions. Following Faulkner's opinion, one should focus instead on character, for he contended that his subject was "not ideas but people."[33] More specific in dismissing a thematic emphasis, Faulkner told Cynthia Grenier, "There isn't any theme in my work, or maybe if there is, you can call it a certain faith in man and his ability to always prevail and endure over circumstances and over his own destiny."[34]

All major Faulkner critics are in agreement that the men and women Faulkner created who most effectively "stood on their hind legs and cast a shadow" are found in the novels of Yoknapatawpha. Elizabeth Kerr states emphatically that the "final evaluation of Faulkner's literary achievement will rest upon this unified body of fiction dealing with Yoknapatawpha County and its people; none of his other novels and few of his short stories dealing with other scenes are of comparable quality."[35] Shelby Foote echoes her sentiments by saying

[33] James Gray Watson, The Snopes Dilemma: Faulkner's Trilogy (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1968), p. 11.

[34] Cynthia Grenier as quoted in Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 37.

[35] Elizabeth M. Kerr, Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil" (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1969), p. 1.

that "the closer Faulkner got to the heart of Yoknapatawpha County the better he wrote."[36] In explaining why other works, for example, A Fable, failed, Robert Penn Warren says Faulkner "could fight only with his feet on the ground--on home ground." Faulkner, according to Warren, required the complex details and specifics of a literal world that he knew in order to find the "seminal images that would focus his deepest feelings into vision."[37]

Although from Yoknapatawpha County came the best works and the most memorable characters, few critics see the place as a restricting factor. Instead, it is seen as a touchstone, "a cosmos in miniature," a term Michael Millgate borrows from Faulkner himself. Millgate says Faulkner created a world with basic human values and passions that come forth directly and simply, thus providing "a standard by which those of us who live in more modern and complex societies can contemplate and evaluate our own conduct and assumptions."[38] Leary also describes

[36] Shelby Foote, "Faulkner's Depiction of the Planter Aristocracy," in The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1977), p. 152.

[37] Robert Penn Warren, "Introduction: Past and Future," in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 17.

[38] Michael Millgate, "'A Cosmos of My Own': The Evolution of Yoknapatawpha," in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, p. 42.

Yoknapatawpha as an effectively reduced image of a larger world, "a microcosm of the modern world."[39]

Within this microcosm then should move the people whose lives illustrate the "eternal verities" Faulkner spoke of so frequently. The value of the individual man should be obvious also. The presentation of these concepts may be done in both positive and negative ways, by the presence or absence of a given quality, directly or indirectly. Perhaps the best argument for the impact of indirection comes from Faulkner's own defense of his use of evil, violence, or degenerate writing. In an interview in Manila, he stated that degradation was never used for its own sake but as a tool to point out what must be fought against. Any other use, Faulkner said, would be a "failure of integrity." The writer is trying "to tell people that degradation and violence must be cured, and men can cure it."[40] Panthea Broughton says Faulkner believes that awareness of evil is not enough; man must do more than theorize.[41] In many other similar comments, there is always the element of correction and the underlying faith in man.

[39] Leary, p. 22.

[40] William Faulkner, "Faulkner in Manila," in Lion in the Garden, pp. 206-07.

[41] Panthea Reid Broughton, William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1974), p. 178.

If indeed there are men and women in Yoknapatawpha County who "endure and prevail," they may be expected to possess at least some of the qualities Faulkner listed as the "verities," and they should stand as individual men and women. Conversely, those who fail may be expected to be found lacking in the verities and individuality.

Faulkner used the words endure and prevail repeatedly in his comments on his hope for mankind. In most cases, both words are used, not interchangably but with the implication that to prevail is to go a definite step above to endure. The Nobel Speech is worded, "man will not merely endure: he will prevail."[42] Standard definitions support Faulkner's distinction with the connotation of endure, to bear, to stand firm against and that of prevail, to gain mastery, to be victorious, to triumph, to be effective.

In determining the verities, one finds a growing list of overlapping, abstract words in examining speeches, essays, and interviews. However, the Nobel Speech lists six initially and labeled as "the old verities and truths of the heart . . . love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice."[43] Even these six suggest

[42] Faulkner, "Nobel Prize," in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, p. 120.

[43] Faulkner, "Nobel Prize," in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, p. 120.

possible combining. Lawrence Bowling notes that love is listed first and then amplified by three others, pity, compassion, and sacrifice, all he says, "merely different aspects of love." Bowling goes on to define Faulkner's concept of love, "the central subject of all his greatest work," as based upon "the spiritual affinity between man and nature, between man and his fellow man, and among members of a family."[44] Warren also sees as central "the recognition of the common human bond, a profound respect for the human."[45] Louis Rubin sees love as the requisite to achieve full "stature as men." In his opinion, the world of Faulkner "is based on human love, with the dignity and justice that it makes possible in society, and the tragedy that arises out of its violation. The necessity for love is the one constant in all the novels and stories."[46]

The terms honor and pride may be extended to encompass other qualities also. Irving Howe in dealing with Faulkner's

[44] Lawrence Edward Bowling, "William Faulkner: The Importance of Love," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 109-10.

[45] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Four Decades, p. 108.

[46] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 64.

use of honor finds it a difficult concept to define and one which underwent alteration, eventually coming to mean integrity. Howe's distinction between the terms makes honor an external quality, integrity, an internal one. "Honor points to what one is in the world, integrity to what one is in oneself. . . . Honor depends upon an assertion of one's worth, integrity upon a readiness to face the full burden of one's existence."[47] Faulkner best illustrates his meaning for pride in equating it with dignity. This is seen in his description of a particular old couple who sold vegtables at the town square. He commented, "They're scratchin' for a living, . . . yet they call each other Mr. and Mrs., and it's not just a formality." Blotner records his remark and further interprets Faulkner's response, one of genuine feeling. According to Blotner, Faulkner longed for others to see and emulate the pride they possessed. In a similar response, Blotner tells of Faulkner's fondness for the Greeks, indicating that in observing them Faulkner saw "poverty but no squalor." Consequently, he greatly admired their "toughness and pride."[48]

[47] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 148.

[48] Blotner, Biography, II, 1616-17, 1653.

Faulkner admitted that exact definitions or classification of his abstract qualities were hard to arrive at when he said "what quality in man, that prevails, it's difficult to be specific about, but somehow man does prevail, there's always someone that will never stop trying to cope. . . ."[49] Despite the fact that the specific verities needed to prevail are not named here, the implication is that some quality in man enables him to prevail; his further inference is that the quality finds its expression in action. It is in the application of the verities that the concept of individuality is found. Men and women possessing some or all of the virtues listed in the Nobel Speech or in more general terms, love, integrity, and dignity may apply these qualities to the process of living with varying degrees of involvement. On several occasions, Faulkner listed three stages or responses man may make to the obstacles he faces:

> The first says, this is rotten, I'll have no part of it, I will take death first. The second says, this is rotten, I don't like it, I can't do anything about it, but at least I will not participate in it myself, I will go off into a cave or climb a pillar to sit on.

[49] Faulkner, "Session Five: The English Club," in Faulkner in the University, p. 34.

> The third says, this stinks and I'm going to do something about it.[50]

Although the person with the second response may endure, the person to prevail will make the third response, active individual involvement. In Faulkner's last public advice to young people, he told the West Point cadets that "the worst perversion of all is to retire to the ivory tower. Get down in the market place and stay there."[51]

The search for those who endure and prevail because they possess the necessary qualities and apply them in the individual action of daily living should be made in the Yoknapatawpha novels. These provide not only Faulkner at his best, but a great cross-section of humanity. It may be found that those most likely to prevail can be found in all classes of social standing, in all age groups, in both sexes, in all races represented, and with all the range of education. With this probability in mind, the order of publication will provide the general order of examination with some loose and natural grouping of several novels composed or published consecutively.

[50] Faulkner, "Session Twenty-Seven: The English Club, A Word to Young Writers," in Faulkner in the University, pp. 245-46.

[51] William Faulkner, "Transcript of Questions and Answers following Reading," in Faulkner at West Point, ed. Joseph L. Fant, III and Robert Ashley (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 55.

The first two novels of Yoknapatawpha County portray aristocrats in the process of fading or decaying, Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury, the focus of the second chapter. Next Faulkner shifted to less prestigious groups, writing mainly of the lower classes: the poor whites in As I Lay Dying; the degenerate Popeye and his associates in Sanctuary; and saw mill workers, unwed mothers, and a protagonist of mixed blood in Light in August, the focus of the third chapter. Returning to the upper class by portraying those born to status and those seeking or climbing to status, Faulkner treats codes that govern men's lives in The Unvanquished and Absalom, Absalom!; these two novels are discussed in chapter four. Although published with many years intervening, the Snopes trilogy, The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion, was composed mentally or conceived of all at once. The three will be treated together in chapter five. The four remaining Yoknapatawpha novels, Go Down, Moses, Intruder in the Dust, Requiem for a Nun, and The Reivers, have in common the use of most unlikely characters as examples of enduring and prevailing. These four novels are treated in the sixth chapter. Final conclusions are drawn in the seventh chapter.

If one would know the essence of Faulkner's legacy to the literary world, he may discover it by finding

the "eternal verities" and positive individuality illustrated in the people of his mythical kingdom of Yoknapatawpha County.

Chapter II

THE FADING ARISTOCRATS: SARTORIS, THE SOUND AND THE FURY

Faulkner published two novels in 1929, Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury, the first frequently dismissed as an apprentice work, the second frequently hailed as his masterpiece. The works have in common the focus on aristocratic families in the process of decay. Neither family exhibits the quality of prevailing, and only limited examples of enduring may be found. The Sartoris family is handicapped by the need to uphold glorious acts of the past; the Compson family members of The Sound and the Fury are restrained by their attempts to maintain the facade of respectability. The presence of the verities Faulkner valued and the illustrations of positive individuality are found in occasional portraits and glimpses; these, however, are significant. There are also those who have the potential to endure or prevail. Even the absence of love, integrity, dignity, and positive individualism provides comment about their value.

Although Sartoris, Faulkner's third novel, was poorly received, it has gained in stature and in retrospect is seen as a foundation work for the Yoknapatawpha world. John Bassett in reviewing the early critical reception notes its limited publicity and the scarcity of reviews. Those who did write about Sartoris condemned its structure and style. Bassett summarizes Donald Davidson's early assessment (1929), in which Davidson holds that Faulkner had not found the theme or characters equal to his talent. Others pointed to weaknesses in character and structure also; there was a general feeling that Faulkner's potential was not close to realization here. Many early critics, however, did recognize the discovery of Yoknapatawpha as brilliant.[1] Later examinations of Sartoris as the first of many Yoknapatawpha novels provide a different slant. Robert Cantwell (1953) calls it a "key volume" and feels it established a pattern for all Faulkner's works.[2] William Van O'Connor (1959) sees the novel as an aid in helping Faulkner "find himself as a writer" and calls it a source book for later

[1] John Bassett, William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 5.

[2] Robert Cantwell, "Foreword," in Sartoris (1929; rpt. New York: Signet, 1953), p. vii.

works. It is in this work, O'Connor says, that Faulkner "began to see and feel the dignity and pathos of what was to become his most persistent subject matter."[3] Michael Millgate (1963) agrees that here Faulkner first began "to find a voice distinctively his own" and to discover his place; Millgate sees the novel as much advanced over his two earlier novels.[4] Lawrance Thompson (1964) also refers to Sartoris as the "matrix narrative for the chronicles of Yoknapatawpha county."[5]

If, in fact, the greatest significance of Sartoris is its position as the beginning of Yoknapatawpha and its people, then it may well introduce the values Faulkner cherished, either directly or by their absence. The character most frequently seen as central is young Bayard Sartoris who is returning from World War I in 1919. The preceding year Bayard lost his twin brother John in aerial combat; shortly afterwards his wife and son died. Bayard returns to the fine old Sartoris home on the edge of Jefferson; he is awaited by an elderly,

[3] William Van O'Connor, William Faulkner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1959), pp. 9-10.

[4] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), pp. 390, 85.

[5] Lawrance Thompson, "Afterword," in Sartoris, p. 307.

deaf grandfather, an outspoken aunt, and a number of faithful servants of all ages. He has difficulty facing his grandfather because he feels a responsibility for John's death. Much of his time is spent driving dangerously fast around the country. He finally marries Narcissa Benbow whose frequent presence is arranged by Aunt Jenny. When his grandfather has heart failure during a joy ride accident, Bayard first runs to the MacCallum family, then spends Christmas Eve in a Negro cabin, and then flees Yoknapatawpha, never to return. His death in a foolhardy accident comes on the day his wife gives birth to a son. Bayard's inability to establish any semblance of a meaningful life may indicate a case of unrealized potential, the tragic what-might-have-been character. The deep agony and despair that he experiences when he cannot put his life in order prove an underlying sensitivity and longing for meaning.

Through the eyes of the critics Bayard is seen in varying perspectives. There is general agreement that he is the central focus. An early review in New York Times describes him as "nearest to affording the center of the drama."[6] Melvin Backman calls him the novel's

[6] "New York Times Book Review," in Critical Heritage, p. 74.

"driving force."[7] All see his failure, but the causes of his failure and his character traits are controversial. Elizabeth Kerr labels Bayard the perfect Gothic hero, identifying him as "the Romantic rebel, proud and reckless, doomed and damned." For her, John's death leaves Bayard incomplete because John provided the "warmth and loving nature and cheerfulness for both."[8] Sally Page sees Bayard as the "epitome of the defeated Romanticist," suggesting that his idealism changed to cynicism. His violent, reckless driving Page analyzes as "attempts to escape the emptiness of his own existence."[9] Backman theorizes that Bayard is unable to love and sees this as part of his "neurotic estrangement from man and life itself."[10] Irving Howe also notes an estrangement and discontent. In his opinion Bayard is without hope and purpose and is not capable of any "transforming action." Neither is he able to maintain any lasting relationship

[7] Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), p. 6.

[8] Elizabeth M. Kerr, William Faulkner's Gothic Domain (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1979), p. 78.

[9] Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), pp. 39, 35.

[10] Backman, p. 8.

with the tradition of his family or native region. He is concerned only with the immediate and "loves only his dead brother."[11] Edmond Volpe agrees that Bayard loves only John and adds that the violent acts spring not from grief but from guilt.[12] Olga Vickery sees the violence related to John's death and explains that Bayard's love for John "weighs the balance so that he is not only prepared to glorify the foolishness but to make of it a touchstone for his own behavior."[13] According to Kenneth Richardson, Bayard "slowly loses all human responsiveness" when he forces himself to act in a way that is unnatural for him.[14]

Bayard as the central character must, indeed, be seen as one who fails, one who is guilt-ridden, one who distorts love, and one who is alienated from his fellow-man. These observations serve to point up even more dramatically the disquieting example of the absence of the Faulkner virtues. Certainly Bayard's violent ways

[11] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 34-35.

[12] Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), p. 73.

[13] Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 21.

[14] Kenneth E. Richardson, Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), p. 22.

and lack of responsiveness cannot be denied; however, neither can the pain and agony of the chaos of his life. In later works, Faulkner portrayed callousness and a lack of responsiveness to humankind in amoral characters. Most elicit disgust and contempt. Bayard is no forerunner, for he elicits sympathy. It is not disgusting to know Bayard; it is painful. Within him there is the capacity and longing for the virtues, love, integrity, and dignity; his despair is too great as he recognizes in moments of self-awareness how far afield he is. His attempts to claim the old verities are futile, but he must be credited with some effort despite his failure.

In his search for love, Bayard marries Narcissa Benbow, who is fascinated by Bayard and in awe of him. H. Edward Richardson says Bayard saw the marriage as "only a temporary respite."[15] Even though Bayard's life needs the calming influence of Narcissa, he cannot duplicate her detachment. The violence that characterizes his actions may be as alien to his nature as it is to Narcissa's; however, Bayard must feel haunted by the Sartoris legend. Frederick J. Hoffman holds that Bayard "cannot bring himself to accepting violence of any sort as romantic" and describes the extreme frustration that

[15] H. Edward Richardson, William Faulkner: The Journey to Self-Discovery (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1969), p. 183.

he feels from his experiences.[16] Millgate speaks of the influence of the recent war experience as well as the awareness of being a Sartoris. In his opinion, Bayard is "doomed by his birth, by the death of a beloved brother, and by his personal amalgam of courage and folly, to a restless life and violent death."[17] Vickery also emphasizes the impact of Bayard's twin's life and death; she contrasts the "casualness" of John's nature with the "tenseness" seen in Bayard when he risks his life. According to Vickery, John was a Sartoris by nature; Bayard must force himself to become one and as long as he feels this compulsion, there is no chance for a meaningful human relationship. Thus Vickery sees the marriage to Narcissa as evidence of Bayard's wish to end "his involvement in the Sartoris legend." Still, Vickery concludes that Narcissa's serenity does not provide the "bulwark" needed and "she cannot give him the comprehension he desires."[18] Hyatt Waggoner places part of the blame on Narcissa. In his opinion, Narcissa cannot understand Bayard's coldness "because she does not fully understand

[16] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), p. 46.

[17] Millgate, p. 80.

[18] Vickery, pp. 20-23.

the depth of his loss."[19] The implication is clear; Bayard is a man of deep feeling, capable of love as evidenced by his grief for his dead twin. The strong emotions felt by Bayard are kept within at great cost to him. In extreme physical pain following one of his automobile accidents, Bayard is seen in even greater emotional anguish as he kneels alone before a chest of mementos belonging to John: a bear's paw, a shell, a New Testament. Adding to these a trophy, a coat, and a photograph, he makes his way to the washpot fire and burns John's treasures.[20] Although Bayard possesses the capacity for love, he is unable to free himself to love again.

In the midst of all his violent acts, there are also attempts to prove his integrity and dignity. Some hope for Bayard is felt as he turns to the land both as hunter and harvester. The pattern found in the marriage follows; the sanctuary is temporary. Millgate views these interests as Bayard's "efforts to find a solution, or at least a solace," even though Millgate goes on to fault Faulkner for insufficient portrayal of Bayard.[21] There are times then

[19] Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner From Jefferson to the World (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 21.

[20] William Faulkner, Sartoris (1929; rpt. New York: Signet, 1957), pp. 178-79. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[21] Millgate, p. 81.

when Bayard does attempt to find peace and meaning. This is found not only in the relationship to the land but also in two effective scenes following the grandfather's death. One of the finest passages in the novel is Faulkner's description of Bayard's stay with the MacCallums. Here, as Lewis Leary points out, Bayard finds "momentary comfort."[22] Cleanth Brooks says Bayard is at home here and against a background of "solid values and purposeful life," he is able to see himself.[23] Sitting before the MacCallum fire, aware that his sanctuary is short-lived, Bayard is described in a brief and painful moment of self-analysis: "He stared into the fire for a time, rubbing his hands slowly on his knees, and for an instant he saw the recent months of his life coldly in all their headlong and heedless wastefulness" (251). Later in a cold and sleepless night, Bayard shows his great need for the human touch and longs for comprehension, even though he knows he could not accept this. During the long night, he yearns for "a hand, no matter whose, to touch him out of his black choas" (260). Finally sleep comes when Bayard hears the comforting awakening movements of this stable, secure family:

[22] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 29.

[23] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 111.

> The sounds continued; unmistakably he heard a door, and a voice which, with a slight effort of concentration, he knew he could name; and best of all, knew now that he could rise and go where they were gathered about crackling fire, where light was, and warmth. . . . and his own breath was untroubled now as Buddy's while human sounds came murmurously into the cold room with grave and homely reassurance. It comes to all, it comes to all, his tired heart comforted him, and at last he slept. (260-61)

In a parallel scene Bayard is taken in by strangers rather than old friends. After leaving the MacCallums, Bayard is given shelter and a meager Christmas dinner by a poor black family. Brooks describes Bayard's positive response as, for once, "the proper response."[24] Bayard, who often has taken callous pleasure in frightening the black servants of his family, handles sensitively the situation with this share-cropper family he does not know. Willing to share a meal too skimpy to divide, the Negroes allow Bayard to eat first. "He realized at last that they were holding back until he had done, but he overrode them and they dined together" (278).

In these several convincing passages Bayard is seen searching for love and a sense of belonging, well aware of positive, intangible values he longs to claim, sensitive to and full of respect for his fellow man. Although his violence dominates and ultimately brings his

[24] Brooks, p. 113.

death, the wish and need for love, integrity, and dignity are felt. Bayard introduces the old verities of the author through their painful absence.

The introduction of the Snopes clan in Sartoris calls even sharper attention to the distressful nature of the absence of the verities in Bayard's life. Here, in the one Snopes with a major role to play, Faulkner's method of indirection takes on the tone of repulsiveness rather than painfulness. Byron Snopes, the bookkeeper in old Bayard's bank, writes obscene and anonymous love letters to Narcissa Benbow. Elizabeth Kerr sees him "fully developed as an antihero, a case history in abnormal sexual obsession and frustration." She further describes him as a grotesque, "a parody of the Romantic hero" in his crude and vulgar manner, quite a contrast to the courtly lover.[25] His search is based on lust, not love. Other members of his family are mentioned but are of no consequence in this novel. Narcissa's brother Horace has been accompanied to war by Montgomery Ward Snopes, and in the background of the novel Flem Snopes has become vice-president of the bank "to old Bayard's profane astonishment and unconcealed annoyance" (147). The Snopes then are present in Yoknapatawpha from the first novel,

[25] Kerr, pp. 74, 81, 85.

and the reaction of the reader is close to that of old Bayard, contempt.

Narcissa Benbow is first seen as the maiden lady who visits Miss Jenny and discloses her disturbing love letters; she is seen as the head of her household awaiting her brother's return from the war; later she reads to the convalescing Bayard; she eventually marries him and as the novel closes, bears his child and becomes his widow. In all of the roles, Narcissa is portrayed with a serene detachment that prevents full response to either the pleasure or pain each situation offers. She hides in the words of the books she reads to Bayard, afraid of a vital life. This detachment also hinders her having the active presence of Faulkner's virtues and blocks entirely the development of positive individuality. With Narcissa the absence of the virtues is not so pronounced as in Bayard nor is the despair. She exhibits her own brand of enduring, that of quietly and patiently existing but not living.

Most critical speculation begins with an analysis of her personality and then addresses her role as wife to Bayard Sartoris. George M. O'Donnell finds her more formal than vital.[26] Volpe sees her as "weak and afraid

[26] George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 88.

of life" and describes the "serene small garden" she walls herself into. He suggests a strengthening of her character as the novel closes, indicating that motherhood transforms her "into a strong, stable force determined to protect her child from Sartoris malaise."[27] Page says that Faulkner's attitude seems to waver "between admiration for the calm tranquility of her femininity . . . and disdain for her feminine weaknesses." Page also fluctuates in her views, agreeing with Volpe about Narcissa's strength and power when deserted by the father of her child, yet declaring her incapable of understanding "the spiritual despair behind Bayard's actions" earlier in their relationship.[28] Brooks upholds their position, stating candidly that although Narcissa "becomes a mother, she never really becomes a wife."[29] According to Vickery, Narcissa is free to shape her own life but like her brother she chooses "to live by illusion."[30] Given this personality and stance, Narcissa is an unlikely candidate in whom the verities might flourish. Had she embraced life rather than withdrawn, her enduring would have been much more meaningful.

[27] Volpe, pp. 70-71.

[28] Page, pp. 37-38.

[29] Brooks, p. 108.

[30] Vickery, p. 23.

Horace Benbow calls into focus even more sharply than his sister the need for living in the real world. Elizabeth Kerr holds him responsible to some degree for Narcissa's plight. Suggesting that the relationship with his sister is unnatural, Kerr says Horace's admiration for Narcissa's "serenity and purity helped to form her own self-image." Kerr sees Horace as "poetic and idealistic but passive and indolent."[31] Page compares him to Bayard in his recognition of the "futility and sterility of his existence," but Horace is able to "imagine a contentment in a decadent ideal."[32] Volpe supports the view that Horace lives in an unreal world calling him a dreamer, his world a fantasy world. Here, Volpe says, "the tendency of the intellect to substitute word for deed reaches its extreme."[33] Melvin Backman speaks of Horace's estrangement from life; Backman sees him as submissive, one who does not confront life, who, rather, evades it.[34] Brooks concurs, labeling Horace as a Prufrock character.[35] Thus both Benbows illustrate by indirection Faulkner's call for individual action since their lives

[31] Kerr, pp. 86, 79.

[32] Page, p. 38.

[33] Volpe, p. 73.

[34] Backman, p. 10.

[35] Brooks, p. 105.

essentially are lost in the withdrawn stances they take. Both sister and brother talk of love and integrity and dignity, but they fail to incorporate these qualities in daily living.

Much of the novel focuses on young Bayard and the Benbows, who are never at home in the real world and therefore unable to achieve Faulkner's theory of prevailing. There are, however, minor characters who do belong to a world of reality and find meaning in fruitful living. The outstanding example is Mrs. Virginia DuPre, Miss Jenny, who is praised in an early review as "one of those characters whose presence in it justifies any work of fiction"[36] and later by Lawrance Thompson as "the strongest character in the narrative."[37] Brooks refers to Miss Jenny as "the old matriarch set in her ways" but also points out that she is clearly comfortable with herself and her world. He sees beyond her frequent acid attacks on the Sartoris men and discovers an obvious love for them. Some of her exasperations he labels a mere pose.[38] Waggoner also

[36] Milton Waldman, "Tendencies of the Modern Novel," in Critical Heritage, p. 159.

[37] Thompson, p. 310.

[38] Brooks, p. 101, 109.

confirms her love, saying "her sharpness gets its edge from the love behind it."[39] Just as she spares no one with her sarcastic words, neither does she omit any from her affection expressed in action. Frequently while verbally attacking the Sartoris men, the servants, or Narcissa, her compassion and concern are indirectly in evidence in the way she acts in the interest of those she cares about. She badgers old Bayard until she gets him to a doctor, not an easy feat:

> But she got him up with cold implacability and led him, still grumbling, down the street where merchants and others spoke to her as to a martial queen, old Bayard stalking alone beside her with sullen reluctance. (88)

She can muster the same energy when she wants him to change his wet boots. Yet she speaks of him and his grandson Bayard whom she guards and nurses with a maternal love after several foolish accidents: "I've lived with these bullheaded Sartorises for eighty years, and I'll never give a single ghost of 'em the satisfaction of shedding a tear over him" (42). Consistently, she lashes out at Doc Peabody, telling him he has "eaten off us Thanksgiving and Christmas for sixty years," (235) accusing him of "conjuring" the wen on old Bayard's face, attacking

[39] Waggoner, p. 26.

his gluttony, yet all the while serving him from her heavy-laden Thanksgiving table and including him in the amiable bickering of her family.

Critics see her as a strong, caring woman able to survive trying circumstances. Sally Page identifies her "cocksureness, stubborn determination and her personal independence." Although Page finds her "more a comic figure than an heroic one," she praises not only her sense of humor but her "spiritual endurance."[40] Vickery sees her flexibility, her "instinctive ability to adapt herself to circumstances and to do whatever is required of her." It is Miss Jenny who provides the order in a frequently chaotic household.[41] Hers is not an easy role as Volpe implies when he describes her as a strong woman, "able to accept without flinching the many tragedies that befall her."[42] After she receives the news of young Bayard's death, Dr. Peabody watches "until Miss Jenny's straight slender back and the square indomitable angle of her bonnet had passed from sight" (295).

Thus Miss Jenny endures and, at times, prevails. She buries the last adult Sartoris, and as the novel closes, she sits quietly as Narcissa plays the piano while

[40] Page, p. 36.

[41] Vickery, p. 25.

[42] Volpe, p. 70.

the newborn Sartoris sleeps. Miss Jenny is older in years than she is in spirit. Her vision of the world is clear; she is described as possessing "piercing old eyes that saw so much and so truly" (294). Her full participation in life is in contrast to the withdrawal of Narcissa and Horace and the violent escape of Bayard. Despite her numerous comic and sarcastic comments, she maintains a dignity as the old matriarch and lives her life with integrity; her relationships with her family and acquaintances are characterized by compassion and pity and sacrifice.

Old Bayard is almost as memorable a character as Miss Jenny is, but he is not so enduring and lacks the vital involvement with life that Miss Jenny manages. In a sense, old Bayard is a figure of isolation. His deafness creates a physical isolation that he at times conveniently uses to his advantage. His nostalgic longing for bygone days of Sartoris glory causes an additional aspect of separation from the world surrounding him. By his own admission to Dr. Peabody, he is not the typical Sartoris: "I have already outlived my time, . . . I am the first of my name to see sixty years that I know of" (96). Walter K. Everett points out that he is "not a man of blood and action as the other Sartorises had been."[43] Kerr speaks

[43] Walter K. Everett, Faulkner's Art and Characters (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1969), p. 86.

of his retreat from reality and says that he lives in "memories of the older order. . . . sustained by escape through a long life of inactivity."[44] In analyzing his inactive life, one may find a dignified man with high values and a deep love and concern for his family, both white and black. Obviously a creature of habit, his daily exit from the bank with Simon, his coachman, there waiting is a ritual; those on the street "halted to admire the momentary drama of the departure" (21). Upon reaching his home, he first stops in the spacious hall, then takes in the familiar view from his upstairs window, and revealing his sensitivity, he opens quietly the closed door to his grandson's room, "the room in which his grandson's wife and child had died last October" (32). He then turns to other cherished parts of his life, a horseback ride over his land accompanied by a favorite hound. His frequent high-speed rides in his grandson's new automobile indicate his sacrificial concern for an agonizing soldier still filled with grief and frustration. Old Bayard sees himself as a check on his grandson's recklessnesses and forces himself to ride in a vehicle he will not allow his bank to finance. Also indicative of his family loyalty is his rescue of his coachman, Simon

[44] Kerr, p. 82.

Strother, who is under strong pressure to repay squandered money belonging to the proposed Second Baptist Church. Like Miss Jenny in concealing his caring beneath much verbal resistance and sarcasm, old Bayard, nevertheless, stomps into the house and amidst much swearing produces the money and vows to Simon ". . . the next time you steal money and come to me to pay it back, I'm going to have you arrested and prosecute you myself" (223). In his harsh and frequently silent way, Bayard evinces an integrity and dignity and an active concern for a family and a world he does not truly approve of.

Much like his master old Bayard and sharing many of his values is Simon Strother who introduces the blacks, mainly his own family. According to H. Edward Richardson, Simon is "more a Sartoris himself than a mere servant."[45] He upholds old Bayard's respect for the carriage and coachman and handles his job with dignity, always wearing his top hat and linen duster ". . . and the thong of the whip caught smartly back in his right and usually the unvarying and seemingly incombustible fragment of a cigar at a swaggering angle in his black face" (20-21). He valued both the horses and their owners, the Sartorises. "He admired Sartorises and he had for them a warmly

[45] H. Edward Richardson, p. 168.

protective tenderness, but he loved horses and beneath his hands the sorriest beast bloomed and acquired comeliness like a caressed woman. . ." (21). Some critics see Faulkner's handling of the blacks in Sartoris from a negative standpoint. For example, Irving Howe calls them "comic stereotypes" and states that Faulkner lacks the "moral sympathy and perception" that a novelist of his stature should possess. His tone throughout is condescending according to Howe.[46] The humor is present in the episode of Simon and the church money he "put out," in the half-heard dialogue between the rights-conscious Caspey who returned from the war and old Bayard, in the constant warfare between Miss Jenny and whomever she calls on for help; however, the vitality of minor characters exceeds dull stereotyping. Brooks includes the blacks in the folk society that he describes surrounding the Sartorises and the Benbows. The folk society, in contrast to the futility and violence often found in the higher ranks, goes on in "its immemorial ways . . . neither sick nor tired."[47]

On much smaller scale, Faulkner provides several glimpses of others who endure and possess virtues. Doc Peabody, on first impression a comic figure, "eighty-seven

[46] Howe, pp. 120-21. [47] Brooks, p. 115.

years old and weighing three hundred and ten pounds and possessing a digestive tract like a horse," (91) is seen as the long-time friend of old Bayard and in humorous exchanges with Miss Jenny. When seen in contrast to the young Dr. Alford, professional and immaculate, Doc Peabody's values rise above his dingy, cluttered office. In a brief description, Faulkner gives much insight into the lifestyle and priorities of each doctor. In an empty waiting room, Miss Jenny is at first told she cannot see Dr. Alford without an appointment, a totally different approach from Doc Peabody's being on call twenty-four hours a day for infrequent payments. The skill of each as well is revealed; Dr. Alford's alarmed concern for the cancer-prone wen that old Will Falls cures with his secret salve is in contrast to Doc Peabody's dismissal of the wen but quick recognition that old Bayard's heart cannot stand the daredevil rides in young Bayard's car, a prediction which comes true. In all of his disarray, Doc Peabody is seen as one who practices not just medicine but the old verities, and the sterile atmosphere of young Dr. Alford's office will probably encompass his life.

Also aware of the intangibles which enrich life are the MacCallums, another part of the folk society and quite different in their way of living from the aristocratic Sartorises. Millgate describes them, a father and his sons,

as "simple, vigorous hill-folk whom Faulkner so greatly admires,"[48] and Lewis Leary says they are treated "most sympathetically." He refers to them as independent and strong-willed, possessing pride and self-respect.[49] Howe describes their strict standards of behavior and praises the "grave affection" that binds them, "their unity, a powerful contrast to the crumbling of the Sartorises."[50] Most significant is the fact that it is to this family who live simply and in isolation that young Bayard Sartoris turns in his grief and despair when his grandfather dies in his car. More significant is the fact that he finds comfort even though it is temporary. It is with the MacCallums that Bayard painfully analyzes the wastefulness of his life. Their unity and values are felt in their conversations around the fire; their open acceptance of the variety among brothers and their respect for Bayard's privacy and grief for his brother also reveal their worth. As Bayard leaves, unable to tell them of his grandfather and escaping before they learn for themselves of his death, he looks back to see them standing still "quiet and grave and steadfast" (271).

[48] Millgate, p. 78.

[49] Leary, p. 29.

[50] Howe, pp. 40-41.

The final scene with Bayard also provides a look at life far removed from the Sartoris tradition, a scene Waggoner describes as "not greatly excelled anywhere in Faulkner's work."[51] Bayard, in flight, spends Christmas Eve with a black sharecropper family who live in extreme poverty. He shares with them the MacCallum jug meant for his grandfather, and they give him the last quilt and the choice of a meager Christmas dinner. Again as with the MacCallums Bayard seems touched by what he senses here. Faulkner describes the day briefly and moves on. Brooks explains that Faulkner does not need to make his point directly but adds that the "Negro family represents genuinely, if in its humblest form, the precious thing that Bayard has forfeited."[52]

Characteristic of Faulkner perhaps, the most direct illustrations of love, integrity, and dignity, and positive individuality appear in the unexpected people of unusual backgrounds: an elderly aunt, an unkempt old doctor, a family of hill-folk and poor blacks who meet life head-on. The Benbows and the major Sartoris character, all from aristocratic backgrounds, withdraw from life and lose in the process.

Faulkner maintained much of the same pattern in the second Yoknapatawpha novel, also published in 1929. The

[51] Waggoner, p. 27. [52] Brooks, p. 112.

Sound and the Fury is the story of the fast-crumbling Compson family, an aristocratic family in which, for most of the time, the "old verities" are obviously and painfully missing but a family served and loved by one of Faulkner's most enduring characters. On numerous occasions, Faulkner spoke of his special feeling for this novel and for several of its characters in particular. In an interview, Faulkner told Jean Stein that The Sound and the Fury is "the book I feel tenderest towards."[53] When asked at the University of Virginia which novel he considered his best, Faulkner replied:

> The one that failed the most tragically and the most splendidly. That was The Sound and the Fury--the one that I worked at the longest, the hardest, that was to me the most passionate and moving idea, and made the most splendid failure. That's the one that's my--I consider the best, not--well, best is the wrong word--that's the one that I love most.[54]

Critical evaluation has much of the ambivalence Faulkner expressed. Frederick Hoffman reviews the initial critical reception. According to Hoffman, no other

[53] Jean Stein, "William Faulkner: An Interview," in Three Decades, p. 74.

[54] William Faulkner, "Session Nine: Graduate Course in American Fiction, Undergraduate Course in the Novel," in Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 77.

American novel had demanded the critical skills this novel did with its unusual ways of employing the stream-of-consciousness technique. Hoffman acknowledges that this work marks the beginning of "serious general concern" over Faulkner as an artist and quotes from several negative reviews, yet he sees more praise for Faulkner's methods in spite of the difficulty.[55] O'Connor summarizes that many now see this work as Faulkner's best, naming it "one of the greatest novels written in the twentieth century."[56]

From a thematic standpoint, many critics praise the novel for its treatment of the primary virtue, love, encompassing compassion, pity, and sacrifice. Lewis Leary emphasizes the love theme, viewing love as both misdirected and true, showing what happens "when love is absent or distorted." Although he identifies a tone of disillusionment, he finds beneath this "a note of hope." Leary describes the work as "a warmly compassionate examination of what can be done to love to destroy it, and what can be done to keep it whole."[57] O'Connor sees

[55] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part One: The Growth of a Reputation," in Three Decades, pp. 16-17.

[56] O'Connor, p. 13.

[57] Leary, pp. 43, 61.

the novel as the history of "an inward turning family" and the tragic dimension as "the failure of love."[58]

Although the Compson family is distinctive with its heritage of great personalities and impressive property holdings, several critics praise the universal impact achieved in Jefferson of Yoknapatawpha County. Irving Howe sees the Compson world as a microcosm and their downfall as social criticism. He states that at no other time has Faulkner worked so for the acceptance of "Yoknapatawpha as an emblem of a larger world beyond, and its moral death as an acting-out of the disorder of our time."[59] Comparing Faulkner's provincialism to Tolstoy's, Günter Blöcker says the "full intensity of existence" is felt in a limited geographical setting and adds that when "he appears to be telling the story of his home town, he is telling the story of the world."[60]

The Compson story reveals clearly the failure of love in many different situations and relationships. The focus is on character as opposed to plot; in fact, even though there is a repeated narrative with several members of the Compson family telling a particular version of the family

[58] O'Connor, p. 16. [59] Howe, p. 47.

[60] Günter Blöcker, "William Faulkner," in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 126.

plight, the insights into personality and the complexities of relationships are basic to what is being said about love. The family members dramatically show the failure of love; Dilsey, the servant to the family, illustrates the triumph of love.

Faulkner begins the Compson story with Ben, an innocent, mentally retarded son whose capacity even to comprehend love is questioned. Explaining that he began his novel from Ben's point of view because he was "capable only of knowing what happened but not why," Faulkner goes on to describe Ben as irrational and even calls him an animal. He does say that Ben could recognize "tenderness and love though he could not have named them."[61] Ironically, despite his inability to know love or to verbalize feelings, Ben's life emphatically illustrates the need for compassion and pity and sacrifice. However, almost all of his family members are unwilling to provide him with any degree of these virtues. Ben is thirty-three years old and described as "a big man who appeared to have been shaped of some substance whose particles would not or did not cohere to one another or to the frame which supported it."[62] He is to most a nuisance, a burden; he

[61] Stein in Three Decades, p. 74.

[62] William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (1929; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1956), p. 342. All further references to this work appear in the text.

demands constant watching, is frequently drooling, bellowing, and even once escapes through the wrought-iron fence surrounding the grounds. Yet as Melvin Backman insists, Ben is portrayed as a human being, "a child dependent upon the world's tenderness." For Backman, Ben incarnates "the human need for love."[63] Peter Swiggart points out his helplessness and inability to express his feelings, emphasizing that because of his situation, he has to "depend upon the love and understanding of others without giving any return."[64]

Most of the Compsons as well as the servants assigned to watch Ben give him nothing, certainly not tenderness. Early in the novel, his callous brother Jason has called him "that damn loony" (12) and before the narrative ends, it is apparent that Jason will admit him to a state mental institution at the earliest opportunity. Quentin, a brother at times seen as very sensitive, is repulsed by Ben and wishes him out of the way. His remarks while watching his sister feed Ben are indicative of his attitude: "Why don't you feed him in the kitchen. It's like eating with a pig" (86). From his parents the treatment is no better, and from most of the servants the treatment ranges from neglect to deliberate aggravation.

[63] Backman, pp. 33,40.

[64] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), p. 89.

Within his family, it is only from his sister Caddy that Ben receives the compassion and pity he so desperately needs, and even Caddy denies him the sacrifice. At seventeen, Caddy leaves the Compson home, and Ben never sees her again. Some of the novel's most painful scenes show Ben wailing as he hears golfers call her name or frantically clutching an old slipper he associates with his sister. Yet in her childhood Caddy was full of a maternal love and sensitivity to Ben. Lawrance Thompson says that Caddy's responsiveness to her brother's needs "had brought him whatever moments of serenity and happiness he knew, in his otherwise painful and confused experience."[65] Faulkner's comments to the students at the University of Virginia support the idea that Caddy provides the only stability Ben knows:

> That the only thing that held him into any sort of reality, into the world at all, was the trust that he had for his sister, that he knew that she loved him and would defend him, and she was the whole world to him.[66]

Although Ben as well as other family members receives the unselfish and unchanging love of the servant Dilsey, for

[65] Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 33.

[66] Faulkner, "Session Eight: Undergraduate Course in Contemporary Literature," in Faulkner in the University, p. 64.

Ben it is only Caddy's love that is significant. Swiggart calls Ben's "one clearly defined emotion, his love for Caddy."[67] Edmond Volpe says that "what Ben really loses in his loss of Caddy is love" and then suggests that "loss of love is the central cause of decay in modern society."[68] Thompson also says that his "instinctive search is for the redeeming power of love."[69]

Thus Ben, the idiot son of the once-aristocratic Compsons, introduces both narrative and theme. The failure of love may not be placed on Ben's heart, for in a sense, even with his mindlessness, he loves with his whole being. Instead he provides a powerful example of love desperately needed but greatly denied.

Caddy, the only Compson daughter, gave Ben his one period of love and security; she gave to him her childhood years. However, for Caddy, the childhood years were too limited; the family situation forced her into too early adulthood. For Ben, childhood years were unending. Thompson describes Caddy's presence as "Ben's joy; her absence his grief."[70]

[67] Swiggart, p. 65. [68] Volpe, p. 104.

[69] Thompson, Faulkner, p. 48.

[70] Lawrance Thompson, "Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury," in Three Decades, p. 214.

Although Caddy is not given a narrative section of the novel, Faulkner referred to her as "the beautiful one, . . . my heart's darling"[71] and in a comment on her creation as a character added an autobiographical note: "So I, who never had a sister and was fated to lose my daughter in infancy, set out to make myself a beautiful and tragic little girl."[72] Floyd Watkins interprets the deliberate absence of Caddy as a narrator since the three brothers are given a section. In his opinion, it is appropriate that Caddy be dramatized rather than merely heard. Hers is a vital and active life, and her deeds are "Faulkner's triumph in the novel."[73] Her deeds are primarily those performed for Ben's well-being and are in sharp contrast to the neglect of their mother. Several critics point out that the child Caddy assumes the maternal role, even at times extending her care to her own mother. Michael Millgate sees her as the main person to sustain whatever family unity exists and says she is seen as "the protector and comforter of Benjy, and even as the pacifier of her

[71] Faulkner, "Session One: Graduate Course in American Fiction," in Faulkner in the University, p. 6.

[72] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), I, 570.

[73] Floyd C. Watkins, "The Word and the Deed in Faulkner's First Great Novels," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 217-18.

mother."[74] Thompson agrees also that she mothers Ben and even at times mothers "her self-pitying mother."[75] In Sally Page's view, Caddy's whole childhood is "focused on her mothering love and care for her idiot brother." Page is impressed with Caddy's skill in her maternal role to Ben and praises "her thorough understanding of his needs and her skill at preserving his sense of security." Caddy is quite willing to assume this role and handles it with skill and intelligence.[76] In her childhood, Caddy dramatically illustrates the triumph of love and a willingness to act. In a temporary fashion, she may be categorized with those Faulkner praises for their recognition of a bad situation and the determination to make a positive difference. She acts with love and courage and is frequently seen as independent and daring. Yet her sense of prevailing and her open giving of wholesome love are short-lived; the triumph is temporary.

Although Volpe calls her the only Compson "capable of giving herself to love and to life,"[77] Caddy's life is thwarted by her family situation, and she becomes the victim of the shaping influence of adults who lack love.

[74] Michael Millgate, "The Sound and the Fury," in Critical Essays, p. 103.

[75] Thompson, Faulkner, p. 36.

[76] Page, pp. 50-51.

[77] Volpe, p. 99.

Thompson refers to her as "doomed not only by parental failures but also by the misleading actions of Quentin."[78] Leary sees her "caught in the barren trap set by her family's failure" and describes her unguided development toward sexual maturity which ends in disaster.[79] Millgate sees her sexual experiences as an "outlet from family repression."[80] Eventually Caddy leaves the Compson family and is never allowed to return, her name painfully heard by Ben from strangers on the adjacent golf course but forbidden within the home. As an adult and a natural mother, her love for her daughter Quentin, kept by the Compsons, now becomes her tragedy. Linda Wagner sees this love as her only motivation which allows her to become a "pawn in Jason's manipulations." Describing her isolation and "bleak existence" Wagner laments the fact that Caddy had so little effect on her family and that "no one has learned to love, or to cope, from her example."[81] Watkins defines hers as the greatest tragedy in The Sound and the Fury,

[78] Thompson, Faulkner, p. 49.

[79] Leary, p. 61.

[80] Millgate in Critical Essays, p. 103.

[81] Linda Welshimer Wagner, "Faulkner and (Southern) Women," in The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1977), p. 134.

"that Caddy and her capacity for love are lost." Watkins describes Caddy's life:

> She loved most of all; she expressed her love in action rather than in word. . . . She falls more than any of the Compsons; the fault is her own; but Faulkner seems to suggest that the Compsons had too little regard for Caddy herself and her love and too much respect for the conventions and proprieties. Only Benjy loves her enough. . . . In his limited mind, Caddy still exists in present tense.[82]

Caddy's love extends to her brother Quentin also; however, as a rational being, he is caught by this Compson regard for propriety and therefore his response differs from that of Ben. Nonetheless, the second section of the novel, which Quentin narrates, may be compared to Ben's section as can Caddy's role to Quentin as substitute mother. Olga Vickery points out the closeness of the two brothers' sections, and even though she admits Quentin's carrying out gestures people expected of him, Vickery describes Quentin's world "essentially as isolated and irrational as his brother's." The basic difference is that Ben's world is based on sensations, Quentin's on abstractions.[83] Louis Rubin also sees Quentin as "obsessed by useless, abstract

[82] Watkins in Four Decades, p. 219.

[83] Vickery, pp. 30-31.

notions of family honor."[84] Backman speaks of his brooding on ideals.[85] Volpe blames Mrs. Compson for much of Quentin's instability because she did not provide adequate love and security for her children. As a result, Quentin becomes emotionally dependent on his sister; he forms a dependency so great "that he centers all his idealism on her."[86] According to Vickery, when Caddy's behavior causes disorder in Quentin's world, his outrage and anguish are similar to Ben's.[87] Frederick Hoffman states that Quentin has made himself the guardian of the Compson honor and that he tries "to wipe out Caddy's sin by claiming it as incest."[88]

Although Quentin is portrayed in Ben's section with the other children, following Caddy's lead and accepting her love, he is more fully portrayed in his own section on the day of his suicide. He is a victim of his own abstractions and distortions. The Compson land was sold for Quentin to go to Harvard where he ends his life. He perhaps represents the hope for the Compsons, but he cannot cope with the crippling influence of his family even when physically removed from them. Despite his weak nature, there is something reminiscent of young Bayard Sartoris

[84] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 55-56.

[85] Backman, p. 38.

[86] Volpe, pp. 110-11.

[87] Vickery, p. 31.

[88] Hoffman, Faulkner, pp. 55-56.

in him. The loss of love is felt in his attitude toward Caddy; the need for love is obviously present. His response to others is seen in his concern for an Italian child who follows him in his aimless wandering. However, as he is seen in this section, he is too disoriented to practice the virtues Faulkner honors and has no hope for enduring. Floyd Watkins describes him as a character who exists and lives "by the empty word . . . incapable of finding the way to life."[89]

The remaining Compsons offer even less evidence of Faulkner's virtues and make no attempts at positive individuality. The third narrative section belongs to the final brother, Jason. However, in his sarcastic exchanges with his mother and his attacks on his now deceased father, additional views of both parents are revealed. Both seem incapable of genuine love, dignity, and integrity mainly because they both retreat from life. Mr. Compson evades all responsibility and escapes into his alcoholic world; Mrs. Compson's rejection of motherhood is pronounced as she hides in her bedroom, a hypochrondriac wallowing in self-pity. In a sense, they must be held responsible for the failure of love; what efforts they make are for respectability. Both suffer at the hands of critics. Sally Page says Mrs. Compson "effectively damns

[89] Watkins in Four Decades, p. 227.

all her children into non-existence by her total incapacity to love them."[90] Backman call her a "weak, whining, cold woman" and believes her to be incapable of the virtues of Faulkner.[91] Leary describes her way of handling every crisis "by taking to her bed."[92] Elizabeth Kerr condemns her as "a chief cause of the misfortunes and disasters she lamented."[93] According to Kenneth Richardson, Mr. Compson "is unwilling to act humanely or even act at all because to act is to risk something of himself."[94]

Although the adult Compsons clearly show the need for the virtues, especially in their roles as parents, and the need for acting rather than retreating, the supreme example of denial of love, dignity, and integrity is the life of Jason, the remaining Compson brother. With the death of the father and the suicide of Quentin, Jason is seen as the last hope for security, the head of the Compson family. Critics admit that Jason possesses a logic missing in the other brothers. Vickery points out that his thinking is clear and orderly so much so in fact that "his is a world reduced to calculation."[95] Leary labels his logic

[90] Page, p. 60.

[91] Backman, p. 18.

[92] Leary, p. 47.

[93] Kerr, p. 60.

[94] Kenneth Richardson, p. 28.

[95] Vickery, pp. 31, 42-43.

as ruthless.[96] In Faulkner's own assessment, Jason is far more than ruthless and may represent complete evil. His creator calls him "the most vicious character . . . I ever thought of."[97] Backman finds Jason, like his mother, unable to love and therefore, he becomes the antagonist of those who do. In Backman's view, "Hate is the chief source of Jason's energy."[98] Page sees Jason's philosophy as not just "anti-woman" but "anti-life" and cites examples to prove he has feeling for no one.[99] As Panthea Broughton points out, even the woman Jason sees from Memphis is a business arrangement.[100] All Jason's interests are material, and Millgate sees this as a cause for his isolation from both his family and the community. According to Millgate, Jason's is a "willed deracination," and "his contempt for the town is only exceeded by his contempt for his own family."[101] Robert Penn Warren says no one

[96] Leary, p. 54.

[97] William Faulkner, "Colloquies at Nagano Seminar," in Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random, 1968), p. 146.

[98] Backman, p. 30 [99] Page, p. 67.

[100] Panthea Reid Broughton, William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1974), p. 90.

[101] Millgate in Critical Essays, pp. 105, 104.

equals Jason in "degradation and vileness"[102] and calls his portrayal "one of the most terrifying in all literature."[103] Although Jason by no means endures and his self-inflicted isolation reveals a miserable creature, he is a most disturbing example of a logical man who survives with no trace of compassion, pity, sacrifice, or integrity.

The one sustained example of endurance in The Sound and the Fury is found in Dilsey, technically by name, birth, and race outside the Compson family, yet in a sense, the most vital and dominant member. With the possible exception of Caddy, all other Compsons illustrate the failure of love. She is the epitome of Faulkner's "old verities and truths of the heart," compassion, pity, and sacrifice as well as honor and pride and a strong example of positive individuality. She proves Faulkner's belief in man's toughness in the face of adversity and clearly fits into the classification of those who, in the midst of chaos, declare "I'm going to do something about it." She often intervenes in family struggles, accomplishing with wisdom all the circumstances will permit. Dilsey herself acknowledges as she gently rocks and strokes the man-child Benjy, "I does de bes I kin" (396).

[102] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Three Decades, p. 120.

[103] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Four Decades, p. 97.

Dilsey's best far exceeds the efforts of the family she serves, and her accomplishments point up even more dramatically the inadequacies of the Compsons. Her actions, values, and attitudes are seen in direct contrast to theirs. The most obvious contrast is to the adult Compsons. According to Lewis Leary, she is both mother and surrogate father, "the true head of the household."[104] Walter Everett describes "her calm moral stance," a direct contrast "to the simpering of Mrs. Compson."[105] Kenneth Richardson refers to her as the loyal mother to and for Mrs. Compson, and when compared to Mr. Compson, Dilsey is an "uneducated seer," he, "an educated fool."[106] Volpe also notes the contrast of Dilsey's simple faith and uneducated view of life with Mr. Compson's "sterile and doomed philosophizing."[107] In examining her view of the world, Hoffman praises her continuous ability "to balance the real against the ideal" which enables her to endure.[108] In this regard she is in sharp contrast to Quentin. Backman, who says

[104] Leary, p. 58. [105] Everett, p. 112.

[106] Kenneth Richardson, pp. 100-02.

[107] Volpe, p. 125.

[108] Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 29.

Quentin "broods upon ideals," adds but Dilsey "lives them."[109] Leary speaks of her selflessness as opposed to Quentin's "inward-looking nightmarish egotism" and even to Ben's "innocent egocentricity."[110]

Although the obvious contrast is drawn with the elder Compsons, the most extreme contrast is to Jason whose values are in direct opposition to Dilsey's. Dilsey differs from Quentin and his parents in her embracing of life; they retreat or escape. However, both Dilsey and Jason act; the difference is in attitude. Dilsey loves life despite its handicaps. Jason attacks life and seeks revenge for the setbacks he has suffered. Broughton discusses Dilsey's faith as the basis of her handling of pettiness, injustice, and indifference. She can accept the "nothingness in the Compson world" and can deal with disaster without "ever being hardened or becoming vindictive or morose."[111] Herein her response to life is very different from Jason's who never forgets that Compson land was sold for Quentin's education which he callously comments taught Quentin "how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim" (243). Neither can Jason overcome the loss of the promised job from Caddy's husband. He takes his hostility out on Caddy especially and on her daughter.

[109] Backman, p. 38. [110] Leary, p. 58.

[111] Broughton, p. 177.

Dilsey herself points out the contrast between herself and Jason when Caddy pleads desperately with Jason to see her child and is met with cruel refusal. Dilsey comments, "You's a cold man, Jason, if man you is, . . . I thank de Lawd I got mo heart dan dat, even ef hit is black" (258). More evidence of difference in attitude is seen in the value each places on appearances. Both possess pride; however, Dilsey takes Ben to church while Jason roams the countryside in pursuit of Caddy's daughter who is disgracing him. Dilsey's comment to Frony for those who question Ben's accompanying her is: "Den you send un to me, . . . Tell um de good Lawd dont keer whether he smart or not. Dont nobody but white trash keer dat" (362).

Dilsey, the black servant, rises above the once-aristocratic Compsons and proves herself the superior human being. This is based primarily on her capacity to love, a capacity most of the Compsons lack. For this capacity and for other virtues, she receives much positive critical evaluation. Robert Penn Warren singles her out as the only character "who embodies love, force, and fulfilled identity."[112] Elizabeth Kerr also describes her as "the one source of love and order in the household."[113] Hyatt Waggoner speaks of

[112] Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: The South, the Negro, and Time," in Critical Essays, p. 258.

[113] Kerr, p. 60.

her love for Benjy in particular. Her feeling is not only compassion but also respect, Waggoner says. "Only to her is he not a 'thing' but a person."[114] This is in evidence early in the novel when Dilsey, from her own funds, buys Benjy a birthday cake complete with an assortment of candles, some broken into little pieces to come up with the right number.

The dignity Dilsey maintains is also impressive. This quality is achieved in spite of her feeble and aging physical condition, the comic garb she dons for church, and even her role as domestic. It is a dignity which goes deeper than the physical impression, the dress, or the job. Peter Swiggart says that "Faulkner invests Dilsey with an atmosphere of heroic dignity."[115] Howe finds her poise remarkable and praises "her ability to maintain her selfhood under humiliating conditions."[116] Volpe says "she is a servant, but she works with such devotion and responsibility that she has far more dignity than those she serves."[117]

In Dilsey, "the old verities and truths of the heart" are present, and equally important, she possesses the courage and wisdom to act. Sallie TelSelle states that she "becomes what she is through what she does."[118] Vickery also focuses

[114] Waggoner, p. 46. [115] Swiggart, p. 106.

[116] Howe, p. 123 [117] Volpe, pp. 124-25.

[118] Sallie McFague TeSelle, Literature and the Christian Life (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), p. 28.

on her deeds, suggesting that on the basis of being articulate, she is only a little above Ben, and it is solely by her actions that she becomes "the embodiment of the truth of the heart."[119] Her acts are selfless and almost instinctive, and to the Compson family they provide the sole source of stability. Page says Dilsey "creates order out of chaos by her love of and service to others" and states that she acts in the interest of others without concern for herself.[120] In Vickery's opinion, Dilsey acts with instinctive feeling that she must face whatever comes with courage, and this eliminates any room for passivity.[121]

When The Sound and the Fury comes to its literal ending, the scene is of Benjy in an agonizing roar and at the mercy of a thoughtless servant. Jason, outraged and humiliated that Benjy is in sight of those on the Jefferson square, reacts with his typical threats and violence. Yet every reader is aware that in the Compson kitchen Dilsey awaits in all her compassion and steadfastness willing to do her very best. When Malcolm Cowley prepared The Portable Faulkner, Faulkner added an appendix which traced the Compsons for a century and a half. After detailed data on the events in the lives of the Compsons, he ends with the blacks, saving

[119] Vickery, p. 22.

[120] Page, pp. 69-70.

[121] Vickery, p. 48.

Dilsey for last with her first name, followed by "they endured" (427). Given the daily chaotic situation she lives in and the numerous tasks required by her for her own family as well as the Compsons, her endurance takes on greater significance. Kerr speaks of her pride in the fact "that her own values sustained her" yet she did not have the satisfaction of seeing them prevail. Nonetheless "her unflagging quest . . . for an identity that transcends self and race" leaves her a figure of triumph.[122] Millgate also sees her as an "immensely positive figure," and he notes that although she endures, "her endurance is tested not in acts of spectacular heroism but in her submission to the tedious, trivial . . . and willfully inconsiderate demands made upon her by the Compson family."[123]

Her practice of the verities and her endurance make Dilsey a character worthy of admiration, a feeling Faulkner held for her long after he wrote the Compson story. In one introduction to the novel written several years after its first publication, Faulkner spoke of the conclusion of his work and Dilsey:

> Then the story was complete, finished. There was Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the

[122] Kerr, p. 66.

[123] Millgate in Critical Essays, p. 106.

> fallen ruins of the family like a ruined chimney, gaunt, patient, and indomitable.[124]

To the University of Virginia students nearly thirty years after he created Dilsey, he described her as a "good human being" and gave her credit for holding the Compson family together and not for "the hope of reward but just because it was the decent and proper thing to do."[125] In this same period, he spoke of her in a Paris interview with a more personal tone of admiration: "Dilsey is brave, courageous, generous, gentle and honest. She's much more brave and honest and generous than I am."[126]

In these early Yoknapatawpha novels with their focus on the aristocrats, Faulkner shows endurance in the midst of decay. Sartoris, defined by general critical evaluation as the weaker novel, treats the verities and positive individual action through several minor characters as well as Miss Jenny. Bayard's violent escape from life and the Benbows' retreat from vital living make statements by indirection. In The Sound and the Fury, for many Faulkner's best work, the presence and absence of the verities are

[124] William Faulkner, "An Introduction to The Sound and the Fury," in A Faulkner Miscellany, ed. James B. Meriwether (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1974), p. 160.

[125] Faulkner, "Session Ten: Visitors from Virginia Colleges," in Faulkner in the University, p. 85.

[126] William Faulkner, "Interview with Cynthia Grenier," in Lion in the Garden, p. 224.

found in a much more pronounced fashion. In all of Yoknapatawpha, Dilsey is perhaps his greatest character of affirmation and Jason, the greatest denial of the verities.

Chapter III

THE LOWER CLASSES: *AS I LAY DYING*, *SANCTUARY*, *LIGHT IN AUGUST*

In the early years of the 1930s Faulkner published three Yoknapatawpha novels, *As I Lay Dying* in 1930, *Sanctuary* in 1931, and *Light in August* in 1932. In all three the major focus clearly shifts from the fading aristocratic world of the Sartorises and the Compsons to far less prestigious social groups, dirt farmers, bootleggers, and sawmill workers. As one might anticipate with the strength of Dilsey or the steadfastness of the MacCallums in mind, the fall in status and class may not indicate a corresponding fall in the quality of enduring nor in the need for the verities. The Bundrens of *As I Lay Dying* overcome flood and fire to carry out their mission; Ruby Lamar of *Sanctuary* displays integrity that sharply contrasts with Narcissa Benbow; Byron Bunch of *Light in August* reveals loyalty and a love that is selfless. Each novel also contains characters whose lives illustrate a yearning for the verities, and to some extent, each novel provides examples by the absence of the verities. Here through illustrations of isolation Faulkner shows with

increasing emphasis the need for human communion. Although the rash and reckless acts of Bayard Sartoris and the callousness of Jason Compson are shocking, the three novels of the early thirties take on more overtones of horror and outrage, often based on sheer violence and a sense of evil. Within this framework, the call for positive individuality is even more compelling; only a few respond.

When Faulkner published As I Lay Dying, his third Yoknapatawpha novel, his literary reputation was stronger than it had been at the publication of Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury, and according to John Bassett, the early reviews were generally supportive even though some critics were dismayed that his entire character focus was on low-class people, the Bundrens and their neighbors.[1] Irving Howe sees this character focus as proof of Faulkner's readiness "to immerse himself in people radically unlike himself" yet points out that Faulkner finds even "in the most absurdly wretched" a capacity for dignity and suffering.[2] Howe, along with several other critics, shows

[1] John Bassett, William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 6-7.

[2] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 189.

the surface contrast of the Bundrens to the Compsons and Sartorises yet identifies their likenesses in dealing with the intangible qualities. Most of these critics imply or state clearly that the Bundrens possess an endurance frequently missing in their social superiors. Lewis Leary calls them "unsophisticated country people" but finds them "not greatly unlike" Sartorises and Compsons in their pride, ambition, and capacity for failure; then he calls attention to their "indomitable, dogged determination" which he says allows success.[3] The French critic and translator André Bleikasten points out that the Bundrens belong to no Southern dynasty, have no famous ancestor, no tradition, and no legacy. Although he emphasizes the individual isolation that is never overcome, he states that the family "sticks together as long as survival is at stake." To more firmly support his stand, Bleikasten reviews Cleanth Brooks who discusses at length the heroic nature of the Bundrens' emphasizing of a family honor as demanding as that of Faulkner's aristocrats.[4] Howe acknowledges the individual motives of the Bundren family

[3] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 64.

[4] André Bleikasten, Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, trans. Roger Little (Bloomington, Ind.,: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 78-79, 145.

members, but he sees a union in the obligation all have to the dead woman. In contrast to the aristocrats, Howe states that they can "come together in a brief act of humanity in a way the Compsons cannot."[5] Robert Penn Warren agrees, stating that the Bundrens "may come off a little better than the latter-day Compsons" because they are capable of "heroic effort" and of carrying out a promise.[6]

The impact of enduring is most effectively shown by examining the family as a unit. Throughout the novel, the presence of all members of the family may be felt, even that of Addie Bundren, the mother whose death explains the title. Her dying hours and bizarre funeral procession to nearby Jefferson furnish the occasion for the family's sense of purpose. In the views of several critics, the combined efforts in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles are seen as praiseworthy and evidence of endurance. Joseph Blotner says that the trip was "costly for all of them. . . . But they have endured the castastrophe."[7]

[5] Howe, p. 53.

[6] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 119.

[7] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), I, 641.

Louis Rubin describes the lifestyle of these "poor dirt farmers" who live on the land and aspire "to little more than subsistence." Yet Rubin sees the Bundrens as "genuine human beings, who for all their squalor and even depravity are capable of integrity and even nobility." Even in the misery of their lives, Rubin describes "a kind of heroism" and in looking at them as a family, he sees a unit "strong enough to persist and endure in its purpose."[8] Even though Brooks calls the story of the Bundrens "clearly appalling," he adds that it is "not scathing and not debunking" and admits it is "a commentary upon man's power to act and to endure." He concludes that "Man's capacity to spend himself in a cause is always a remarkable thing and nowhere more so than when it springs from an unlikely soil and when it is not aware that it is remarkable."[9]

Thus the overall impression of the novel is that of the family that endures hardships and overcomes danger and gross circumstances in order to accomplish its mission. Rubin accounts for the success of the Bundrens by identifying the presence of love, even though "warped and twisted."

[8] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), pp. 62-63.

[9] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 166.

He finds "no meaning for their cohesion . . . except love, a grotesque, appalling kind of love in many ways, but love nonetheless." He insists that each of the Bundrens in his own individual way loves Addie, the wife and mother.[10] When the Bundrens are seen as a family unit, the endurance and accomplishment are clear; when examined individually, isolation rather than unity is apparent, and motives other than love for the dead wife and mother surface. Ironically, when viewed as an individual, each member reveals a deep need for unity and love. As the story is presented through the monologues of the Bundrens and many of those who come in contact with them, the yearning for the verities is more obvious than the presence; however, some of the verities are evident to some degree.

Perhaps Addie herself as she dies and as she had lived illustrates most dramatically the need for love and belonging. Seen first on her deathbed, Addie is surrounded by her husband Anse, her only daughter Dewey Dell, four sons, Cash, Jewel, Darl, and the youngest Vardaman and several neighbors anxious to help and console. Yet as Melvin Backman points out, she lay "dying as she had lived, alone in spirit."[11]

[10] Rubin, pp. 60, 63.

[11] Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), p. 58.

Although love for her inspired the funeral journey, love from her seemed frequently withheld, and her life in the midst of a large farm family is characterized by loneliness. According to Brooks, isolation has long been the plight of Addie; he speaks of her longing for "some kind of communion" and states that she had felt this "emptiness of despair" even before she married Anse.[12] Brooks' views are supported in Addie's recollection of her teaching days prior to her marriage. She spoke of her pupils, "each with his and her secret and selfish thought, and blood strange to each other blood and strange to mine."[13] With pleasure, she anticipated their misbehavior and saw the subsequent whippings as an opportunity to make them aware of her.

The power of the act to convey what the words of her teaching evidently did not is a characteristic belief that disturbed Addie throughout her life. Backman sees Addie's distrust of words and respect for deeds as illustrative of the major themes of the novel, "the power to act" and "the power of love."[14] Floyd Watkins calls her position "one of

[12] Brooks, p. 149.

[13] William Faulkner, As I Lay Dying (1930; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1964), pp. 161-62. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[14] Backman, p. 57.

the most effective rejections of abstraction written in the early twentieth century" and goes on to paraphrase her view that "Those who can . . . love and act; those who cannot, talk and speak words of truth."[15] According to Leary, love as Anse spoke it to Addie "proved to be an empty word, attractive but meaningless."[16] Olga Vickery reviews Addie's dying thoughts on the distinction between word and deed. In Vickery's opinion, Addie concludes "that any experience--love, marriage, motherhood, bereavement--can be either an intensely felt reality or a mere conventional form of speech and behavior."[17] Sally Page recognizes Addie's "deep desire for a vital life" but summarizes Addie's life as "one of negation and partial fulfillment." Page cites Addie's rejection of her children, her unsatisfactory marriage, and the absence of love. Page says, "Life has failed Addie, but also Addie fails life. By refusing to enter life on its own terms, Addie loses it completely."[18]

[15] Floyd C. Watkins, "The Word and the Deed in Faulkner's First Novels," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), p. 213.

[16] Leary, p. 65.

[17] Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 53.

[18] Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc, 1972), p. 118.

Howe also points out flaws and finds little worthy of admiration except "her utter insistence upon taking and struggling with life until the end."[19] Therefore, although there may be a sense of enduring a lonely and hard life, there is no element of prevailing. Addie, more than any previous Faulkner character, articulates the need for positive action in her reliance on deeds as opposed to words, yet in her life she was unable to break the barriers of her isolation to practice the giving or receiving of love.

While Addie longs for actions and discounts words, Anse's life resides in words, meaningless words, mostly worn-out expressions of the illiterate hill-country people. His lecture when Jewel plans to ride his horse in the funeral procession has a repetitive tone: "How many times I told him it's doing such things as that that makes folks talk about him, I dont know. I says I got some regard for what folks say about my flesh and blood even if you haven't. . ." (99). His frequently quoted Biblical comments seem hollow. "The Lord giveth" (81) is his consolation at Addie's death. "God's will be done" (108) is his reaction when the river he must cross is at the highest level ever witnessed. Frederick Hoffman sees Anse as a man of words

[19] Howe, p. 177.

throughout the novel, a man "who shunts aside with words and folk pieties all responsibility to act."[20] Perhaps Anse's most accurate statement of self-analysis is "I mislike undecision as much as ere a man" (16). Several critics point out the total incompatability of Anse and Addie and his failure to meet her needs. Vickery finds him "completely blind to Addie's intense desire for life,"[21] and Page states he "not only is incapable of fulfilling Addie's physical need for sense of union but also is totally incapable of even comprehending the nature of her emotions."[22] As a father Anse fails also. His children are for his use, including their possessions. When Anse is desperate to get to Jefferson, he refuses a neighbor's offer of a team but stealthily trades Jewel's hard-earned horse. In Jefferson, Anse realizes that Dewey Dell has ten dollars; he disregards her arguments, accuses her of selfishness and ingratitude, and departs with her money. His major act of parental concern is the cementing of Cash's broken leg; this absurd kindness so enrages Doc Peabody that he declares:

> God Amighty, why didn't Anse carry you to the nearest sawmill and stick your leg in the saw?

[20] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), p. 62.

[21] Vickery, p. 53. [22] Page, p. 115.

> That would have cured it. Then you all could have stuck his head into the saw and cured a whole family. . . . (230)

Anse, examined individually, diminishes the quality of enduring his family has been honored for. Anse is not an active participant in life but more a bystander, an onlooker. Perhaps he merely survives rather than endures or simply exists in much the same nature that his wagon or the mules do. His greatest activity is probably a mental one, what Elizabeth Kerr defines as his "ability to secure aid from everyone else while asserting his determination not to be beholden to anyone."[23] A major purpose in his life is to obtain a new set of teeth. "That will be a comfort. It will" (105).

Although the traditional head of a family that endures, Anse in general must be labeled a failure. Only on brief and rare occasions does he approach the virtues Faulkner commends, and even in these scenes, his successes are questionable. A momment of compassion is seen as he clumsily attempts to smoothe the quilt covering Addie, but he only disarranged it and returns to "mouthing his snuff against his gums" and commenting "God's will be done. . . . Now I can get them teeth" (51). Receiving

[23] Elizabeth M. Kerr, "As I Lay Dying as Ironic Quest," in Four Decades, p. 234.

his neighbors' calls of condolence, Anse exhibits dignity. He is described by Vernon Tull: "He looks folks in the eye now, dignified, his face tragic and composed, shaking us by the hand as we walk up onto the porch. . ." (81). Vickery describes his response here when he "recites his litany of grief" and suggests that his egotism is the dominant feeling. She interprets his enjoyment of the situation as the "chief mourner . . . for once in his life, a person of importance."[24] Glimpses of fierce and perhaps foolish independence are seen in his refusal to accept food or shelter in the homes along the way and his determination to secure his own mules rather than borrow.

The one sustained action that saves Anse from total failure is the completion of his task. Although he is rewarded with new teeth and a new Mrs. Bundren, Anse buries Addie as he intended all along. George M. O'Donnell says Anse's promise to his dying wife "sets up for himself an ethical duty"; O'Donnell praises him for "the fulfillment of this obligation in spite of constant temptation to abandon it, and in spite of multiplied difficulties put in his way by nature itself." O'Donnell calls this "a genuine act of traditional morality" carried to the end.[25]

[24] Vickery, p. 52.

[25] George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in Three Decades, p. 87.

In contrast to Addie's husband from whom she extracts the promise to bury her in Jefferson is her son Jewel who she accurately predicts ". . . will be my salvation" (160). Jewel and Anse are complete opposites in personality and behavior. Anse, a character of inertia, is a man of speech even though his words are as empty as he seems to be. Jewel, a character of deeds, is a man of silence yet his actions indicate that strong, even violent feelings, are locked within him. Although Jewel is not Anse Bundren's son but the result of Addie's affair with the Reverend Whitfield, he shares, more so than Anse's own children, Anse's determination to see the burial task completed. In keeping with their opposing natures, Anse's determination is expressed in words, Jewel's illustrated in action. His greatest resolution and physical courage are seen when he rescues the coffin from a burning barn: "Then it [the coffin] topples forward, gaining momentum, revealing Jewel and the sparks raining on him too in engendering gusts, so that he appears to be enclosed in a thin nimbus of fire" (212).

As his determination indicates, Jewel seems drawn more to Addie than her other children. Leary holds that Addie gave him special attention and affection by "beating him and caressing him,"[26] and Hoffman sees him as her

[26] Leary, p. 68.

"only real son."[27] Backman explains Jewel's favored position is gained by the "burden he placed on her: the sinful conception, the hard birth . . . and the deceit she practised for his sake." In Backman's opinion, Jewel returns his mother's love with equal intensity although he does not verbalize his feelings but reveals them, "in a sense, by cursing and caressing his horse, . . . a substitute for his mother." Jewel and Addie also share a lack of faith in words. Backman describes Jewel's eyes as registering "intense but inarticulate emotion" and states that "Addie's distrust of words is curiously embodied in Jewel."[28] Bleikasten points out that Jewel breaks his silence only once and describes this monologue as "peppered with invective and breathless rage" and revealing only "his hatred of the others and his jealous love of Addie."[29] Jewel's love is expressed most dramatically when he permits Anse to sell his cherished horse in order to continue to Jefferson. Faulkner praised Jewel's act to the students at the University of Virginia by first emphasizing Jewel's great feeling for the horse and his faith that he would always own it, then saying that "when the crisis came he did behave

[27] Hoffman, p. 63. [28] Backman, pp. 59-60, 62.

29 Bleikasten, p. 61.

better than he thought he would behave. He sacrificed the only thing he loved for someone else's good."[30] Thus Jewel, harsh, silent, and violent, provides an example of what he believes to be positive action carried out in the face of catastrophe and an illustration of sacrificial love.

Darl, the second son born to the Bundrens, is the most articulate member of the family. Given approximately one-third of the narration, Darl sees into the lives of his family as no one else can and also views the burial differently. Darl is a man of thought rather than action, but in the course of the journey, his thinking leads him to attempt one major act, that of setting the barn on fire. Howe explains that only Darl "senses how preposterous the journey has become."[31] The normal activity of Darl is primarily mental; it is sensitive perception. Leary calls Darl's insight "an uncanny, almost supernatural knack for knowing without ever having been told." Examples Leary cites are Darl's sister's pregnancy, Jewel's true father, the time of Addie's death when Darl is not close by.[32] Floyd

[30] William Faulkner, "Session Fourteen: Graduate Course in American Fiction, Undergraduate Course in American Literature," in Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 109.

[31] Howe, p. 55.

[32] Leary, pp. 68-69.

Watkins calls Darl's awareness a clairvoyance so strong that "he lays bare the souls and reads the minds of members of his family." This comes, according to Watkins, because Darl is "obsessed by a terrible need for love."[33] Bleikasten says that Addie did not want him and "never accepted him."[34] Howe speaks of his constant search to find his place in this family; "To the end it is a search for kinship that obsesses Darl."[35] Yet the conclusion of the novel shows Darl being carted off to the state mental institution. Cash makes a final pronouncement: "But it is better so for him. This world is not his world" (250).

Darl Bundren, the most articulate, the most intelligent, and the most sensitive, illustrates not the presence of Faulkner's virtues but rather the yearning for them. Through Darl's situation, Faulkner shows clearly the deep need for human communion. Although Darl, with his special sensitivity, knows much about his family, he is never known by them.

The strongest sense of enduring and the greatest evidence of the virtues are found in Cash, the firstborn

[33] Watkins in Four Decades, p. 223.

[34] Bleikasten, p. 87.

[35] Howe, pp. 181-82.

of Addie and Anse. As a carpenter first seen carefully building Addie's coffin, Cash may be thought of as a man of manual labor only. Closer inspection reveals a quiet and patient man, longsuffering and caring, a man who understands his family well. Cash is the accepted son; his birth comes before what Hoffman refers to as the "dissolution of Addie's love and trust."[36] Cash is consequently better adjusted and is able to express his love in acceptable ways. When it is discovered that Jewel is working nights to buy a horse, Cash helps with Jewel's daily chores and defends his right to his purchase. Vickery praises his use of his skill as a carpenter, describing his building of the coffin as "an act of love."[37] Much more significant than the work of Cash's hands is the work of his heart. Cash is able to accept and even defend words and actions of his family that a lesser man could not tolerate. Cash is placed on top of his mother's coffin with his swollen leg cast in cement; his physical endurance is remarkable. Even the youngest brother Vardaman notices that Cash's pain is extreme," . . . Cash begins to sweat again. His teeth look out" (186). But when Darl tries to get Cash to admit the pain, Cash replies, "It dont bother none" (186) and will not agree to a slower pace for his

[36] Hoffman, p. 62. [37] Vickery, p. 57.

ease. His spiritual endurance surpasses the physical, for Cash exhibits a forgiving nature and a selflessness found in no other family member. Even in the face of Doc Peabody's outrage, Cash refuses to blame his father and brothers for the ordeal they have permitted. He is able to handle opposing acts of his brothers with compassionate understanding. His reaction to the fire illustrates this. Vickery says "he alone comprehends that the judgment of Darl's attempt to destroy the coffin and of Jewel's grim efforts to save it must depend upon whether the body is viewed realistically or symbolically."[38] According to Bleikasten, Cash seems to "grasp most fully the meaning of the crisis his family is going through," and he is also able to understand Darl in a way none of the others can.[39] Vickery singles him out as "the one character in the novel who achieves his full humanity in which reason and intuition, words and action merge into a single though complex response."[40]

The two remaining Bundren children, Dewey Dell, the only daughter, and Vardaman, a young son, provide little evidence of the Faulkner virtues. Dewey Dell is forced into the role of the woman of the home; she is seen preparing

[38] Vickery, p. 58. [39] Bleikasten, pp. 86-87.

[40] Vickery, p. 58.

the meals and pacifying Vardaman who is confused by all that is happening. Although there are occasions when Dewey Dell performs acts of kindness for her brothers, particularly Cash, all her thoughts are centered on her pregnant condition and desperate need for an abortion. Brooks explains she is "obsessed with her own problem" and is aware that she cannot "indulge her grief for her mother."[41] The chance to have an abortion becomes the sole reason for the trip; she becomes frantic when a neighbor suggests to Anse that he bury Addie close by at New Hope. Dewey Dell resorts to shaming and threatening her father: "You promised her. . . . She wouldn't go until you promised. She thought she could depend on you. If you don't do it, it will be a curse on you" (109). Surely Dewey Dell is seen in even more trying circumstances than her brothers, yet her self-centeredness contrasts with Cash who also has to bear physical problems as well as grief. Howe calls Dewey Dell "placidly vegetable,"[42] and Brooks refers to her "somewhat bovine simplicity."[43] Bleikasten defends her to some extent by pointing out that her mother's death comes at a time "when she more than ever needs Addie"; hence Dewey Dell must feel "doubly betrayed and doubly deserted."[44]

[41] Brooks, p. 160.

[42] Howe, p. 53.

[43] Brooks, p. 160.

[44] Bleikasten, p. 94.

Both Dewey Dell and Vardaman may illustrate the need for the verities. Howe describes Vardaman as "terrified, perhaps deranged by the whole experience."[45] Faulkner also comments on Vardaman's being "baffled and puzzled" and neglected by the adults who do not take the time "to show him any tenderness, any affection and he was groping."[46] In the lives of the youngest Bundrens, it is the need for compassion and pity that is strongly felt. Dewey Dell, only a teenager, faces unwanted motherhood and the loss of her own mother simultaneously. Vardaman, much younger, is heard voicing his concern and confusion over Darl's being sent to Jackson and also his wish at least to see the toy train his heart desires; instead Dewey Dell appeases him with bananas.

Surrounding the Bundren family in their home as Addie dies and en route to Jefferson are other hill country farmers and the local minister. Few are developed as individual characters, and the general impression is that of concerned and compassionate country folk ready to help even the shiftless Anse. Elizabeth Kerr describes the Armstids and the Gillespies extending hospitality "beyond the call of duty" and also Vernon Tull helping

[45] Howe, p. 53.

[46] Faulkner, "Session Fourteen," in Faulkner in the University, pp. 110-11.

"against his own better judgment."[47] Vernon offers to help Anse with his corn planting if Anse "gets into a tight" and adds "Like most folks around here, I done holp him so much already I cant quit now" (32).

Two characters from this group receive fuller treatment, Cora, Tull's wife, and Whitfield, the minister. Both characters illustrate the abuse of the old verities, Cora in her piety and Whitfield in his hypocrisy. Cora, who speaks in religious clichés, appears to be willing to help in any way, but her motives somehow serve Cora more than others. Vickery says Cora helps "in the name of duty not love" and that all she does is intended to prove "her own virtue and her own right to salvation." In Vickery's opinion, "kindness such as Cora's is essentially selfish, debasing both the giver and the recipient."[48] Edmond Volpe describes Cora sitting by Addie's deathbed thinking about her own trivial problems such as the eggs wasted in the cakes she did not sell.[49] Though Cora would likely evaluate herself as the epitome of Faulkner's virtues, in reality they are only platitudes in her religious vocabulary.

[47] Kerr in Four Decades, p. 235.

[48] Vickery, p. 64.

[49] Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), p. 129.

Whitfield is even more verbose and affected in speech. Even in desperate prayer for Addie to remain silent about "the tale of mine and her transgression," Whitfield practices eloquence: "Just let me not perish before I have begged the forgiveness of the man whom I betrayed. . . . Let not the waters of Thy Mighty Wrath encompass me until I have cleansed my soul. . ." (170). Brooks says that Whitfield's "colloquy with himself beautifully illustrates Addie's point about those who live by mere words."[50] When the minister passes Tull's home, he learns that Addie is already dead and finds great relief in his belief that God knows his "remorse and the will of my spirit" and therefore "will accept the word for the deed" (171). He has escaped his public confession and gives God the credit, praising "his infinite wisdom" for preventing Addie's "dying lips" from reporting their sin (171).

Even though the characters of As I Lay Dying do not provide clear and strong examples of the Faulkner virtues carried out in positive individual action, through Addie's and Darl's distrust of words as opposed to deeds and Cora's counterfeit use of words, Faulkner makes a sad statement about the virtues being merely verbalized rather than lived. Although Jewel illustrates sacrifice in his one finest

[50] Brooks, p. 150.

hour, only Cash approaches consistent employment of the virtues in positive living and only Darl in positive thinking.

When Sanctuary was published in 1931, the reaction was serious outrage because of the subject matter. Faulkner had moved from the low class world of the hill country Bundrens to the depraved and evil world of the Old Frenchman place run by an ex-prisoner bootlegger and frequented by the perverted Popeye. The repulsive journey with the decaying corpse of Addie Bundren shifted to a more terrifying tone of horror and violence with scenes of perversion and murder. The element of enduring and the sense of even questionable accomplishment of As I Lay Dying disappeared altogether; Sanctuary in general offers little hope for mankind; it is, even, seen as condemning. The condemnation is not reserved for the bootleggers and the perverted even though their stories are the more spectacular. In Sanctuary, representatives of the aristocratic world re-enter: lawyer Horace Benbow, Temple Drake, the popular daughter of a judge, and Narcissa Benbow Sartoris. Few characters exhibit the old verities; even fewer illustrate their application in positive action. Those who do reveal the active virtues come primarily from the non-aristocratic world. Any aristocrats possessing the virtues are ineffectual in applying them.

Early critics quickly classified Faulkner with the school of cruelty when he published Sanctuary. Henry Seidel Canby published an article in The Saturday Review of Literature acknowledging his power and talent as a writer and referring to the novel as "powerful and distressing." Canby sees Faulkner as "a prime example of American sadism."[51] Later critics tend to see the discovery of evil as thematically central. Also significant and related to the evil theme is the failure of justice to triumph. O'Connor labels the novel an "attack on modernism-- . . . stated too insistently and without qualification."[52] In Howe's view, Faulkner's way of exposing both worlds, the aristocratic and the non-aristocratic, adds greatly to the impact of the novel. He cites the importance of the relationship between the "foulness" of a character like Popeye and the "rottenness" of one like Narcissa; "the two together, the agent of the underworld and the agent of the respectable world, drive Faulkner to that sense of nausea which dominates the novel." Popeye's world, Howe says, is even more threatening because of the presence of Narcissa's.[53] "What is lacking . . .,"

[51] Henry Seidel Canby, "The School of Cruelty," The Saturday Review of Literature, 21 March 1931, p. 674.

[52] William Van O'Connor, William Faulkner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 20.

[53] Howe, pp. 57-58.

Hoffman says, "is a sense of humanity."[54] Lawrance Thompson emphasizes the lack of moral responsibility and the aftereffects on a society that devalues moral choices.[55] The world of Sanctuary then is a decadent one; examples to the contrary are found in isolation.

The character most associated with evil and decadence is Popeye, who, without any fears or scruples, exploits bootleggers such as Lee Goodwin of the Old Frenchman place and therefore has an abundance of money. He does not hesitate to murder the mentally slow Tommy who tries to protect the young woman Temple Drake; neither is Popeye reluctant to carry out a violent and perverted act on Temple and later hold her hostage in a Memphis brothel. Prior to his violent acts, Popeye shows no consideration or concern; following his acts, he shows no remorse. Hoffman calls him "an unnatural creature" adding that he is often described in non-human terms such as "metallic or mechanical."[56] Faulkner first pictures him in his tight black suit across a small pond from Horace Benbow and ill at ease in the world of nature. His face has "a queer, bloodless color, as though seen by electric light; . . . he had that vicious depthless quality of stamped

[54] Hoffman, p. 68.

[55] Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 115.

[56] Hoffman, p. 67.

tin."[57] Backman says Popeye knows "neither compassion nor morality . . . he personifies a vicious, mechanistic destructiveness."[58] Volpe feels that he has no human emotions and points out that as a murderer, Popeye is not "ruthless" but simply kills anyone threatening him in the same way he killed Tommy's dog, without passion. Volpe says "nothing at all is going on inside Popeye's mind and heart."[59] Thus after all the evil that he sets in motion, Popeye reveals no satisfaction, and when he is last observed returning from his routine annual visit to his mother and erroneously convicted of murder, he expresses no feeling for his own life. He is not unlike Shakespeare's Iago in his sinister composure as he faces death. His final remark is "Fix my hair, Jack" (308). Harry M. Campbell and Ruel Foster describe his abandon in this final experience when falsely charged; they see his loss of desire to live. "He rejects his lawyer, rejects freedom, and coolly and rather placidly rejects life, too."[60] Significantly Faulkner withholds the traumatic experiences of his early childhood until Popeye has firmly established only a contemptuous

[57] William Faulkner, Sanctuary (1931; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1958), p. 4. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[58] Backman, p. 45. [59] Volpe, pp. 149-50.

[60] Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, William Faulkner (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 51.

response from the reader. All of the virtues are absolutely absent in Popeye; he reveals no potential nor yearning for them. He illustrates in a horrifying way the monsters that may be produced by a society in which the virtues are lost.

While Popeye provides an illustration from the underworld, Narcissa Benbow Sartoris provides a parallel illustration from the upper world, the people of supposed quality. If questioned, Narcissa would insist that her society upholds the virtues; however, her actions plainly reveal that she actually upholds a hollow respectability and places no value on right or justice. Brooks places her next to Popeye as "the most frightening person in this novel as she pitilessly moves on to her own ends with no regard for justice and no concern for the claims of truth."[61] Narcissa Sartoris now lives with her young son and the aged Miss Jenny in the old Sartoris mansion just outside of Jefferson; she has been a widow for ten years since last seen at the close of Sartoris. Her brother Horace is her main concern now. When he married the divorced Belle Mitchell and moved away, he and Narcissa closed the family home. Now Horace, fleeing the restraints of his marriage, returns to the old home ready to defend bootlegger Lee

[61] Brooks, p. 128.

Goodwin who is being accused of a murder that Popeye committed. Even more upsetting to Narcissa than Horace's flight from marriage and his defense of an accused murderer is his determination to aid the accused man's common law wife and sick baby. Horace pleads with his sister, "Think of her, alone, with that baby. . . ." Narcissa replies, "I dont want to think about her. I wish I had never heard of the whole thing. To think that my brother--. . . . But to bring a streetwalker, a murderess, into the house where I was born" (114). The Benbow name may be maligned, and Narcissa must not allow this at all costs; she is even willing to provide information to the district attorney and thereby destroy Horace's case. If in the process an innocent man dies, leaving a wife and infant helpless, to Narcissa, also widowed with an infant, this is of no consequence. As Elizabeth Kerr states, Narcissa "has no moral scruples" and puts respectability before justice.[62] Vickery says Narcissa is "coolly indifferent to the methods she uses as long as they succeed in bringing her brother . . . back into the fold." In Narcissa's sense of values, Horace has been "babbling about truth, justice, and responsibility" when the serious problem is his "offending social decorum past the point of forgiveness."[63] As

[62] Kerr, p. 94. [63] Vickery, p. 109.

Thompson points out, to Narcissa only the gossip caused by the connection with Ruby is important.[64] Although it is Temple Drake who publicly destroys the innocent Lee Goodwin, according to Volpe, Narcissa helps "light the fire" when she informs the district attorney. Thus Narcissa "differs from Temple only in degree."[65] Page sees Narcissa as representative of the "conventional society which, in its effort to hide its inner corruption, is led to regard outward respectability more highly than inward purity."[66] The total absence of the verities here is as pronounced as in Popeye's world. The facade of respectability clouds the appearance of evil; there are no violent acts, yet Lee Goodwin dies because of the influence of this respectable world, perhaps even more frightening in its pretense and power.

Temple Drake, a popular and flirtatious university student and definitely of the Benbow and Sartoris class, is at first the victim of the underworld but later allows herself to be held hostage by Popeye and gradually enters the world of depravity. Viewed first in the fastpaced superficial world of the popular college girl, there is little opportunity to see in Temple the capacity for the

[64] Thompson, p. 112. [65] Volpe, p. 147.

[66] Page, p. 72.

virtues. However, her focus on self-gratification initially seems only the characteristic teen-age stage; she is not portrayed as callous or cruel, just unthinking. After her entry into the world of Popeye, her attitudes deteriorate. Kenneth Richardson draws a corresponding pattern by stating that after her "alliance with evil, . . . her capacity for inhuman and destructive acts grows as her capacity for love and responsibility diminishes."[67] Page sees Temple as evidence of Faulkner's "implicit condemnation of a way of life which warps human values and fosters duplicity, hypocrisy, egocentricity, and artificiality."[68] Vickery describes the steady decline in "her capacity for moral commitments and responsibilities."[69] Temple's total neglect of moral responsibility leads her not only to create misery in her own life but to destroy the lives of innocent people without reason. Her perjury in court convicts Lee Goodwin and leaves Ruby, the person who courageously protected her, bereft. Seen then with the old background of Narcissa's respectable world and the new-found experience of Popeye's underworld, Temple is inhumanely treated, but more significant, Temple becomes inhumane.

[67] Kenneth E. Richardson, Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), p. 80.

[68] Page, p. 77. [69] Vickery, p. 108.

Gowan Stevens, Temple's sophisticated but drunken date, is a minor character who nonetheless reveals the distortion of values. Like Narcissa in his desire for respectability, Gowan narrows his definition of a respectable reputation to one criterion, the drinking ability of the gentleman educated in Virginia. Although Gowan sees only his own shame when he fails the drinking test and deserts Temple, Warren Beck charges him with triggering the "whole chain of events that brought, besides Temple's debauchment, the deaths of Tommy, Red, and Goodwin."[70] Vickery says his "obsessive concern with social values has atrophied his every moral and human instinct."[71]

In addition to Narcissa, Temple, and Gowan, all born into an upper class environment, Senator Clarence Egglestone Snopes, who only aspires to a higher standing, illustrates a lack of the virtues. Seen in his artificial nature, Snopes is described by Faulkner as projecting the idea of being "dry-cleaned rather than washed" (180). He relies on bribes, threats, and spying to carry out his deals. Miss Reba, who runs the brothel, accurately describes him as "Just a cheap, vulgar man" (202). He even tries to contaminate his young

[70] Warren Beck, "Faulkner's Point of View," in Critical Heritage, p. 273.

[71] Vickery, p. 106.

relatives Virgil and Fonzo Snopes who add a comic touch to an otherwise disturbing novel when they, in complete innocence, move into Miss Reba's "boarding house."

The disturbing impact of Sanctuary is based to a large degree on the amoral nature of Popeye, the distorted values of Narcissa and Gowan Stevens, and the discovery of evil by Temple. These characters exhibit none of Faulkner's virtues and carry out no positive individual action. Their power to influence and even destroy the lives of others is frightening. In opposition to these who do not possess the virtues are two characters who do, but the disquieting element of the novel remains. In spite of compassion, pity, sacrifice, integrity, and dignity, neither character is triumphant. Mere possession of the old verities does not guarantee the person will prevail or even endure.

The character who offers the most opposition to Popeye's criminal ways and Narcissa's phony values is Horace Benbow, the lawyer. He displays tremendous faith in truth and justice and sincerely believes that ultimately both will prevail. The distressing factor is that Horace is proved wrong, and as a result, an innocent man dies and a wife and child are left penniless.

The greatest evidence of Horace's compassion is seen in his concern for Ruby Lamar, the common law wife of the man he will defend, and for their sickly infant. Despite

his sister's vehement attacks, Horace continues to care for the mother and child. However, he will not stand in total opposition to Narcissa and community pressure. During the course of the imprisonment and trial, Ruby moves from Horace's home, to a hotel, and finally to a hovel on the edge of town. His compassion does not diminish, but he backs down in the face of the harsh criticism. He holds true to what he confessed to Ruby on their first meeting and before he was needed as a lawyer: "You see . . . I lack courage: that was left out of me. The machinery is all here, but it wont run" (16). Millgate agrees with Horace's self-analysis and calls him "one of Faulkner's well-meaning failures." He admits Horace has "generous impulses" but points out his "inadequate courage or will to action, tending always to dissipate his energies in talk."[72] Hyatt Waggoner sees his Prufrockian nature that Brooks notes in Sartoris. In Waggoner's opinion, Horace comprehends but is "barred from any effective action."[73]

Not only does Horace lack courage, but also he lacks a firm grasp on reality. Most critics condemn him for his

[72] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), p. 117.

[73] Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 93.

extreme idealism and naive views. Peter Swiggart describes him as "romantically innocent of evil" and states that his "naive concept of justice" cannot stand up with actual experience.[74] Page blames the loss of Lee's case on "his childish naiveté about reality." She says he cannot recognize evil and therefore cannot cope with it.[75] Even his client Lee Goodwin is contemptuous of Horace's unwavering faith. Angered at Horace's artless handling of testimony, Lee challenges, "Believe, hell . . . do you think for one minute that man is going to let me walk out of that door and up the street and into that courthouse, after yesterday? What sort of men have you lived with all your life? In a nursery?" (271). Volpe says Horace has lived in a "state of childish innocence" and that he is not merely out of touch with the times but with "life itself."[76]

Horace's greatest defense comes from Cleanth Brooks who acknowledges Horace's failure and labels him "ineffectual in his contest with evil" but upholds his efforts. Brooks, points out that, with Temple's damaging testimony and Narcissa's betrayal, many lawyers would have failed. In Brooks' view, Horace demonstrates "a good deal of pertinacity,

[74] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), pp. 29-30.

[75] Page, pp. 83-84. [76] Volpe, p. 142.

shrewdness, and vigor." Brooks points to Horace's work to find Temple and his diligent attempts to draw more information from his client.[77]

As an illustration of the virtues Horace is especially strong in compassion for suffering humanity. He risks his personal reputation in a sacrificial manner. He handles the case with dignity, and he carries out positive action in the way he feels appropriate. His faith does not waver even in the face of the town's contempt. Horace is admired until the trial ends. In his disillusionment and devastation when he loses, Horace fails to endure in spite of the old verities that fill his heart. He says nothing to Lee and Ruby, carries the case no further, but slips away to Narcissa's waiting car and finally to the meaningless marriage he tried to escape. Although he may be the good man in Sanctuary, his future looks dim.

Ruby Lamar also possesses the Faulkner virtues, especially love, sacrifice, and dignity, yet when the novel closes, her future is not just dim but dark. The object of her great love and sacrifice has been not only unjustly convicted but burned by a hostile mob. Even Temple Drake knew, when she observed "the putty-colored face and bluish eyelids" of Ruby's infant, that it would

[77] Brooks, pp. 116-17.

not survive. "'He's going to die,' Temple whispered. . . . 'Poor little baby'" (60). However, Ruby, whose background has none of the upper-class security, has a clearer view of reality than Horace does. In her keen awareness of the world of Jefferson, she tries to protect Horace from the gossiping community by telling him, when she moves to the lean-to room of an old woman, "I reckon you better not be coming out here" (194). She has endured tribulation all along and maintained a certain dignity. During her time in Jefferson she tells Horace of her past; her account of waiting for Lee who was arrested on his return from the Phillipines shows perseverance and loyalty even though she turns to prostitution to raise needed money. Volpe calls her a "one-time whore" yet says her story is one of "self-sacrifice" and that her prostitution is "redeemed by her fidelity and love."[78] She also reveals to Horace that once they are on the Old Frenchman place, she encourages Lee to leave the dangerous business they are in and the situation of a sick child in a place without a telephone and remote from a doctor. Nonetheless, with her sacrificial love, she manages in the worst of circumstances. Following this outpouring to Horace, she is described: "Motionless, her head bent and her hands still in her lap, she had that spent immobility of a chimney rising above the ruin of a

[78] Volpe, p. 147.

cyclone" (158). Page calls her "the noblest character in Sanctuary as she lives among the bootleggers, a mentally defective man, and the aged blind father of Lee. Referring to the moral and physical decay that surround her, Ruby alone, according to Page, "acts constructively to serve a human need." Page sees her "humility and pride" and her "spiritual and intellectual superiority" to the men who live there; she interprets an inner stability in the calm and orderly manner Ruby has in serving the meal, for example. When she shows Horace her child, Page sees "In a final gesture her honest acknowledgment of the shame and ugliness of her position in life yet her heroic acceptance of this role." In Page's view, Ruby is aware that she is struggling against "the overwhelming forces of evil," but her strength allows her to "endure her fate with dignity."[79] Blotner calls her "the good woman,"[80] and Thompson refers to her as "the actual and tragic heroine" and credits her with having "more dignity to her total action than is achieved by any other character."[81]

In addition to Ruby with her common-law husband and nameless child, a second good woman in Sanctuary is the madam of the house where Temple is held and the Snopes boys

[79] Page, pp. 74, 88-89. [80] Blotner, I, 615.

[81] Thompson, p. 106.

rent a room. Although Miss Reba Rivers is a minor character and labeled by Volpe as "the stereotyped warm-hearted madam, her loyalty to her dead husband, her asthma, her dogs give her an unforgettable individuality."[82] Furthermore, Miss Reba reveals not only her love in almost comic drunken grief for the late Mr. Binford but also a care and compassion for the living. When Horace comes in search of Temple Drake as a witness, Miss Reba aids him in prodding Temple to talk and then suggests to him: "I wish you'd get her down there and not let her come back. I'd find her folks myself, if I knowed how to go about it. But you know how. . . . She'll be dead, or in the asylum in a year, way him and her go on up there in that room" (213). In conversation with her female drinking companions she expresses concern for her boarders, Virgil and Fonzo Snopes: "I think I got to get shut of them, though I aint specially tender-hearted, but after all it aint no use helping young folks to learn this world's meanness until they have to" (245). Kerr compares her to Narcissa in that both are intent on running respectable though different houses, yet Miss Reba has a "capacity for love and compassion and, by comparison with Narcissa's mindless serenity, was a sympathetic character."[83]

[82] Volpe, p. 147. [83] Kerr, p. 94.

Other characters presented individually have very minor roles and therefore provide merely glimpses of the virtues. Miss Jenny of Sartoris remains with Narcissa; now older and mainly verbal, she acidly attacks Horace's running away from his marriage and his idealistic views and sees through Narcissa's feigned purity. Tommy, the grown but retarded bootlegger who was eventually killed by Popeye, tried to protect Temple from his companions. Minnie, a right hand of Miss Reba's establishment, extends understanding and special care to Temple in her first captive days especially. The jailer's wife kindly takes in Ruby saying: "I reckon I kin always find a bed fer a woman and child" (176). In contrast to these minor characters who befriend Temple and Ruby and to the hill folk who willingly aid the Bundrens in As I Lay Dying are the Baptist ladies especially and the community at large. The hotel clerk readily admits a committee of Baptists can bring adequate pressure for him to refuse lodging to Ruby. Although they are not individualized, there is a frightening lack of the virtues in this group and a dangerous hostility in the mob who burn Lee Goodwin after his conviction and who would not mind including the lawyer. The community not only failed with its lack of humanity, but the organized court proceedings failed as well. Lee not only receives an unjust conviction but is denied the due process of judgment.

The world of Sanctuary with its representatives from the underworld of Popeye and his associates and from the upper class of Sartorises and Benbows provides only limited illustrations of Faulkner's virtues and even less evidence of effective positive action. From the lower classes, only Ruby as a major character and Miss Reba as a minor character exhibit the virtues to any extent, and Ruby's life seems doomed to bleakness from the outset. From the Sartoris-Benbow world, only Horace possesses the virtues, and circumstances coupled with his naive idealism halt the positive action he wishes to carry out.

Light in August followed Sanctuary in order of publication, and it continues a focus on the people of Jefferson; Brooks calls them "the plain people."[84] Even though the bootleggers remain, the criminal atmosphere of Popeye's underworld disappears. Violence and perversion continue, however, and the same angry mob that burns Lee Goodwin is ready to lynch Joe Christmas. No major character comes from the Benbow-Sartoris world. Early criticism continued to be divided; Hoffman reviews the early expressions of outrage "vehement and outspoken." Many, he says, were disturbed by Faulkner's "intense depiction of horror."[85]

[84] Brooks, p. 47.

[85] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part One: The Growth of a Reputation," in Three Decades, p. 19.

Bassett says that F. R. Leavis not only found fault with the structure and technique but found the "moral vision sentimental and melodramatic as well."[86] Yet O'Donnell found Light in August "quieter that the author's earlier works, . . . more restrained, less brutal, more leisurely dignified." He sees the characters as "more human" and feels Faulkner is "nearer to the final, truthful revelation of human potentialities."[87] Hoffman reviews J. Donald Adams and other critics who saw the work as "a turn toward the better" and "proof of maturing genius"; they felt Faulkner's treatment of evil is more justified here.[88]

In his depiction of the old verities and positive individuality, Faulkner by indirection shows the need for interaction. Backman says that Light in August reveals the author's "increased awareness of man's need for human communion"; there is a strong concern, Backman says, for the person who is unable to "relate to his society and, hence . . . establish his human identity." A major theme is isolation plus the dehumanization that results. There is "also the power of evil that isolation breeds."[89] Howe

[86] Bassett in Critical Heritage, p. 10.

[87] George Marion O'Donnell, "Review" in Critical Heritage, p. 139.

[88] Hoffman in Three Decades, p. 19.

[89] Backman, pp. 87, 68.

sees the work as "Faulkner's most sustained confrontation of modern society" and lists "Hatred, alienation, martyrdom, isolation" as "the burden of Light in August."[90] These key concepts that Backman and Howe identify support the treatment of the virtues by indirection. The primary virtues of compassion, pity, sacrifice, integrity, and dignity infer man's continual and positive relationship with his fellowman. The alienation and isolation dominating Light in August counteract the development of the virtues. The absence of the virtues and the corresponding problems of self-absorption and identity lead to problems of religious and sexual distortions. Those characters who, in some measure, possess the virtues are ineffectual if isolated. The hope of the novel resides in those characters who do possess the virtues and who attempt to free themselves from isolation or detachment, express the virtues in positive action, and thereby endure. The insights provided by such characters are consistent with Miss Jenny of Sartoris at home in her world of involvement, Dilsey of The Sound and the Fury with her supportive compassion, Cash of As I Lay Dying with his selflessness, and Ruby of Sanctuary with her sacrificial love. Although no character in Light in August realizes the full potential of the virtues and positive

[90] Howe, p. 62.

individual action and thereby prevails, there are limited examples of endurance from those who move in the right direction.

The theme of alienation and isolation is most dramatically seen in the tragic life of Joe Christmas, a man of unknown heritage who is mistreated from birth. Many of the people whose lives touch his also have problems of estrangement. At his birth, his mother is allowed to die by her crazed and enraged father Doc Hines. Later Hines kidnaps Joe from his grandmother and leaves him on the steps of an orphanage where he remains until adopted by the rigidly Calvinistic Simon McEachern. While with the McEacherns, Joe suffers severe whippings when he refuses to memorize the catechism; he becomes infatuated with a prostitute; he assaults his angry foster father and finally flees. The road he takes carries him to numerous jobs as well as to joblessness, to the black world and the white, to many women. The road

> was fifteen years long: . . . And always, sooner or later, the street ran through cities, through an identical and well-nigh interchangeable section of cities without remembered names, where beneath the dark and equivocal and symbolical archways of midnight he bedded with the women and paid them when he had the money,

> and when he did not have it he bedded anyway and then told them that he was a negro.[91]

Never is Joe seen giving or receiving love or achieving a sense of self or group identity. Finally the road leads to Jefferson where Joe, now thirty, works in a planing mill by day and eventually becomes a bootlegger. He lives in a deserted cabin behind the home of Miss Joanna Burden, a white spinster whose concern for the welfare and education of the blacks takes on a missionary zeal and alienates her from the white community. Their association develops from his nightly trips to eat left-over meals in her kitchen to nightly trips to be her violent lover; finally he becomes her special project to educate and manipulate. Ultimately he is her murderer, and the remainder of his life is spent in futile flight from bloodhounds and his cabinmate who wants the reward offered by Miss Burden's relative. His life ends violently at the home of an outcast minister.

Most critical speculation centers on Joe as victim or victimized. David L. Minter finds him "more than either victim or villain" and further labels him the tragic hero.

[91] William Faulkner, Light in August (1932; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1972), p. 211. All further references to this work appear in the text.

He sees Faulkner's portrayal as "not merely individual man as enemy and victim of man but individual man as enemy and victim of himself."[92] Richard Chase discounts the villain role and questions the tragic hero image; he points to Faulkner's admiration for Joe in his suffering, divided state, in his outrage and grief. Chase says Christmas has a simple request, "merely to live, to share the human experience, and to be an individual."[93] Robert Penn Warren calls him a villain yet "a mixture of heroism and pathos, . . . the lost, suffering enduring creature . . . and even the murder he commits at the end is a fumbling attempt to define his manhood. . . ."[94] Whether the alienation Joe suffers is self-inflicted, society-imposed, or the working of both, it is a painful alienation, and Blotner, for one, feels that Faulkner's "anguished sympathy" for Christmas is apparent throughout most of the novel and especially in Joe's younger days.[95] The alienation is closely related to Joe's problem of identity, his inability

[92] David L. Minter, "Introduction," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Light in August, ed. David L. Minter (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 10.

[93] Richard Chase, "Faulkner's Light in August," in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 19.

[94] Robert Penn Warren, "Cowley's Faulkner," in Critical Heritage, p. 325.

[95] Blotner, I, 763-64.

to establish a sense of belonging or a peace within himself. Without this, the giving or receiving of the old verities is an impossibility; neither is he capable of positive action. Volpe speaks of Joe's "life-long anguish . . . that he must but cannot identify himself" and goes on to show his becoming "self-crucifier and a crucifier of others."[96] Darrel Abel also sees him as "a person struggling to establish his selfhood."[97] Faulkner calls his situation the "most tragic condition a man could find himself in--not to know what he is and to know that he will never know." As Faulkner describes his life, "he deliberately evicted himself from the human race."[98]

This eviction is life-denying, and with it comes the corresponding absence of the virtues as harshly denied by him as they are denied to him. As a child, Joe rejects the gentle caring and concern his foster mother, Mrs. McEachern, tries to give; it is unpredictable and leaves him vulnerable. It is as if even as a little child, Joe is scarred by the inconsistency of the orphanage

[96] Volpe, pp. 161, 166.

[97] Darrel Abel, "Frozen Movement in Light in August," in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 47.

[98] Faulkner, "Session Nine: Graduate Course in American Fiction, Undergraduate Course in the Novel," in Faulkner in the University, p. 72.

experience and the desertion by the few older children who at times cared for him. From his arrival, the mother-son relationship was doomed:

> He had never been carried by a woman since he was big enough to walk. He squirmed down and entered the house on his own feet. . . . She followed, hovering about him. . . . Later she put him to bed. For two years almost he had been dressing and undressing himself, unnoticed and unassisted save by occasional Alices. (155-156)

Although he rebels against the rigid administering of Mr. McEachern's religion, Joe handles the strict and demanding treatment his foster father gives easier than he does the kindness of the mother. Vickery explains that even though McEachern's religion is expressed in "an intricate and deadly game of good and evil, reward and punishment," Joe can accept the religious discipline because of its predictability, "relieving him of the necessity for self-judgment and responsibility. Accordingly he rejects Mrs. McEachern's kind and uncertain attempts to establish a more purely human relationship."[99] Much later Joe becomes violent when Joanna Burden wants to take charge of his adult life; her wish to see him educated and in charge of projects

[99] Olga W. Vickery, "The Shadow and the Mirror: Light in August," in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 29.

for the blacks is received as a threat rather than a kindness. Her determination to pray for him is more than he can tolerate. Even the simplest gestures of human kindness are coldly rejected. In his earliest days on the job at the planing mill, Byron Bunch, a fellow worker, realizes that Joe is without money and offers him part of his lunch. Even to a stranger, Joe's attitude is hostile; he "without changing his indolent and contemptuous attitude, turned his face and looked once more at the proffered pail through the drooping smoke of the cigarette. 'I ain't hungry. Keep your muck'" (31). Louis Rubin sees his struggle as "against all human ties, against all love and dependence. Tortured by doubt as to whether he is white or Negro, he wars against society to see whether he can do without its very existence. He will not acknowledge brotherhood, friendship, love."[100] Carl Benson says he becomes an adult in a world "which has shown him so little compassion that he does not know how to deal with it."[101] Joe's life then is a study of one who lives without the Faulkner verities. He is totally unaware of the potential impact of his own capacity for and practice of the virtues;

[100] Rubin, p. 61.

[101] Carl Benson, "Thematic Design in Light in August," in Four Decades, p. 264.

he cannot accept the rare occasions when he might benefit from the virtues of others. His essential aloneness makes him a pathetic creature. Even though Faulkner depicts him as a murderer, he reveals Joe's growing alienation through sympathetically examining his childhood and adult experiences. The need to be human seems more pronounced than in the mechanistic Popeye. Alfred Kazin speaks of his flight "toward himself which he cannot reach, and away from hatred of himself, which he cannot escape."[102] Phyllis Hirshleifer also sees his "compulsive flight--from waitress, McEachern, Jefferson--essentially from himself."[103] John L. Longley, Jr. pictures him shortly before his brutal, mutilating murder as "completely alone" and "feared and rejected" by both worlds.[104] Subtly and indirectly there is the powerful implication that only the acceptance of and corresponding use of the virtues could have eliminated the aloneness of Joe Christmas and enabled him to find meaningful identity.

The force of what is being said about the virtues through the estranged life of Joe Christmas is underscored by the distorted attitudes of several whose lives influence his childhood. Just as the virtues cannot flourish in the

[102] Alfred Kazin, "The Stillness of Light in August," in Three Decades, p. 252.

[103] Phyllis Hirshleffer, "As Whirlwinds in the South: An Analysis of Light in August," in Four Decades, p. 255.

[104] John L. Longley, Jr., "Joe Christmas: The Hero in the Modern World," in Three Decades, p. 273.

alienated life, neither can they develop in those governed by distortion. Joe's grandfather, Doc Hines, whose religious and racial attitudes are not only distorted but totally irrational, controls the initial problems of Joe's life. His obsession with extreme religious views and his bigotry have destroyed his own life, and he frantically sets out to destroy his grandson. Directly responsible for the death of the baby's parents, Doc Hines, according to Leary, is "virtually insane with eagerness that punishment for the sin of the father should descend upon the infant son."[105] Once he deserts him on the orphanage steps, Hines returns as janitor to cast an evil influence on the child. Vickery describes "his brooding watchfulness," his questions and his power to suggest to both the child and his associates "the awareness of something strange or different about Joe."[106] Thirty years later, although he has deteriorated both physically and mentally, Doc Hines is present in his frenzied hatred trying to incite the lynch mob to destroy Joe. Even though he manages to ruin his wife's life along with his own, Mrs. Hines maintains some mental balance, and she reveals a desperate need to know and extend love, however

[105] Leary, p. 84.

[106] Vickery, "Shadow and Mirror," p. 28.

briefly, to the grandson she lost as an infant. The child she is allowed to hold is a newborn one even while her adult grandson is being pursued. After the agonizing years her husband has put her through and the long denial of love, she confuses this infant with the one taken from her. Mrs. Hines is seen as a pathetic old woman whose capacity to love and sacrifice had no opportunity to thrive in the presence of her insane husband.

Joe's foster parents, the McEacherns, present a more rational yet similar situation in which a rigid religious structure eliminates any possibility of developing the virtues. Like Doc Hines, Simon McEachern dominates his wife who longs to find in Joe an outlet for her affection and compassion. McEachern's life and soul are so obsessed with the negative aspects of life that he leaves no room for the positive. He does not attain a meaningful life but instead destroys any possibility for himself, his wife, and for Joe as long as he controls him. In analyzing his lifestyle, Broughton says, "Indeed, man is debased whenever he assumes that the mere enactment of a code can absolve him of human responsibility."[107] Rather than provide Joe with the warmth and security he missed in his early

[107] Panthea Reid Broughton, William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1975), p. 95

childhood, McEachern forces on him his stern religion, beating Joe unconscious when he refuses to memorize the assigned catechism. Swiggart describes McEachern's voice as "'not unkind,' but it is inhuman and impersonal."[108] His life too is inhuman and impersonal and thus void of the virtues.

When Joe escapes the rigidly religious environment of the McEacherns, he tries to enter the world of Bobbie Allen, "the downlooking, and abject" (187) waitress several years his senior in actual age and many years in experience. Although Sally Page sees "her genuine though momentary interest in Joe" as evidence of "at least one redeeming trait," Page also describes her "ghastly embodiment of death-like qualities of sexual perversion."[109] Thus Joe, naive and shy and experiencing what he believes to be love, is finally rejected by a prostitute who cannot free herself from her life-denying ways to find love or compassion. Bobbie Allen, locked into her inhuman lifestyle, reveals alienation from yet another vantage point.

The final alienated individual whose life has a major influence on Joe Christmas is Joanna Burden. When Joe first meets her, she is an outcast from the white community

[108] Swiggart, p. 132. [109] Page, p. 178.

because she is a champion of the blacks and of Northern heritage; when he leaves her murdered in her bedroom, she has added to her position of social outcast a wild sexual perversion he shared in. Initially her strength in her aloneness seems praiseworthy; however, with Joe, also a misfit, she no longer maintains a balanced though solitary life. Brooks compliments her courage, her "quiet power of endurance, and a remarkable lack of bitterness at her plight."[110] Thompson in describing her as a crusader for Negro rights praises her "self-sacrificial missionary zeal" as she expressed love for a people she also feared.[111] Page, however, questions the motivation of her love and finds it "not the life-giving product of love, but it is a sacrifice to alleviate her own fears and guilt."[112] Even though compassion, pity, and sacrifice are present in Joanna and she attempts positive action in behalf of her black friends, the isolation she experiences plus the aberration she is obsessed with renders the virtues meaningless and ineffective. Faulkner seems to be showing that only the whole human being, stable and healthy in mind and attitude, can fully possess the virtues and put

[110] Brooks, p. 57. [111] Thompson, p. 72.

[112] Page, p. 149.

them into effective practice. Those alienated by identity crises, fanatical religion, obsessions, and perversion have no likelihood of enduring or prevailing.

Light in August has no one character who possesses all the virtues expressed in positive action. However, running parallel and at times briefly touching the hopeless world Joe Christmas moves in, there is a world of hope. Byron Bunch in his essential goodness plus his discovery of love, Gail Hightower in his triumph over immunity to his fellowman, and Lena Grove in her stability and faith: these three combine to leave an outlook of promise that is not found in Horace and Ruby as Sanctuary closes.

Byron Bunch is introduced as a quiet man, a hard worker, a good man with an established routine. He is virtually unknown to the people of Jefferson where he has worked in the planing mill and lived at Mrs. Beard's boarding house for seven years. He works a full week including his solitary overtime on Saturday, visits an ostracized minister on a week night, and then makes a regular weekend trip to a remote country church to lead the singing. The gesture of offering his lunch to a new mill worker is characteristic of his natural goodness, "the action as reflex as the thought" (31). The close keeping of his time when he works alone, seen when he accounts for his break to talk with Lena, is characteristic

of his basic honesty. Blotner points out his goodness and compares him to Cash Bundren, "undersized, literal-minded, scrupulously honorable, truthful, generous, compassionate, and limited."[113] Kazin labels him a "good Christian laborer, . . . the very essence of the common ordinary good man."[114] Yet from Byron, no sermons, frenzied or composed, are heard; no sins are attacked; no catechism is memorized. In contrast to the fanatic ranting of Doc Hines and the cold religion of McEachern, Byron is described by Waggoner as a "portrait of the unlettered practicing Christian" who does not make judgments.[115]

By his own quietness and established pattern of living, Byron is isolated. However, with the coming of Lena Grove and Byron's discovery of love, the isolation is broken. Byron is thrown into the mainstream of life by his determination to protect and care for Lena who is ready to deliver the child of a former fellow worker of Byron. Although with his love for Lena Byron loses the safe security of his routine life, he may now activate the virtues already present with more meaningful practice and

[113] Blotner, I, 704.

[114] Kazin in Three Decades, p. 251.

[115] Waggoner, p. 109.

thereby become a stronger character. In Waggoner's opinion, Byron learns "to bear the burden of being human."[116] Later Byron himself acknowledges, "It seems like a man can just about bear anything. He can even bear what he never done" (401). Norman Holmes Pearson sees love as transforming Byron into a more confident man, suggesting he is now "sure of himself," which fact he illustrates when he "no longer stumbles" as he enters Hightower's home. Pearson sees the significance of Byron's escaping the solitary nature of his life and states that he "has found someone to belong to."[117] Vickery also notes improvement, stating that Byron "has gained in some measure a self-respect, a dignity, and a courage which was lacking in his isolated safety and which gives promise of being a sufficient shield against whatever catastrophes he may encounter."[118] To Byron, Lena's situation calls for his compassion and sacrifice; he offers both with dignity and integrity. He arranges for her temporary lodging, protects her from the painful truth of her lover's immediate plight, then sets her up in the Burden cabin to await her baby's birth while he sleeps close by.

[116] Waggoner, p. 109.

[117] Norman Holmes Pearson, "View Points," in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 101.

[118] Vickery, Novels, p. 82.

In spite of his devotion to Lena, Byron recognizes her determination to find the child's worthless father and approaches the minister friend about performing a marriage. When Lucas Burch, the child's father, tries to flee, Byron even attacks him in what he foresees as a doomed physical bout: "I may not can whip him . . . because he is bigger than me. But I can try it. I can try to do it" (403). Lena makes Byron no promises yet allows him to follow her and her infant out of Jefferson. In Brooks' opinion, Byron has "done quite nobly. He has befriended and protected Lena"; he has acted "unselfishly and gallantly." The last account of Byron and Lena is through the traveling furniture dealer who sees Byron in a comic light as he tells his wife of Byron's loyalty despite his rebuff. Yet Brooks predicts that eventually "Byron came to realize that Lena wanted to be possessed and mastered."[119]

Certainly his love for Lena rules Byron's life and is the motivation for most of his action. However, his love for Lena does not eliminate his response to his fellowman. Rather, as Millgate points out, Byron "is converted by his love for Lena to a new concern for humanity which soon extends beyond his relationship with Lena herself and

[119] Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, pp. 72-74.

overflows into a compassionate if hopeless attempt to aid Joe Christmas."[120] Even though Joe's only connection with Byron was the work at the planing mill where he hatefully rejected Byron's kindness, Byron has followed Joe's flight after Joanna Burden's murder. His interest goes beyond the fact that Lucas Burch may claim the thousand dollar reward at Joe's capture; this is seen when Byron reports to Hightower that Joe's grandmother "lost for thirty years . . . is found now" (345) and much more dramatically when he later requests that Hightower provide an alibi for Christmas. With Byron's futile attempts to save Joe Christmas from an angry town, he also saves the man whom he alone visited weekly. Millgate sees the reversal of the earlier role of Hightower as mentor, Byron as student and states that Byron "not only breaks with his earlier discipleship but actually becomes his master's teacher, showing him the way to that recognition of value in life, in human involvement, which Hightower finally achieves."[121]

Byron's love and subsequent positive action serve Lena, give Byron himself a more meaningful life, and even instigate the return of Hightower to the world of the living.

[120] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), p. 132.

[121] Millgate, p. 132.

The friendship of Byron and Gail Hightower existed before Lena arrived in Jefferson, and the unusual story of Hightower came before Byron's arrival. When Byron helps tear down the wall that surrounds Hightower, he destroys far more than the self-imposed isolation Byron himself had experienced. Hightower is a victim of his own irrational obsession with his heritage and the resulting abuse of the Jefferson church he served. Hightower came to Jefferson as minister after much plotting to get this particular assignment, the scene of his grandfather's supposed glory during the Civil War. Volpe says that by the time Hightower arrived in Jefferson with his wife "his retreat from reality" was nearly complete.[122] His rather brief term as minister was highly irregular from the outset with his wild preaching,

> . . . up there in the pulpit with his hands flying around him and the dogma he was supposed to preach all full of galloping cavalry and defeat and glory. . . . Until it was natural that the old men and women should believe that what he preached in God's own house on God's own day verged on actual sacrilege. (57)

In addition to his professional maladjustment, his personal life caused concern. His wife frequently disappeared but was at times seen in Memphis; once after an absence, she

[122] Volpe, p. 157.

appeared on a Sunday and interrupted his sermon with shrieking, "shaking her hands toward the pulpit where her husband had ceased talking" (59) until he came down and led her out. Finally the newspaper account told the story of her suicidal jump or fall from a Memphis hotel window. She had been registered under a false name as the wife of the drunken man found in the room. Hightower's very strange response to her death prompted the request for his resignation. His refusal and determination to continue his preaching even to empty pews added to the outrage of the town. Eventually coerced to resign, Hightower moved to the edge of town to the town's dismay and even violent attempts to alter. When Hightower refused to heed a demand that he leave town, he was found in the woods tied to a tree, unconscious from a beating. Eventually town action ceased, and he lived a solitary life, bothering no one, yet the victim of malicious gossip until finally ignored.

In this quiet retreat from life, Hightower has lived for many years in what he refers to as his "immunity" and his belief that he has paid dearly for the undisturbed life he now leads. It is this subdued Hightower that Byron comes to know in his weekly visits and in whom he confides his concern for first Lena and later Joe Christmas. Even before Byron makes requests to involve Hightower, he senses in him a submerged sensitivity. Telling Hightower of

Lena's situation and of the man she is seeking, Byron "can see in the other's face something latent, about to wake, of which Hightower himself is unaware" (74). When Byron relates the Joe Christmas story including his suspected negro blood, Hightower verbalizes his feelings: "Is it certain, proved, that he has negro blood? Think, Byron; what it will mean when people--if they catch . . . Poor man. Poor mankind" (93).

Hightower wages a battle with himself to resist Byron's drawing him into an active caring he has probably never experienced. When he learns on a routine trip to market that the sheriff and his dogs are close to capturing Christmas, Hightower is outraged at his own compassionate response and tries to fight it off with thinking "I wont! I wont! I have bought immunity. I have paid. I have paid" (292). But when Byron tells Hightower of Joe's capture and the appearance of his pitiful grandmother, Byron sees "the tears themselves run down the flabby cheeks like sweat" (344). Still Hightower fights hard to maintain the immunity when Byron brings Joe's grandmother with her grandson "Like the world never had anything against him yet" (367). She apologizes to Hightower for bothering a stranger, but she tells him he is lucky, "A bachelor, a single man that could grow old without the despair of love" (367).

With Byron's persistence, Hightower comes to see that by avoiding the despair of love, he has also missed the joy of love and of communion with his fellowman and the world itself. Byron has seen in Hightower evidence of the Faulkner virtues although they have been inactive perhaps for all of his life. Through two situations that Byron is involved in, Hightower is placed in circumstances where positive action is desperately needed. Byron comes directly to Hightower when Lena's labor begins, and Hightower delivers the baby while Byron locates a doctor. The impact of this occasion on Hightower is pronounced. After a two-mile walk home and his usual breakfast in his dirty kitchen, he feels "a glow, a wave, a surge of something almost hot, almost triumphant" (382). He neglects the dishes, dismisses his earlier idea to nap, ignores his typical escape in Tennyson, "moves like a man with a purpose now, who for twenty-five years has been doing nothing at all" and chooses to read "food for man . . . Henry IV" (383). Later returning to Lena's cabin, he experiences new wonder at the sounds and smells of the walk through the woods. Vickery points out that the birth of Lena's child forces him to become "a participant in rather than spectator of life" and even more important, "through the birth he is initiated into the

world of nature and discovers that life itself is a source of human value."[123]

Finally when Joe Christmas enters Hightower's home, Hightower tries desperately in the face of violent men to provide the alibi he first refused to offer. Although he waits too late to act and he is now no match for the cold fury of Joe's murderer, Percy Grimm, he makes at last a noble effort. Both incidents, one bringing life and one ending in death, are instrumental in liberating the old verities Faulkner honors and inspiring the courage to act. Further, Hightower now has the fortitude to examine the errors and wastefulness of his past. Backman sees Hightower's story as his "struggle to realize moral responsibility."[124] Vickery describes a new Hightower "Jarred out of his complacency and self-righteousness by Joe's death"; he now can see his past "with new clarity," and finally he comes to recognize "the interdependence of the individual and society, of the private and public worlds, and more important, the interdependence of individuals within the public world."[125] Longley adds to these realizations

[123] Vickery, Novels, p. 78.

[124] Backman, p. 83.

[125] Vickery in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 37.

Hightower's awareness of his personal failure. He sees Hightower's coming to realize "his own cold selfishness" and the fact of his being so absorbed in the glory of his dead grandfather that he failed his wife who died in disgrace. Longley interprets the final scene with Christmas and Grimm as enabling Hightower to see "his own failure to live up to his humanity" and to see that all are responsible as a part of mankind.[126] Hirshleifer identifies "his final horrifying recognition" that he sacrificed not just his life but his wife's too.[127] Brooks describes Hightower's "long reverie" in which he acknowledges failure as well as responsibility for his wife's death. He says Hightower had been "neither dead nor alive" but finds him now "powerfully changed."[128] Benson says that Hightower "achieves a victory by traveling the moral distance from selfish immunity to redemption by the conviction that immunity cannot be bought."[129] Although Hightower must cope with fifty years of the waste and abuse of life, he is last

[126] Longley in Three Decades, p. 276.

[127] Hirshleifer in Four Decades, p. 252.

[128] Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 70.

[129] Carl Benson, "View Points," in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 105.

seen in a sense more realistic than ever before, fully aware of the presence of compassion, pity, and sacrifice in his own being and capable of relating to the world through positive action.

Most responsible for Byron's full entry into life and largely responsible for Hightower's re-entry is Lena Grove, who comes to Jefferson ready to bear the child of Lucas Burch. Even though she lacks the reflective thought and intellectual nature of Hightower and the selflessness of Byron, she exhibits an unwavering faith in man's and God's basic goodness and illustrates a simple enduring. Kenneth Richardson attributes her endurance to love, mainly a maternal love but a sustaining one just the same.[130] Lena shows both physical and spiritual endurance. She has walked from Alabama in her attempt to join the unborn child's father. She refuses to be dismayed when she has no word from him and little luck in finding him. Instead she serenely depends on her firm belief: "I reckon a family ought to all be together when a chap comes. Specially the first one. I reckon the Lord will see to that" (18). Although she is usually the recipient of the virtues others possess, Thompson interprets this as a result of "a peculiar power to evoke from others various

[130] Richardson, p. 94.

reflections of her own gentleness, kindliness, and compassion."[131] She perhaps aids the ongoing of the virtues in much the same way that Wordsworth's "Old Cumberland Beggar" does in keeping alive a spirit of kindness. She is given numerous rides by strangers and at times overnight lodging and meals, the last night before Jefferson with the Armstids. Mrs. Armstid especially illustrates Lena's appeal to the goodness of humanity. Seeking no gratitude, Mrs. Armstid breaks the china bank holding her egg money and insists that her husband give it to Lena. Lena never requests help yet always receives it, from strangers along the way to the sacrificial devotion of Byron Bunch. Through the story of her journey, Faulkner addresses the basic goodness in human nature and provides a contrast to the mob outrage at Joe Christmas.

In spite of her endurance and simple faith, total admiration is withheld from Lena because of her naive loyalty to an unworthy man. Even the strangers Lena meets along the way are aware that Lucas ran away and never intends to see her again. Byron compares him to "one of these cars running along the street with a radio in it. You can't make out what it is saying and the car ain't going anywhere in particular and when you look at it close

[131] Thompson, p. 79.

you see that there ain't even anybody in it" (32-33). He is also like a locust, "living on the country" and doing this so long that "all of him had become scattered and diffused and now there was nothing left but the transparent and weightless shell blown oblivious and without destination upon whatever wind" (33-34). By contrast Kerr says Lena is "always positive and purposeful even when she did not know her destination."[132] Abel sees the trust she has, even in its blindness, as the source of her prevailing. In his view, it is not her understanding that sustains her, but "her complacent trust in others" even though it at times borders on "obstinacy and stupidity." Although Abel calls her story "a comedy of rustic innocence," he contends that Faulkner "dignifies instead of disparaging her."[133]

Sally Page honors Lena's "immense personal enjoyment of life despite the hardships it has brought her" and cites her "self-mocking good humor" in her comment about the window she should not have crawled out. Seen as a mother-earth figure, Lena is presented with "tenderness, humor, and profound respect" according to Page.[134] In Brooks'

[132] Kerr, p. 120.

[133] Abel in Twentieth Century Interpretations, p. 47.

[134] Page, pp. 141-42.

view, Faulkner uses her "to confirm an ideal of integrity and wholeness in the light of which the alienated characters are judged."[135]

Lena, then, adds to the note of hope for mankind that Byron and Hightower reveal. Unlike these two whose lives she dramatically touches, she is not a developing character. Her firm faith in life and man is consistent throughout. Millgate points out that "it is with Lena, in her familiar role as the calm recipient of kindness, that the book begins and ends."[136]

Within the lower-class world of dirt farmers, bootleggers, and saw mill workers, Faulkner depicts those who possess at least some of the qualities of enduring. He shows indirectly yet strongly related to the capacity to endure and prevail the threat posed by isolation and alienation. In all three novels of the early thirties Faulkner shows the need for a sense of human communion wherein the virtues may flourish. The physical subsistence of the low-class Bundren family of As I Lay Dying would be questionable without the aid of neighbors, yet the strong staying power of the family alone is revealed on their journey. In Sanctuary, Ruby Lamar with her selfless

[135] Brooks in Four Decades, p. 130.

[136] Millgate, p. 129.

devotion survives in a world of bootleggers and poverty, and Horace Benbow, though handicapped by idealism, stands for a sense of right. Finally in Light in August, Faulkner proves that with love, inactive virtues are strongly brought to life in Byron Bunch, dormant virtues are awakened in Gail Hightower, and the goodness of man is confirmed by the sustaining faith of Lena Grove.

Chapter IV

THE INFLUENCE OF CODES: THE UNVANQUISHED, ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

In the midst of composing numerous short stories and doing script work in Hollywood, both primarily for economic reasons, Faulkner published two more Yoknapatawpha novels in the 'thirties, Absalom, Absalom! in 1936 and The Unvanquished in 1938. Even though early criticism on Absalom, Absalom! was divided, Cleanth Brooks now calls it "the greatest of Faulkner's novels."[1] When The Unvanquished was published, the early critical reception was generally promising; John Bassett describes "a solidly favorable majority of reviewers, a majority he was never to lose again."[2] Although the works are opposites in style with Absalom, Absalom!'s highly complex narration and The Unvanquished's simple story told in actual order, in content

[1] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 295.

[2] John Bassett, William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 18.

both focus on the perpetuation of a family dynasty built on a particular code, and both are set in the Civil War and Reconstruction days. In Absalom, Absalom!, the code usually referred to as a "design" is based on tangible aspects, an impressive accumulation of the material wealth; in The Unvanquished the code is on the intangible, the principles of family honor. In both cases the code fails to provide the meaningful life the protagonists seek; both failures are based on the refusal to honor the sacredness of humanity and thereby recognize the values of the Faulkner virtues. In Absalom, Absalom! class standing is achieved by the amassing of property and money; in The Unvanquished the class standing is inherited. Faulkner's most powerful statements about the verities and enduring and prevailing are made through indirection in Absalom, Absalom!; in The Unvanquished the statements are made directly.

Much of the early response to Absalom, Absalom! proves that Faulkner is totally indirect in his method. Bassett summarizes the initial reception and notes comments that the work is "void of philosophy" or that it "lacks a spiritual center."[3] Hoffman reviews Clifton Fadiman's strong objections to the novel in an early article in The New Yorker; Fadiman states that "every person in Absalom,

[3] Bassett, pp. 12-13.

Absalom! comes to no good end."[4] Later Lawrance Thompson interprets the plight of the characters as serving the theme; in his view, love is the key to the meaning of the work, but Faulkner has arranged "to define the positive largely in terms of the negative." As Thompson points out, the chief character, Thomas Sutpen, does not possess love, "thus all the other virtues came to naught."[5]

The novel, narrated in 1910, is dominated by Thomas Sutpen who lived in the preceding century and has been dead at least forty years. That major portion of his life lived in Yoknapatawpha is devoted to the attempted establishment of his design to achieve superior social and economic standing. Born in poverty in the mountains of West Virginia, he comes to Jefferson in his mid-twenties and by way of Haiti. In Haiti he had made a fortune on a sugar plantation, married, and fathered a son. On learning his wife Eulalia has Negro blood, he makes an appropriate financial settlement and leaves them. On his arrival in Jefferson, he obtains a vast amount of land and with a band of wild Negroes and a captive French architect begins the construction of a

[4] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part One: The Growth of a Reputation," in Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 20.

[5] Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 63.

mansion in the wilderness. With the completion of his house, he adds another aspect of respectable social standing, a wife. Ellen Coldfield, the elder daughter of a small store owner, bears Sutpen a son, Henry, and a daughter, Judith; in addition to his children by Ellen, Thomas also has a daughter Clytemnestra, or Clytie, by a slave woman. The dynasty he desires seems assured until threatened by Henry's bringing home Charles Bon, Sutpen's first-born son, from the University of Mississippi and then by the outbreak of the Civil War which Sutpen serves in as a general and Henry and Bon as soldiers. During the war, Ellen dies and her father dies, leaving Ellen's younger sister Rosa, who moves to Sutpen's Hundred. Following the war, Henry kills Bon and flees, and Thomas proposes to his wife's sister. He diligently begins rebuilding his dynasty and searching for a mother for a son. When Rosa leaves in outrage, he takes his crony Wash Jones' granddaughter. Eventually Jones kills Sutpen; the mansion is left to his daughters, one black, one white, who care for Charles Bon's son until he grows up and marries a negro. Smallpox takes the life of Judith and Bon's son, and Sutpen's Hundred is left with Clytie and Jim Bond, born to the Negro wife of Charles Etienne St. Velery Bon.

The bringing together of this complex story is done chiefly by young Quentin Compson, summoned by the elderly Rosa Coldfield, to listen and to accompany her to the old mansion to discover its secret. Added to Miss Rosa's

mysterious and embittered attitude is the information Quentin obtains from his father, who knew Sutpen from his father. With these two major sources, Quentin gives a detailed account to Shreve, his Canadian-born Harvard roommate, and the two young men engage in extensive speculation to fill in the explanation of the failure of Sutpen's dynasty. In their complicated analyses of the lives of those related to or associated with Thomas Stupen, they verify Fadiman's charge that no one comes to a good end. Most significant is the failure of Sutpen himself and of his design.

Perhaps in no other Faulkner novel is the method of indirection more dramatically used, for Sutpen who dominates the story is a classic example of the violation of the primary virtues. There is no awakening of his morality nor is there activating of the old verities. When he deals with his failure, he searches fruitlessly for a miscalculation, a cold, objective, mechanical error. As Shreve and Quentin comtemplate, they see more subjective flaws, errors of the heart and soul. Sutpen fails himself and his immediate family because he fails to belong to a larger family, the human family. Although he possesses strengths, his failure to recognize the human factor, his propensity to treat human beings as objects, undermines all his strengths.

The strengths that Thomas Sutpen deemed essential to accomplish his goals were "courage and shrewdness and the one he knew he had and the other he believed he could learn if it were to be taught."[6] Miss Rosa concurs in her initial conversation with Quentin, admitting that "he was brave. I have never gainsaid that." But she adds, categorizing him with other soldiers," . . . men with valor and strength but without pity or honor" (20). His strong points are recognized by critics as well. Volpe describes Sutpen as "one of the powerful of the earth" and praises his courage and independence. He calls him a "rugged individualist" and says that he "strides to success without faltering." He notes his "fierce ambition" and "self-assurance" and speaks of his eagerness to endure "hardship and hard work."[7] The mansion that he builds and the prosperity he achieves before the war support Volpe's views. Rubin also comments on his "great strength and tremendous will" and mentions his impressive perseverance and almost super-human energy.[8]

[6] William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (1936; rpt. New York: Random, 1964), p. 244. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[7] Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), p. 195.

[8] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 53.

These strengths are also recognized by those who knew him. The women who awaited his return from the war anticipated his determination to rebuild. Miss Rosa records, "We were right about what he would intend to do: that he would not even pause for breath before undertaking to restore his house and plantation as near as possible to what it had been" (160).

Surely Sutpen is a survivor, able to withstand numerous hardships and able to handle setbacks with renewed dedication. His major concern after the war is that time will run out, but not that courage or energy will fail. However, even with courage, stamina, and will power, Sutpen only survives; he cannot prevail.

Sutpen's relationships to all, related and unrelated, whom he comes in contact with reveal a total lack of compassion and pity. This loveless response to mankind holds true from the time he turns his back on his original family to the birth of his last child, borne by a young girl. When he leaves Haiti, he deserts his first wife and child as Swiggart says "convinced by his puritan 'innocence' that leaving her money absolves him of further responsibility."[9] When he marries Ellen Coldfield, Ilse Dusoir Lind says the marriage is not for love "but because he is ready to acquire furniture

[9] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), p. 167.

for his house."[10] Broughton sees Ellen as "only the inert embodiment, the mere shape of respectability."[11] In the role of father now to children of an acceptable mother, the major portrayal is the children's observing the violent physical bouts he engages in for entertainment. Ellen describes him "standing there naked and panting and bloody to the waist and the Negro just fallen evidently, lying at his feet and bloody too. . . ." Then Ellen sees their son Henry "plunge out from among the Negroes who had been holding him, screaming and vomiting" and later she learns that Judith too was "looking down through the square entrance to the loft" (29-30). Toward this family, so essential in Sutpen's design, his relationship appears to be one of neglect; intent on the work of his plantation, he simply ignores his family.

His first-born son, unfit for the design because of his mixed blood, Sutpen first deserts as an infant, and when as a young man, he appears with Henry at Sutpen's Hundred, Sutpen offers callous rejection, coldly refusing to acknowledge even unspoken recognition as Quentin and Shreve theorize. The painful irony here is that Charles

[10] Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!" in Three Decades, p. 294.

[11] Panthea Reid Broughton, William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ., 1974), p. 70.

Bon repeats the image of the boy at the door of the big house, the initial incident Sutpen admits instigated his strong ambition to create and accomplish a design of superior standing. Quentin envisions the scene for Shreve: ". . . and after fifty years the forlorn nameless and homeless lost child came to knock at it and no monkey-dressed nigger anywhere under the sun to come to the door and order the child away" (267). Sutpen reveals an incident in his poverty-stricken childhood when he was sent to the big house and was told by the "monkey nigger" ". . . never to come to that front door again but to go around to the back" (232). By Sutpen's own admission, the painful rejection of this moment led to his design. The threat that Bon poses to the design is his probable marriage to Judith. Vickery sees him as symbolic of the boy at the door years ago and sees the "rejection repeated under different circumstances." In her view, his demand to be known is denied "for the sake of the design. . . . Sutpen must choose between his adherence to the concept of pure blood and his own and his son's humanity."[12]

There are no glimpses into a normal married life with Ellen Coldfield even though she measured up to the requirements of respectability and gave Sutpen a son and a daughter.

[12] Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 96.

Her death is acknowledged by the purchase of an appropriate and impressive tombstone rather than by evidence of grief or sense of loss. Her replacement is sought immediately, and her younger sister is the most convenient candidate. The abrupt proposal to Rosa Coldfield proves even more conclusively the lovelessness of Sutpen's relationships. Horrifying evidence of Sutpen's disregard for relationships is revealed in his candid suggestion which appalls Rosa, that she first conceive a male heir and then they will marry. His manner when he makes this order adds further insult; he shouts from the back gallery for her to come down and stands waiting with the reins of his horse still in hand "and spoke the bald outrageous words exactly as if he were consulting with Jones or with some other man about a bitch dog or cow or mare" (168). It is this very attitude Rosa senses that later costs him his life. When the young granddaughter of his old friend and staunch admirer Wash Jones delivers Sutpen's child in the old fish camp house, Sutpen, more concerned with the foaling of his prize mare than the birth of a girl baby, comments, "Well, Milly, too bad you're not a mare like Penelope. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable" (185).

All the evidence of his relationships provided by Miss Rosa and Mr. Compson and speculated on further by Quentin and Shreve leads critics to attack this man of courage and stamina and condemn him for his lack of humanity,

the total absence of Faulkner's basic virtues. Rubin notes his strength and his will but finds him lacking in the one ingredient, "that capacity for genuine love and compassion." He concludes that Sutpen's mind is unable to "comprehend human affection."[13] Leary identifies the same deficiency, calling love and compassion "the greater virtues" and explaining that "what other people call love has become for Sutpen a mere biological instrument for carrying out his grand design."[14] In Hoffman's view, Sutpen "rejects personal, human commitment." It is his arbitrary dismissal of human values that accounts for his repeated failures, according to Hoffman.[15] Vickery says that what happens to Sutpen is that "each betrayal of humanity betrays its agent as well as the victim."[16] Kenneth Richardson finds him "ruthless, without pity or love" and states that his focus on his design replaces his "sense of morality." It is this "materialistic approach" which cannot function in a "purely human world" that divorces him from humanity.[17] Commenting

[13] Rubin, p. 53.

[14] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), pp. 198-10.

[15] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 75-76.

[16] Vickery, p. 95.

[17] Kenneth E. Richardson, Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), p. 31.

on Sutpen's total emphasis on his design, Rubin calls it an "abstract scheme" with human beings serving as mere pawns[18] or "commodities to be expended in pursuit of objectives."[19] Thus Thomas Sutpen, the courageous and persevering man, is found wanting in the "old verities of the heart," compassion, pity, and sacrifice; he denies the humanity of others and thereby denies also his own. When his grand design crumbles, he searches blindly for the mechanical error, but Malcolm Cowley finds the error not a mechanical one but names "heartlessness . . . the mistake that had ruined Thomas Sutpen,"[20] and the virtues needed to endure and prevail spring from the heart.

Sutpen stomps through the lives of many who might have developed differently without his powerful negative influence. He must be held accountable, at least in part, for the tragedies of his wives and children as well as the embittered life of Rosa Coldfield. With the exception of Rosa, all other characters of Sutpen's time are seen only tangentially; therefore, without full development, only impressions of the presence or absence of the virtues are found. Perhaps

[18] Rubin, p. 52.

[19] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "Scarlett O'Hara and the Two Quentin Compsons," in The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, ed. Evans Harrington and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1977), p. 172.

[20] Malcolm Cowley, "William Faulkner's Legend of the South," in Critical Heritage, p. 306.

more significant is the fact that Sutpen's heartlessness robs not only Sutpen himself but others as well of humanity. Charles Bon's lifestyle and values imply that Sutpen's first wife comes to New Orleans and loses herself in an empty materialistic world. Ellen's life, seen more directly, reveals values similar to her husband's; her purchase of a trousseau for daughter Judith is not unlike his furnishing the mansion, nor is her arrangement of Judith's engagement far from her husband's arrangement of her own engagement.

> Ellen did not once mention love between Judith and Bon. . . . She spoke of Bon as if he were three inanimate objects in one, or perhaps one inanimate object for which she and the family would find three concordant uses. . . . (75)

Vickery calls Ellen "the lady of the manor" and a "partner" to Sutpen as she tries to win the sophisticated Bon for Judith.[21] Although Ellen is pictured capable of emotional pain when she weds Sutpen in an empty church and her upbringing surely provided values quite different from her husband's, in Mr. Compson's view, "Ellen was incapable of love" (103). Evidently Sutpen's impact on her drives her from her conservative background to a lady of regal carriage and eventually to an empty world of illusion. Finally the most directly viewed destruction wrought by

[21] Vickery, pp. 95-96.

Sutpen is seen in the unending bitterness and distortion found in Rosa Coldfield. Brooks describes her as "rigid with horror and hate for forty-three years."[22] Born late in her parents' marriage and left motherless very early, Rosa had few opportunities to find love or any meaningful relationship. She witnessed the breakdown of her eccentric father and faithfully cared for him in his last years of self-exile. Her romantic fascination with the Bon-Judith relationship indicates her own longing for love. When she goes to Sutpen's Hundred, her arguments with herself reveal her yearnings and frustrations: ". . . because I did not love him. Bon (How could I have, when I had never seen him?) And even if I did, not as women love. . ." (146). Backman describes her development from "warped childhood to a spinster's dream world."[23] It is this life already lonely and pathetic that Sutpen ruins with his dehumanizing, humiliating proposal. The remainder of her life is spent in hatred for "the demon, the ogre" she tells Quentin about. Howe describes her rising to "a hysteria of eloquence in castigating Sutpen," yet he says "she unwittingly declares herself still subject to him."[24] Even in her thriving on

[22] Brooks, p. 305.

[23] Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), p. 109.

[24] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 222.

hatred, Rosa exhibits a strength and a capacity to act. Jean-Jacques Mayoux says her "body denotes lack, failure, defeat, even madness, but it also indicates the power of the will to live."[25] Although her reclusive life back in Jefferson isolates her from her fellow man, she musters the courage to act and draws from Quentin the desired response in returning to the old mansion to find the dying Henry. Without question she is motivated by her curiosity, old hatred, and frustration; however, three months after their first visit, Miss Rosa returns with an ambulance to get medical attention for her nephew, an act of courage and compassion. Rosa had the potential for a meaningful life had she been spared the damage and destruction caused by Sutpen.

The lives of Sutpen's children also bear the mark of his negative influence, their tragedies a direct result of his denial of humanity. Both sons are seen primarily from the speculative viewpoints of Shreve and Quentin. If they are accurate in their assessment of Charles Bon and his motives, he possesses an ambivalent attitude toward love, so in need of paternal love and recognition that he can callously use a young girl and her possible

[25] Jean-Jacques Mayoux, "The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner," in Three Decades, p. 160.

feelings of love. Backman supports the Shreve-Quentin theories and states that Bon "wanted no inheritance" but only "a word, a sign, a look, a touch from Sutpen which would say you are my son." However, Sutpen refused to acknowledge his elder son in any way, and as Backman points out "even the love he got from his brother Henry turned into ashes" when Henry learned of Bon's black blood.[26] Thus Bon is denied love and falls victim to Sutpen's design, murdered by Henry when he threatens the design with his return. If Shreve reads Bon's final act correctly, he has compassion for Judith even though he would have used her to reach his father. The locket found on Bon's body holds not the picture of Judith it was intended to hold, but that of his octoroon wife and child. According to Shreve, Bon, aware that Henry may kill him, wants to spare Judith any pain he can. Bon reasons, as Shreve sees it, that "it will be the only way I will have to say to her 'I was no good; do not grieve for me'" (350). Thus Bon, like Rosa, reveals an element of compassion, a sensitivity that under other circumstances might have altered his tragic life.

Henry, the recognized son of Thomas Sutpen and apparent heir to his fortune, is seen as capable of love but also

[26] Backman, p. 104.

capable of his father's cruelty and disregard for human life. Ironically, both aspects are seen in regard to the same person. Henry can dismiss the impressive material wealth for the sake of love, yet he can murder to preserve the Sutpen dynasty and purity. The love is for Charles Bon, his older sophisticated classmate at the University of Mississippi; the cruelty is for Charles Bon, his half-brother, already married to an octoroon in New Orleans and threatening to marry Judith. Volpe sees Henry's likeness to his father and finds Henry even more at fault. In Volpe's view, his "crime is basically the same as Sutpen's, but Henry is not blindly innocent; he is involved with Charles as a human being. He cannot ignore the moral responsibility of his act."[27] Most of Henry's life is unaccounted for since he flees after the murder and reappears for the reader only when Miss Rosa and Quentin make their trip to Sutpen's Hundred. Backman calls Henry "a futile ghost out of the dead but lingering past."[28]

Henry's sister Judith exhibits a strength and a compassion that surpasses that of her brother and half-brother. She is seen as a staunch and daring child witnessing the fights her brother cannot handle and making the

[27] Volpe, p. 207. [28] Backman, p. 109.

horses run away: ". . . it had been Judith, a girl of six, who had instigated and authorized that Negro to make the team run away. Not Henry, mind; not the boy, which would have been outrageous enough; but Judith, the girl" (25). Page interprets these incidents as proof of her father's influence, his "masculine destructiveness . . . so powerful that his daughter seems to have been infected by it from childhood." Yet Page praises the adult woman for "the courage with which Judith endures the continual disruption of normal life that her father's ambition precipitates."[29] Although Judith's feelings are not revealed as she copes with the problems she faces, her actions indicate much compassion. Miss Rosa describes her generosity when the women are left destitute during the war. "Judith . . . would cook twice what we could eat and three times what we could afford and give it to anyone, any stranger in a land already beginning to fill with straggling soldiers who stopped and asked for it" (156). Her incredibly unselfish gesture of allowing the octoroon wife of Bon to visit his grave reveals an immense capacity for sympathy and understanding. Most significant is her virtual adoption of the

[29] Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), p. 179.

son of Bon and his first wife. She cares for him in his childhood, but when he reaches manhood, he causes her countless problems. Still when he contracts yellow fever, she moves him back into the mansion and nurses him until he dies; then she too dies from the disease. Linda Welshimer Wagner says Judith "has both awareness and capability to act" and cites her burial of Bon and her management of the homestead as well as the rearing of young Bon.[30] In Broughton's opinion, Judith "perseveres stoically." She cites the care of Charles St. Velery Bon as a child and in his fatal illness as proof of "her active commitment." She "endures . . . and acts" and "exemplifies mankind's capacity for courage."[31]

Clytie, Sutpen's daughter by a slave woman, greatly aids Judith in her wartime management of Sutpen's Hundred. Possessed with the same fierce determination to survive trying times, Clytie lives on many years after Judith's death. Although she is portrayed with little life of her own, two occasions prove her strong family loyalty and courage to act. At Judith's death, Clytie intends to finish paying for Judith's tombstone. Quentin relates

[30] Linda Welshimer Wagner, "Faulkner and (Southern) Women," in The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, p. 137.

[31] Broughton, p. 178.

that "when his grandfather tried to refuse it, she [Clytie] set the rusty can full of nickels and dimes and frayed paper money on the desk and walked out of the office without a word" (210). On the second occasion, Clytie sacrifices her own life in her act of setting fire to the old mansion when she sees Miss Rosa and the ambulance approaching. Swiggart interprets her act, "to save Henry from being arrested for the old crime."[32]

The courage and determination displayed by Judith and Clytie particularly contrast sharply with the courage and determination of Sutpen. This difference is found in the basic reason for the qualities. For Judith and Clytie, determination and the courage to act spring from compassion and a family loyalty that extends even to such outcast relationships as the child of an octoroon mistress of a supposed fiancé. Both the compassion and the family loyalty recognize the sacredness of human life, the worth of any human being. With Sutpen, such a foundation for his action is totally absent. This truth is painfully discovered by Wash Jones when he overhears Sutpen's callous comment to Milly. In his disillusionment and rage, Jones kills the man he idolized. Swiggart says Sutpen forces him to

[32] Swiggart, p. 164.

see "that courage and determination are empty virtues if they destroy human dignity and self-respect."[33]

For the narrators who have no direct involvement in the rise and fall of Sutpen and his family, the impact of his life may do far more than acquaint the Canadian-born Shreve with the foreign South and its heritage or help resolve the ambivalent feelings Quentin Compson has about his homeland and its past. Although the fascination, excitement, and intrigue the two experience as they are caught up in the complex lives of the Sutpen family dominate their narration, they may be left with more than an interesting story. Without the emotional involvement of Wash Jones, these two young men are provided with an opportunity to conclude that man's humanity cannot be disregarded and that to value it is to understand and practice the virtues of love, dignity, and integrity.

However, the novel closes without envisioning the effect Sutpen's life will have on these impressionable young men living almost a half century later. In The Unvanquished two young men, one black and one white, grow up with the code of John Sartoris as a part of their daily experience. For Bayard, the son of Sartoris, the code must be closely examined as he comes of age and is forced to accept, reject,

[33] Swiggart, p. 169.

or alter the beliefs and practices of his forefathers. This novel closes with Bayard's decision clearly illustrated and a sense of triumph pervades.

Although Thomas Sutpen and John Sartoris are seen in close association during the war, with Sutpen serving under Sartoris and then replacing him as colonel when the regiment deposed Sartoris, a more perceptive contrast of these two powerful men is found in their one recorded conversation after the war. Bayard recalls the encounter in a conversation with Drusilla, his strange young stepmother. Even though John Sartoris never forgave Sutpen for the regiment leadership and though he viewed him generally with disdain, he approached him when he was trying to organize opposition to the carpet baggers and prevent Negro insurrections. Bayard gives the account: "Father said, 'Are you with us or against us?' and he said 'I'm for my land. If every man of you would rehabilitate his own land, the country will take care of itself.'"[34] The interpretation and ensuing argument between Bayard and Drusilla reveal the difference in the views of Sutpen and Sartoris. Drusilla sees Sutpen's self-centeredness and defends Sartoris:

[34] William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (1934; rpt. New York: Signet, 1959), p. 169. All further references to this work appear in the text.

> Yes. But his dream is just Sutpen. John's is not. He is thinking of this whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps, so that all the people in it, not just his kind nor his old regiment, but all the people, black and white, the women and children, back in the hills who don't even own shoes--Don't you see? (169)

Bayard, however, questions his father's violence and implies that he is wrong in killing. Drusilla interrupts: "Killed for some of them? I suppose you include those two carpet baggers he had to kill to hold that first election, don't you?" To this Bayard replies, "They were men. Human beings" (169). Waggoner also contrasts Sutpen and Sartoris. Sartoris, he says, had a "somewhat broader area of social concern. . . . His 'good' was not so exclusively his own." In agreement with Drusilla's evaluation on Sartoris' concern for others, Waggoner, however, adds that Sartoris also was intent on protecting the system which kept his family elevated. Sartoris

> . . . may have been "immoral" but he was not "amoral": his dream was qualified by his acceptance of the old moral code as he understood it. Sutpen's dream was qualified by no code at all except his "private morality," which was more primitive and inadequate and self-centered than John Sartoris.[35]

[35] Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 182.

Although Sartoris may look good when placed by Sutpen, most critics see Faulkner's questioning of the violent direction the code has taken in his hands. O'Connor says that to the extent the novel is about a Southern code, "it is a criticism of that code."[36] Millgate points out Faulkner's emphasis on "the unnecessary killing in which John Sartoris had indulged" and "the hardness and inhumanity of the code of violence as cherished by Drusilla."[37]

The novel, narrated by Bayard in a retrospective tone, relates his years from early adolescence to early adulthood. Son of the master and colorful Colonel Sartoris, Bayard shares his days with Ringo, son of a servant family. Both boys, at the outset only twelve, enjoy a sheltered, carefree existence, eaves-dropping with excitement on accounts of a war in strange places and against strange people called Yankees. Their immediate world is influenced by Granny Rosa Millard; their imaginative world is influenced by the glorious adventures of John Sartoris. In their attack on a Yankee in the first chapter, "Ambuscade," they are motivated by the violence of the Colonel and protected by the shrewdness of Granny. Throughout their maturing, Sartoris wields a

[36] William Van O'Connor, William Faulkner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 31.

[37] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), p. 67.

mighty influence even though he was frequently absent or, if present, preoccupied. Only shortly before his death does he exert an altered and positive influence.

Through the eyes of his young son, John Sartoris understandably is cast in the heroic image. However, as Bayard matures, after experiencing firsthand violent revenge, he sees his father and his code from a different perspective. In spite of the daring John Sartoris exhibits in the war and the fortitude with which he tackles the reconstruction of his own home and his homeland at large, Sartoris is seen by his own admission and in Millgate's view as a "man who has done too much killing." Millgate interprets that Sartoris himself comes to this realization and points to the final confrontation with his political enemy and ex-business partner Redmond. In this encounter Sartoris refuses to draw his gun and is killed, yet Millgate describes the positive impact that this "last courageous gesture" has on his son.[38] Prior to his final non-violent stance, Sartoris had ruthlessly killed two carpetbaggers on election day; a hill woman of his own area flung money in his face when he tried to make up for having impulsively killed her husband. Although he is seen most as a soldier, in Brooks' view, John Sartoris may be "most attractive in his dealings with Drusilla," a

[38] Millgate, p. 168.

young woman many years younger than he whom he married after the war in order to spare her family and community pressure. Even though Brooks sees his treatment of her late in the novel as courteous yet indifferent, at the time of their marriage he is "understanding and sympathetic and high-hearted. . . . sensitive to the girl's plight."[39] Without question then Sartoris exhibits a general concern for his community and his family totally absent in the isolated Sutpen. Even though the verbal taunts he continuously flings at Redmond cannot be denied, his provocation of murder is not the callous attack on a basic humanity that costs Sutpen his life. Unlike Sutpen, Sartoris' prestigious position in Jefferson is assured by his very last name, but his tendency to live with violence creates an imbalance; the virtues are seen in only a limited way, and prevailing is impossible. Only his final act to put aside violence redeems him, and this comes in his last hour.

Drusilla Hawk Sartoris is the staunch defender of his code even though she too provides a token symbol of her changing attitude as the novel closes. More protégé and disciple than wife, Drusilla moves more comfortably in the world of men and violence. When young Bayard first sees her in the last days of the war, she sits astride her horse

[39] Brooks, p. 78.

and is dressed in masculine clothing. His cousin Denny brags of her fearlessly fighting off Yankees to save her horse. To Bayard, she makes one plea: "When you go back home and see Uncle John, ask him to let me come there and ride with his troop. Tell him I can ride, and maybe I can learn to shoot" (82). Drusilla reveals a genuine compassion for the welfare of countless Negroes who blindly make their way to a freedom symbolized by the river. Against her mother's commands, she works diligently to save those she can. Eventually her wish to be in the Sartoris troop is fulfilled. Brooks interprets the earlier loss of her fiancé as the reason for her repudiation of the "traditional life of a woman."[40] Page also explains her behavior in participating in the war as "a product of her grief"; furthermore, Page says that "the more she is involved in violence the more she is committed to it." Her pressing Bayard to avenge his father's death with violence is evidence of her wish to fulfill her violent needs through him.[41] To Bayard she adds pressure and confusion with her firm belief in revenge and her physical advances; however, although she leaves after his father's death, Drusilla leaves the sprig of verbena she always wore because "she

[40] Brooks, p. 80. [41] Page, pp. 179-80.

said verbena was the only scent you could smell above the smell of horses and courage" (167). Gorman Beauchamp says that in spite of her "insane desire for blood" she is forced to admit that Bayard's is the "superior courage" and the verbena she leaves on his pillow is her admission of this.[42] Drusilla never makes peace with life; therefore, the virtues and positive action cannot develop. Her sensitivity is seen in her concern for the blacks before she gets caught up in violence. Her wisdom to comprehend Bayard's reasoning is found in the verbena. However, her departure, according to Faulkner, proves she "was still too involved in it to accept that morally" and her leaving says "this is not for me, that I--that sort of bravery is not for me."[43]

The violence of John Sartoris' code is also upheld by Ringo who shared Bayard's childhood on equal terms. Ward L. Miner points out that when Bayard came to realize that Ringo must sleep on the floor while Bayard slept in the bed,

[42] Gorman Beauchamp, "The Unvanquished: Faulkner's Oresteia," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), p. 301.

[43] William Faulkner, "Session Six: Undergraduate Course in Contemporary Literature," in Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 42.

he "was saddened by this awareness."[44] Bayard and Ringo stood together in their vengeance for Granny's murder. It is Ringo who comes to Oxford when Bayard is in law school to tell him of his father's death. Ringo shares the grief Bayard feels, but in determining the proper response to Sartoris' murder, Ringo stands with Drusilla though he is sullenly silent. Brooks says even though he is "outside the white code, . . . he has no doubt that vengeance should be executed."[45] When Bayard starts in to town on the morning after his arrival home, he records:

> It was four miles to town but I had not gone two of them when I heard the horse coming up behind me and I did not look back because I knew it was Ringo. I did not look back; he came up on one of the carriage horses, he rode up beside me and looked me full in the face for one moment, the sullen determined face, the eyes rolling at me defiant and momentary and red; we rode on. (185)

Unlike Drusilla, however, when the meeting with Redmond is over, Ringo is there. Evidently he sits quietly as Bayard sleeps in the creek bottom for almost five hours before reentering his home. When Bayard wakes up crying, "Ringo was squatting there beside me." Finally when his crying

[44] Ward L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), p. 76.

[45] Brooks, p. 89.

stops, "Ringo brought his hat full of water from the creek. . ." (190).

When John Sartoris turned an inherited code of pride and honor into a code of violence, he destroyed his own life since much of his life was absorbed with this violent response to his fellowman; he came to grips with what he had become too late. In addition, his tendency toward violence inspired Drusilla's, and she was unable to see her own life without it. His influence on Ringo caused him to enter adulthood with a high priority on violence and revenge, and his own son Bayard went through an agonizing and dangerous experience in order to escape the ogligation to carry out violent revenge and still live with himself.

The fact that Bayard was able to handle his father's murder without avenging it indicates his strength and courage and the sense of triumph that The Unvanquished ends with as opposed to Absalom, Absalom!. From his twelfth year when the novel begins, Bayard's acceptance of the violent code was apparent. He and Ringo engage in make-believe war games, and when a real Yankee appears on the road, they team up to hold and aim an old musket and attempt to "shoot the bastud" (29). Their escapades with Granny while John Sartoris is away expose them to daring events, to ruthless men, and finally to witness Granny's brutal murder when she is betrayed. Without hesitation they avenge

Granny's death by relentlessly tracking down a dangerous criminal, nailing his body to a door, and returning with his hand to place on Granny's grave. For this criminal deed, Bayard receives the highest praise; Uncle Buck shouts, "The proof and expiation! . . . Ain't I told you he is John Sartoris' boy? Hey? Ain't I told you?" (143).

In "An Odor of Verbena," the final chapter, Bayard now has experienced his first distance from the home environment, from his companion Ringo, and from the ambivalent burden-privilege of being a Sartoris. Bayard, now twenty-four, is living in Oxford and studying law. When Ringo comes to inform him of his father's death, Bayard's response indicates the responsibility he feels, ". . . because I was now The Sartoris (The Sartoris: that had been one of the concomitant flashes. . .)" (163). The crucial test of Bayard's execution of the Sartoris code comes in the first twenty-four hours he is at home. He is accompanied home by Ringo whose position of violently carrying out the code is clear if not verbalized. He is met at the gate by George Wyatt and others of his father's troop; Wyatt offers Bayard's inexperience as an excuse for no action, yet responds to Bayard's "I reckon I can attend to it" with "Sure. . . . I reckon we all knew that's what you would say" (177). He is met at the steps by Drusilla adorned with her verbena sprigs; very shortly she is

extending two identical duelling pistols. Only his Aunt Jenny meets him without an assignment of revenge but with a shared grief and compassionate though silent understanding. Finally he is met by the body of John Sartoris, ". . . sabre, plumes, and all," and "the face which I realized I now saw in repose for the first time in my life" (179). On the next morning as he goes to town to see his father's murderer, he goes without Drusilla's pistols and with her disapproval, and with Ringo's questioning; only Aunt Jenny has spoken to him of non-violence, telling him of an Englishman in Charleston who spoke of "no bloody moon" (185). Once Bayard is in town, Wyatt in anger and contempt tries to force him to take his pistol. Bayard, however, faces Redmond unarmed and though Redmond fires his pistol, he leaves Jefferson without killing Bayard, and Bayard goes down the stairs to hear Wyatt admit "maybe you're right, maybe there has been enough killing in your family . . ." (189) and to be accompanied by Ringo faithfully caring for him. Once at home again, although Drusilla has departed, she has left the symbolic sprig of verbena to express an approval of his brand of courage. In Millgate's view, Bayard has contemplated the meaning of the code in practice, and now in this crucial test he does not reject the code but rather "breaks with the formal pattern of revenge." Still he does not "offend against the code's fundamental

standards of bravery and personal responsibility." Although he repudiates violence, he "does not repudiate the essentials of the code itself."[46] Brooks sees his decision as the culminating step in his initiation to manhood and moral responsibility. Bayard does not reject the code but transcends it "in a complex action that honors the community's demand that he should call his father's assassin into account, while at the same time acknowledging the higher law embodied in 'Thou shalt not kill.'"[47] Waggoner praises Bayard's response, saying that he "dissociates himself from the decadence of the code," proves his courage by facing Redmond unarmed, and thereby defines it as one that can stand "the light of greater awareness and broader and deeper symapthies."[48] Beauchamp also applauds the "non-violent courage to face and defeat the demand for a 'succinct and formal violence'" and states that Bayard's "courageous action leads out of the darkness of retributive violence into light of a higher moral understanding."[49] Describing the "almost hysteric social pressure Bayard faces," Backman sees a "moral rebirth."[50]

[46] Millgate, pp. 168-69. [47] Brooks, p. 89.

[48] Waggoner, p. 172.

[49] Beauchamp in Four Decades, pp. 301, 302.

[50] Backman, p. 124.

Even though this act of non-violence ends the novel, Bayard has taken a major step in upholding the sacredness of human life, and he has at the same time maintained an integrity and dignity. He has proved himself capable of taking positive action in keeping with the demands of the given situation. With this as a touchstone experience at the onset of adulthood, Bayard seems a likely candidate in whom the Faulkner virtues may flourish and one who is capable of action.

Along with the violent pattern of living his father provided, Bayard also has the compassionate pattern that Granny provided; both adults were the dominant influences of his childhood with Granny perhaps more significant in her constant presence. She has assumed the maternal role because his mother died at his birth. Bayard's reaction to Granny's death proves the great attachment he had to her. Although only fifteen when she is brutally murdered, Bayard in his painful grief savagely seeks revenge. Bayard has seen her in full action not only as a mother figure in early childhood but also as a staunch protector of family and homeland. Listening to her encounter with a Yankee lieutenant, Bayard notes "that she looked littler than anybody I could remember, like during the four years she hadn't got any older or weaker, but just littler and littler and straighter and more and more indomitable" (112).

Referred to by Earle Birney as a "cocky grandmother who defrauds Sherman's men of mules, sells them back to them, and washes her sins away with prayer,"[51] Granny provides not only an example of action but of action motivated by compassion. The mules captured and sold back with daring and shrewdness provide sustenance for countless poor farm families during the war years; those mules too obviously branded to return were loaned out for labor to work the farms. Her compassion extended to the blacks as well. She is once seen caring for and sharing food with a sick woman with a new baby. Then intent on regaining her silver trunk, she joins Drusilla in her work at the river where the blacks gathered. Successful in her efforts, Granny leaves with "ten chests in the wagon and the mules and our army of niggers behind" (89). The basis of her success comes from her recognition of essential goodness in her fellow men, even Yankees; she demands to see Colonel Dick, who had knowingly spared her grandson and Ringo when they mistakenly shot a Yankee horse rather than a Yankee. The implication is that Granny can anticipate his humane response even in wartime because it is not unlike what her own attitude would be.

[51] Earle Birney, "The Two William Faulkners," in Critical Heritage, p. 228.

The most memorable aspect of Granny's personality and surely having a major impact on Bayard's life is her viable religion. Seen in contrast to Simon McEachern's forcing his sterm Calvinistic views on Joe Christmas, Granny teaches her charges clean living and speaking, as well as the necessity for confession and requesting forgiveness. At the same time she acts with purpose and assumes responsibility for her decisions. Brooks says she believes in "a God to whom she can and does talk back," and he sees her practice of religion in "the nurturing and fostering of children, mercy for the helpless, aid for the poor." Hers is a practical religion with a firm belief in good works.[52] Backman speaks of her reluctant use of deception and describes her confessional prayers which end with "challenge and reproof to God."[53] Granny, in her compassion, is convinced by the necessity of her deeds that she is justified; therefore, her prayers allow confession and request forgiveness but have little if any tone of repentance. After she conceals Bayard and Ringo under her skirts, she kneels and asks to be forgiven for telling a lie. Once she and the boys kneel again because they have lied. She confesses publicly and requests prayer in Brother Fortinbride's

[52] Brooks, pp. 94-95. [53] Backman, p. 117.

church: "I have sinned. I want you all to pray for me" (108). Immediately afterwards, she and Ringo open a large account book and she dispenses money and mules and listens to reports on the returns of her work for these people. In her last recorded prayer, the trio kneel in the empty church, and she confesses, takes full responsibility for all three, and chastises God for the outcome of the war:

> She was small between us, little; she talked quiet, not loud, not fast and not slow; her voice sounded quiet and still, but strong and clear: "I have sinned. I have stolen, and I have borne false witness against my neighbor, though that neighbor was an enemy of my country. And more than that, I have caused these children to sin. I hereby take their sins upon my conscience. . . . But I did not sin for gain or for greed, . . . I did not sin for revenge. I defy You or anyone to say I did. I sinned first for justice; I sinned for the sake of food and clothes for Your own creatures who could not help themselves--for children who had given their fathers, for wives who had given their husbands, for old people who had given their sons to a holy cause, even though You have seen fit to make it a lost cause. What I gained, I shared with them. It is true that I kept some of it back, but I am the best judge of that because I, too, have dependents who may be orphans, too, at this moment, for all I know. And if this be sin in Your sight, I take this on my conscience too. Amen." (115)

V. F. Calverton says that with Granny Millard, Faulkner "comes closest to a character of emulative quality."[54] Although she does not survive the criminal world Ab Snopes leads her into, Backman sees her as the "true hero" of the

[54] V. F. Calverton, "Southerner at Large," in Critical Heritage, p. 224.

novel and worthy of the title; he cites her indomitability as her most appealing quality.[55] Indeed Rosa Millard displays compassion, pity, and sacrifice; these qualities benefit her grandson, Ringo, and the servants of the Sartoris place, but they extend to benefit many hill families whose names she could not call but whose plight she understands. In maintaining her home, rearing children and even stealing mules, her justified sin, she exhibits a dignity and integrity. The qualities of enduring and prevailing find expression in positive action.

In her life and according to Brother Fortinbride even in death, she provided a powerful example and a continuing inspiration. Even though Mrs. Compson had arranged for a big preacher from Memphis to speak at Granny's funeral, unordained and untrained Brother Fortinbride led the men in covering the casket, leaned on his shovel, and spoke to a large gathering of people of all classes, black and white, town and country, who came in the rain to bury Granny:

> I don't reckon that Rosa Millard or anybody that ever knew her has to be told where she has gone. And I don't reckon that anybody that ever knew her would want to insult her by telling her to rest anywhere in peace. And I reckon that God has already seen to it that there are men, women and children, black, white, yellow or red, waiting for her to tend and worry over. And so

[55] Backman, p. 117.

> you folks go home. Some of you ain't come far, and you came that distance in carriages with tops. But most of you didn't, and it's by the grace of Rosa Millard that you didn't come on foot. I'm talking to you. You have wood to cut and split, at least. And what do you reckon Rosa Millard would say about you all standing around here, keeping old folks and children out here in the rain? (123)

Thus the triumph of The Unvanquished is found in a maturing Bayard's defining and executing his modification of the Sartoris code and Granny's illustration of enduring and prevailing. The numerous minor characters are seen briefly. Several are interesting because of the more significant roles they play in other works. Miss Jenny, who encourages Bayard's non-violence, is a young widow with eyes very much like her brother John's except "very wise instead of intolerant" (178). Her endurance is seen in Sartoris as she cares for the elderly Bayard and his grandson, and she is even older in Sanctuary, living with Narcissa Benbow Sartoris. Mrs. Compson, probably of The Sound and the Fury family, provides rose cuttings for Granny's first trip and a hat that Granny wears constantly. When Drusilla's mother's sense of propriety is highly offended at her daughter's actions, it is Mrs. Compson who is called upon to help remedy the shameful situation of John and Drusilla. She is aided by a Mrs. Habersham who came and inspected beds and led the delegation of women intent on seeing a wedding performed. These Jefferson

ladies, joined by Aunt Louisa, the mother of Drusilla, are active and determined; they are motivated by their social values and provide a contrast to Rosa Millard. Ironically, more comparable to Granny in humanitarian values is Colonel Dick, the Yankee officer, who understands a grandmother's protective love, and to whom she goes for restitution.

Several individualized black characters add to the Civil War setting. Loosh, who is a family servant and Ringo's uncle, claims the freedom granted by the war. His wife Philadelphy is caught in the dilemma of loyalty to the Sartoris family and to her husband. When Granny tries to reason with her, warning her of "misery and starvation," Philadelphy "began to cry. 'I knows hit. I knows whut they tole him can't be true. But he my husband. I reckon I got to go with him'" (64). Simon, the body servant of John Sartoris, reveals his loyalty and grief at his master's death. The confusing plight of numerous nameless blacks is captured in the exodus scenes as they head to the river Jordan. Also a part of the Civil War setting are the Burdens, related to Joanna of Light in August; they stand for Negro freedom and suffrage and are killed by John Sartoris on election day.

In spite of the hardship and bloodshed of the war, the greatest pain felt is inflicted by Ab Snopes and Grumby. John Sartoris cautioned Ringo and Bayard about Ab even

though he had told him "to look out for Granny while he was away." John's comment proved true: "Ab was all right in his way, but he was like a mule: while you had him in the traces, you better watch him" (96). He served Granny diligently in her stealing and selling business but only for the privilege of betraying her once. He led her into the hands of Grumby, a vicious leader of raiders; both men illustrate a lack of regard for humanity and thus, an absence of virtues.

In Absalom, Absalom! and The Unvanquished Faulkner examines codes which prove hollow if the worth of the individual human being is denied and consequentially, the virtues of compassion, pity, and sacrifice, pride, and honor. In the powerful influence of Thomas Sutpen and his grand design, Faulkner reveals the absence of the value of humanity and the virtues; Sutpen not only wrecks his own life but contributes greatly to the destruction of many others. Judith, his daughter, more than any other, is able to practice the virtues to some extent, even in the dearth of family relationships Sutpen is responsible for. By contrast, The Unvanquished reveals Bayard, a young man inspired by the compassionate ways and practical religion of his grandmother, who can transcend and alter a code of violence and restore a sacredness of human life, thus providing hope for the virtues to continue to flourish as they do in his grandmother.

Chapter V

THE SNOPES: THE HAMLET, THE TOWN, THE MANSION

Faulkner published The Hamlet in 1940 and thereby fully introduced his readers to an alarming tribe of people, the Snopes. This tribe Faulkner had known for a while and had included members briefly in earlier works with Ab Snopes in the most significant position with the Sartoris family in The Unvanquished. In the first novel of Yoknapatawpha, Sartoris, Byron Snopes writes obscene love letters to Narcissa Benbow; in Sanctuary, Senator Clarence Snopes is a part of the tracking down of Temple Drake, and Virgil and Fonzo add a comic touch in their boarding house experience. In almost all previous Yoknapatawpha novels, a Snopes is at least mentioned. With The Hamlet the Snopes take on the dominant role in the narrative and provide a very disturbing element in regard to Faulkner's belief in the virtues and the quality of enduring. This focus on the Snopes continues in two additional novels, sequential in narration. Faulkner acknowledged on several occasions that the story of the Snopes had been in his mind for some time. However, he did not publish The Town until 1957, followed by The Mansion in 1959. These three form the Snopes trilogy and are held

together by the rise of the chief Snopes, Flem, the son of Ab; the trilogy ends with Flem's death in The Mansion. Faulkner commented on the long narrative when University of Virginia students questioned him about a sequel to The Town. He said,

> When I first thought of these people and the idea of a tribe of people which would come into an otherwise peaceful little Southern town like ants or like mold on cheese then--I discovered then that to tell the story properly would be too many words to compress into one volume. It had to be two or three.[1]

In Louis Rubin's opinion, Faulkner brought in a new race to "fill the vacuum" created by the fall of the Compsons and Sartorises.[2] However, Faulkner's attitude to this race is entirely different. When asked of his fondness for the Compsons and Snopeses, Faulkner replied, "Well, I feel sorry for the Compsons. That was blood which was good and brave once, but has thinned and faded all the way out. Of the Snopes, I'm terrified." In another comment, he added,

[1] William Faulkner, "Session Twenty-Two: University and Community Public," in Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 193.

[2] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 58.

"I have hated them and laughed at them and been afraid of them for thirty years now."[3]

Even though several stories prove that the Snopes have no common bond and no allegiance to each other, still they seem to follow each other in an upward movement, and they possess many common characteristics. Otis B. Wheeler says, "No one knows where they come from but every month or so a new one turns up. They are ignorant, vicious, rapacious, running the gamut from preternatural shrewdness to idiocy." Wheeler acknowledges their power, noting that once they arrive, they "defile, degrade, and take over."[4] Ward L. Miner finds them "unfit to lead" yet admits that they "have taken over leadership in modern society and act upon mercenary standards instead of human and humane ones."[5] In George O'Donnell's view, they act "only for self-interest, they acknowledge no ethical duty" and are furthermore amoral.[6] Even though most Snopeses tend to

[3] William Faulkner, "Sessions Twenty-two and Twenty-three: University and Community Public," in Faulkner in the University, pp. 197, 201.

[4] Otis B. Wheeler, "Some Uses of Folk Humor by Faulkner," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 75-76.

[5] Ward L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner (New York: Pageant Book Co., 1959), p. 100.

[6] George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed.

exhibit self-interest, rapacity, and amorality, Frederick Hoffman mentions degrees of Snopesism from the pure Snopes to the adulterated to even non-Snopes, unrelated though related by blood.[7] Like Jason Compson, who Rubin says becomes a Snopes in all but name,[8] and Thomas Sutpen, the Snopes pose a tremendous threat to the development of "the old verities and truths of the heart"; the Snopes, for the most part, appear heartless, soulless. Thus through them Faulkner makes powerful though indirect statements. Even though their lives provide the narrative unity in the trilogy named for their move to the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend on to the town of Jefferson and finally to its prestigious mansion, there are major and minor characters outside the clan in each work who see the corruption the Snopes bring and reveal contrasting positive lives. The Snopes trilogy contains the most unworthy and several of the most worthy of Faulkner's characters.

When the first novel about the Snopes was published, Faulkner received criticism for the focus on low life and the tone of pessimism even though several of his now

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Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 83.

[7] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), p. 86.

[8] Rubin, p. 58.

faithful critics praised the narrative strength and the humor present.[9] F. W. Dupee pointed out Faulkner's "anger at humanity" as he related the incidents of greed and rapacity the Snopes are engaged in.[10] According to Hoffman, most critics saw only the Snopes and their "accumulation of evil."[11] Without question, their movement into Frenchman's Bend, a village then controlled by the Varners, dominates the plot. Ab Snopes becomes Will Varner's tenant by making arrangements with the Varner son Jody. Yet from the very beginning V. K. Ratliff, a traveling salesman, establishes a base of observing and questioning the Snopes' entry. When Ratliff relates a history of barn burning, Jody begrudgingly hires Ab's son Flem to clerk in the Varner Store, an unspoken fire insurance policy. The Snopes now have a foothold, and shortly more arrive, Eck in the blacksmith shop, then I. O., the retarded Ike, and Mink on a nearby farm. Flem, the most ambitious of the tribe, advances by marrying Varner's daughter Eula, who is pregnant by someone else. As The Hamlet ends, Flem and Eula depart for Jefferson since he has deceitfully traded the

[9] John Bassett, William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 21-22.

[10] F. W. Dupee, "The Hamlet," in Critical Heritage, p. 251.

[11] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part One: The Growth of a Reputation," in Three Decades, p. 21.

Old Frenchman Place he gained through marriage for Ratliff's share in a Jefferson restaurant. The humor, often sardonic, frequently comes at the expense of those outside the clan; thus the pessimistic tone is not lifted. There is a sense of ongoing for the Snopes as the novel closes, but even though Ratliff, their most perceptive observer, is temporarily defeated by Flem's fraud, there is an increased awareness of their true nature. In defending his use of evil in his writing, Faulkner insisted that degeneration is not employed for its own sake, but to point out faults in an effort to cure, to show a contrast of good and evil, baseness and honesty.[12] Surely Flem and those who follow his lead are forceful reminders of evil. Ratliff and those who listen to him become aware of, even if they are not always capable of combating, the evil they recognize.

Dupee calls Flem "the archetype of the Snopeses, the super Snopes." In explaining the influence he has and the leadership he possesses, he suggests that he "incarnates the desperate fantasies of poor and envious men."[13] Shortly after the arrival of the Ab Snopes family in Frenchman's Bend, Flem manages to be hired in Varner's

[12] William Faulkner, "Colloquies at Nagano Seminar," in Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random, 1968), p. 159.

[13] Dupee, p. 252.

Store where the successful practices of self-service and self-payment indicate he is not needed. His coming seems more the installment of a calculating machine than the presence of a human being. He arrives on a Monday morning on a "gaunt mule" with Varner's saddle, wearing a homemade new white shirt. He is observed by Ratliff and a dozen other lounging men:

> He did not speak. If he ever looked at them individually, that one did not discern it--a thick squat soft man of no establishable age between twenty and thirty, with a broad still face containing a tight seam of mouth stained slightly at the corners with tobacco, and eyes the color of stagnant water, and projecting from among the other features in startling and sudden paradox, a tiny predatory nose like the beak of a small hawk.[14]

Before long Flem moves to the village, adds a small black bow tie to the white shirt and, for respectability, attends church. The villagers marvel that he makes no financial mistakes and report to Ratliff that he denies credit to a customer of long standing, an incident that brings Will Varner shouting, "Who in hell's store do you think this is anyway?" (57). Bookwright, who tells Ratliff the story, comments that some would question who owns the store and adds, "Anyhow, he aint moved into Varner's house yet" (57).

[14] William Faulkner, The Hamlet (1941; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1956), p. 51. All further references to this work appear in the text.

Flem makes deliberate progress, according to the villagers, supplanting or "passing" Varner's son Jody and sitting at Varner's right hand to help him settle yearly accounts. In addition to his work for Varner, which in reality is work to advance only Flem, Flem also works alone. Ratliff is told of his lending practices. One black sawmill worker brags, "He lent me five dollars over two years ago and all I does, every Saturday night I goes to the store and pays him a dime" (70). Ratliff identifies Flem's "working the top and the bottom both at the same time" and asks Tull and Bookwright, decent men, "Aint none of you folks out there done nothing about it?" (71). This question brings into focus the danger Flem poses; he is observed as he moves freely to use anyone available to advance himself. Finally Varner buys him as a husband for his pregnant daughter, cashing "a considerable check" and deeding the couple the Old Frenchman place. The honeymoon trip to Texas provides Flem an excuse to neglect his cousin Mink, who is depending on him to rescue him from a murder trial. As the novel closes, Flem returns some time after his bride and her child, bringing with him a strange Texan and a herd of wild horses. An auction, conveniently led by the Texan, allows him further exploitation of the villagers before he departs for Jefferson to repeat his steady infiltration.

In his entire time in Frenchman's Bend, Flem is seen in one ridiculous gesture of kindness. Henry Armstid, a desperate man intent on buying a wild horse with his wife's last five dollars, is injured trying to claim his purchase. Finally the Texan, to silence him, recalls the sale and tells him Flem will refund his money. Flem refuses, claiming the Texan handled the deals, but after seeing Armstid's wife work constantly to care for her hurt husband in the village as well as her starving children on the farm, Flem buys a bag of candy for them, a nickel's worth. Considering what has occurred through Flem's planned exploitation in the already pathetic lives of the Armstids, his act insults, shows even more blatantly the total disregard for humanity Flem possesses. O'Connor says Flem is seen "systematically defrauding the community" and finds him completely without emotion. In his view, "acting decently or respecting the rules of fair play" never enters Flem's mind.[15] Vickery says Flem can "only pervert, destroy, or exploit."[16] Hoffman describes his movement "in a straight line toward his objective, never missing a chance to capitalize on his strength and the weaknesses of others."[17]

[15] William Van O'Connor, William Faulkner (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1959), p. 35.

[16] Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 198.

[17] Hoffman, p. 90.

Joseph Gold also concludes that Flem could not function "without the vulnerability of others."[18] In the disguise of respectability and in the cold distance he maintains, Flem can achieve his goals.

Howe points out that he is not a "professional criminal" but "crawls through society rather than attacking it from the outside." For Flem there are no moral claims, and his belief in the code of society is not necessary; he "need only learn to mimic its sounds."[19] Swiggart sees Flem "almost totally lacking in human dimension,"[20] and Volpe finds him "guilty of the worst crime in the Faulkner canon--a lack of humanity, a complete failure to recognize and respect the integrity, the needs, and the feelings of other human beings."[21] James Gray Watson says "his every action violates human verities."[22] Flem then exhibits a total absence of the Faulkner virtues; he indicates no need for them. Just as he shows no tendency to treat others as

[18] Joseph Gold, "The 'Normality' of Snopesism: Universal Themes in Faulkner's The Hamlet," in Four Decades, p. 325.

[19] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 80.

[20] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), p. 49.

[21] Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), p. 309.

[22] James Gray Watson, The Snopes Dilemma: Faulkner's Trilogy (Coral Gables, Fla.: Univ. of Miami Press, 1968), p. 12.

human beings, neither does he reveal any longing to be treated as a human being. All his values are founded in the materialistic world, and his kinsmen and the villagers watch him in his achievement of materialistic goals.

By comparison, his relatives, even though poor examples of humanity, show some evidence of emotion and human traits. In their criminal violence or highly abnormal sexual behavior, they appear more human than Flem and serve to make him appear even colder and more passionless. Even the murderer Mink Snopes, cousin to Flem and destitute tenant farmer, reveals inner qualities totally absent in Flem. In contrast to the business arrangement that defines Flem's marriage to Eula Varner, whose pregnancy does not disturb him, Mink marries a nymphomaniac he first met in a convict camp. Although he physically abuses her after he murders a neighbor, he shows the value that he places on human worth in his failure to forget the countless men who came before him, and in his refusal to take money she prostitutes herself for to help him escape. The murder itself is related to Mink's concept of human worth. Although he shoots a neighbor in a squabble over a small amount of money, Mink feels mistreated in the argument, and Robert Penn Warren says his violent act is "out of a kind of warped and confused pride, and by this affirmation is set off against his kinsman Flem, whose only values are those

of pure Snopesism."[23] Howe also sees the murder as originating from a "sense of social humiliation and mangled pride," and even though Mink cannot be justified, he can be understood.[24] Backman sees him pulling "the trigger not only against the man who had impounded his yearling but against the whole scheme of his existence" and identifies his "lonely resistant pride" and indomitability.[25] Volpe also sees more than the fact that Mink's victim Houston pushes him too far; Volpe calls Houston the "agent of a force beyond man which violates basic human rights and dignity." Thus in Volpe's view, Mink is also a victim, but one with "pride and dignity, and integrity."[26] Just as Mink cannot accept the desperately needed money his wife prostitutes to get, neither can he return to Houston's corpse to steal his money, an act his relative Lump tries to force. Watson sees Mink's resistance here as a reaffirmation of "fundamental dignity that he found in murdering Houston."[27] A final human quality distinguishing Mink from his cousin Flem is trust; ironically it is highly misplaced trust, for the imprisoned Mink waits patiently for Flem to

[23] Robert Penn Warren, "Cowley's Faulkner," in Critical Heritage, p. 325.

[24] Howe, p. 85.

[25] Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 154, 156.

[26] Volpe, pp. 313, 316. [27] Watson, p. 56.

come, hardly comprehending his trial in his desperate watching. Once he is sentenced to a life term, Mink, enraged in his disillusionment and despair, calls out, "Flem Snopes! . . . Flem Snopes! Is Flem Snopes in this room? Tell that son of a bitch--" (333). Mink, the convicted murderer, lacking all the material goods Flem spends his life for, reveals an element, however twisted, of pride and integrity, both absent in Flem. From the villagers and the readers he elicits a sympathy or at least an understanding reserved for suffering humanity for which Flem cannot qualify.

Even the retarded Isaac Snopes, whose love relationship with Houston's cow brings him both scorn and pity, reveals feelings that bring him closer within the human race than Flem. Pictured as fully grown physically yet labeled an idiot by the villagers, Ike is observed by Ratliff with "pale eyes which seemed to have no vision in them at all, the open drooling mouth encircled by a light fuzz of golden virgin beard" (81). In spite of the witnessed sodomy, Ike is not repulsive in the way his relative Flem is. In contrast to Flem, Ike, according to Backman, is "ruled by innocence and tenderness" and "his devotion . . . makes Ike Snopes the truest lover in the novel."[28]

[28] Backman, pp. 156, 150.

Howe speaks of his love for the cow "without reserve or meanness" and finds this an "extreme contrast to the acquisitive cunning of Flem."[29] Ike is willing to risk his life to save the cow in a fire, and Thompson defines his love as pure even though he does not understand love. In Thompson's opinion, Ike serves much the same purpose that Benjy Compson serves in The Sound and the Fury, the "moral mirror in which the actions of certain other characters are implicitly reflected and contrasted."[30] In the absence of materialism and the presence of love, the idiot Ike even in his abnormal behavior is more acceptable in the human race than the mechanical Flem.

Several minor Snopes are reflected in the mirror that Ike's life provides. Launcelot, better known as Lump by the villagers, aligns himself with Flem in this exploitation of Ike and the cow. When Ratliff, along with others, is ushered by Lump to observe the scene, in sarcastic outrage Ratliff attacks Lump's callous nature: ". . . does he make you pay again each time, or is it a general club ticket good for every performance?" (196). Lump lacks Flem's financial shrewdness, for Flem would have charged. In a very different reflection, Eck, the first blacksmith

[29] Howe, p. 85.

[30] Lawrence Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), p. 145.

brought in by Flem, shows his departure from Flem's ways. When the real cow is taken from Ike, Eck replaces it with a toy one. Questioned by Ratliff, he admits, "Yes. I felt sorry for him. I thought maybe anytime he would happen to start thinking, that ere toy one would give him something to think about" (267). The cost of the toy cow is in addition to the swindling deal his relative I. O. managed when they bought the real cow to attempt to cure Ike. In this transaction, Eck is pressured and outsmarted, but his gift of the toy is voluntary and given in kindness and love. In Thompson's opinion, this act of pity "elevates him above all the other Snopes."[31]

In addition to the Snopes' reaction to the situation of their retarded relative, Houston, who is Mink's victim, is seen more clearly in his response to Ike. Houston is presented as a man embittered by the loss of love and unable to deal with his grief. Even though he tried to escape Lucy Pate, who chose him in her childhood, he returned to Frenchman's Bend after a twelve-year absence and married her. The happiness he found is abruptly destroyed when the stallion he gave her kills her. Thereafter Houston is a defiant, angry man whom Volpe describes as cut off "from his fellow men with his cold, bitter

[31] Thompson, p. 145.

arrogance."[32] Only Ike, whose tremendous love Houston can identify with, is able to break through his bitterness and draw forth kindness. Once when he finds Ike in a terrible condition after an episode with his cow, Houston washes his ruined overalls and gives him fifty cents before sending him home. Finally he takes the cow to Mrs. Littlejohn's, where Ike lives, and asks for no payment, accepting an unknown amount only because Mrs. Littlejohn insisted. This same man who would willingly give his cow to a pitiful Snopes child is killed by an adult Snopes judged to owe him a pittance in impounding fees. Only Ike reaches Houston through his bitterness and grief.

Others whose lives come in contact with Flem Snopes show something of their values and their humanity in their reactions to Flem and his lack of humanity. Eula Varner, who becomes his wife, responds to him and his absence of passion no differently from the way she had much earlier responded to the display of passion from her teacher Labove. Eula, with her powerful sexuality, has been closely guarded by her brother Jody, is neglected by her mother whose nap is disturbed by news of her daughter's pregnancy, and is labeled a bitch by her father who is disgusted by all the commotion Jody causes. To Flem she is simply a purchase,

[32] Volpe, p. 313.

and her early assessment of him evidently does not change. Prior to their marriage, when he frequently comes to the Varner home to talk business with her father, she announces him as "that man." She pays him no attention even though she recognizes "the mute hissing" his tennis shoes make; "without rising or even turning her head she would call toward the interior of the house: 'Papa, here's that man,' or presently 'the man,'--'papa, here's that man again,' though sometimes she said Mr Snopes, saying it exactly as she would have said Mr Dog" (146). There is no indication that Eula changes her opinion once married to him, nor is there evidence that he wishes her to.

There are others, villagers and farmers along with salesman V. K. Ratliff, whose association is not close, who observe Flem and recoil at times at his inhumane ways. The more pronounced their horror, the more likely they are to possess the qualities he lacks. Vernon Tull and Odum Bookwright, both farmers, provide V. K. Ratliff, traveling sewing machine salesman, with the events of the Snopes during his absences. Their friendship is casual and relaxed, and often their discussion of the Snopes, especially Flem, takes on a bantering tone. They watch with amusement to see what he will do next and enjoy predicting his next move. Ratliff at times reprimands their indifference only to find Bookwright shrugging off Flem's trading

tactics with his characteristic teasing. When Ratliff is told of his taking advantage of the blacks he lends money, he wants to know why those who know have done nothing. Tull replies, "What could we do? . . . It aint right. But it aint none of our business." Ratliff suggests he would do something if he lived with such corruption. But Bookwright comes back with:

> Yes. . . . And wind up with one of them bow ties in place of your buckboard and team. . . . Or maybe them tennis shoes. . . . He aint wore them in a year now.--No. . . . If I was you I would go out there nekkid in the first place. Then you wont notice the cold coming back. (71)

Clearly Bookwright and Tull know Flem in his exploiting ways; however, in spite of their disapproval, they seem reluctant to try to stop him. It is easier to observe and laugh at him than to become involved and perhaps be laughed at.

V. K. Ratliff, although he enjoys the stories told by his friends, cannot dismiss Flem with Tull's "none of your business" stance. Thompson says that Ratliff, more than any other character, "resents and resists the moral dodgings implicit in that recurrent refrain."[33] Millgate sees the position Ratliff takes as central "in the battle against Snopesism," and he sees the opposition of Flem and

[33] Thompson, p. 140.

Ratliff as a pairing "upon which the action as well as the morality of the book largely turns."[34] Ratliff shares with Flem the sharecropper origin and the adult profession of trader, but internally they are direct opposites. Ratliff stands firmly for humanity; Flem, for inhumanity. Thus Ratliff exhibits the virtues Faulkner honors. In his first real encounter with Flem, Ratliff defeats Flem in trading and selling goats; however, rather than his superior shrewdness in trading, Ratliff reveals his compassion for Ike, whose note Flem bargained with. Volpe uses this incident to illustrate that Flem and Ratliff are "direct opposites in their response to people." As Volpe points out, Ratliff sacrifices most of his profit to keep Flem from using the note again.[35] Later he gives Mrs. Littlejohn extra money to provide for Ike. He tells her, "That's what's-his-name, Ike. Isaac. They tell me you feed him some. He dont need money. But maybe--" (87). Isaac's relative uses him; this stranger befriends him.

Ratliff's response to humanity is seen again in his kindness to another member of the Snopes' family. In the long winter that Mink waited in jail for Flem's return, Ratliff, on his way to the Square, "would see the two small

[34] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), pp. 196, 194.

[35] Volpe, p. 316.

grimed hands, immobile and clasping loosely the bars of the jailwindow," (259) and he observed the wife and children leaving from their daily visits. He brings them home to his sister's, allowing Mink's wife to do housework to preserve her dignity. He sees that the children have the cast-off clothes of his nephews and nieces. He is bothered by the picture of the family in the terrible cell and by the unfounded faith Mink has in Flem's return. When the wife finds a job and plans to leave the Ratliff home, V. K. is at first relieved since the home is his sister's also, but he thinks of her financial plight and cannot allow it:

> "You will need to save all you can. . . . So you stay here. Pay her a dollar a week board for the children if that would make you feel better." . . . So she stayed. He had given up his room to them and he slept with his oldest nephew. (260)

He buys coats for the children and allows Mink's wife to pay fifty cents for an old one of his. In total contrast to Flem whose every action satisfies some self-interest, Ratliff inconveniences himself and shows compassionate concern for fellow human beings.

When Flem returns from Texas with a herd of wild horses and a stranger to run his auction, Ratliff speaks out strongly, urging the villagers not to be deceived. His tone has a folksy wisdom, a humorous caution rather than an overpowering or offensive authority: "All right. You

folks can buy them critters if you want to. But me, I'd just soon buy a tiger or a rattlesnake" (279). Although his advice for the most part is unheeded and his bedroom is invaded by a runaway horse, making him the object of much laughter, Ratliff remains compassionate when the suffering of his fellowman is apparent. His investigation of the ownership of the horses is persistent and eventually ends up in an argument with Lump, the clerk, over the return of Mrs. Armstid's money. In his account of the current situation of Mrs. Armstid with an injured husband in the village and children and a farm waiting at home, it is obvious that Ratliff is fully aware of the pathos here. When he tells his friend Bookwright of the Armstids' plight and the callousness of Flem, Bookwright guesses that Ratliff returned the Armstid money, evidently a deed that would be typical. However, this time Ratliff did not, in his knowledge that this would not solve the problem. He explains, "I never made them Snopeses and I never made the folks that cant wait to bare their backsides to them. I could do more, but I wont. I wont, I tell you!" (321). The argument seems pitched to convince the speaker as well as the listener of the wisdom of not giving in to a natural act of kindness. Kenneth Richardson labels him a country man "whose morality is instinctive" and says he approaches life itself and people with "a zest, a reverence, and a respect." He admits that Ratliff is at times naive but

explains that the "perversity of Snopes amorality" is astonishing, yet for Ratliff, not overwhelming.[36]

In Ratliff's final Frenchman's Bend encounter with Flem Snopes, the lead he established over Flem in the goat deal is lost. Flem pulls the old mining trick of "salting" the old Frenchman's place with silver dollars, and Ratliff, Bookwright, and Armstid quickly purchase the land and spend several nights digging. Although several critics condemn Ratliff for his reversal of values, suggesting he, now like Flem, is interested only in money, Hoffman says Ratliff is drawn not so much to possible easy money but that he cannot "resist the excitement and adventure of trying for it,"[37] and Volpe points out that Ratliff has always been "far more interested in people than he is in running a business," evidenced by his preference for traveling about selling a few sewing machines each year to remaining in Jefferson to operate a restaurant he has an interest in.[38] Watson sees irony in the fact that those who see Flem with the clearest vision fall victim but explains that Ratliff is "quickened by Armstid's ardor" and that Ratliff's "hopes are confirmed" when the "conservative,

[36] Kenneth E. Richardson, Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), p. 148.

[37] Hoffman, p. 36. [38] Volpe, p. 315.

skeptical Bookwright is convinced."[39] Once the planted bags are found and Bookwright and Ratliff begin to put together questionable details, their response is much in contrast to Armstid's insane fervor. Their having been duped is not devastating, suggesting their original motive was not all-consuming as was Armstid's. This is seen in the playful bets Ratliff and Bookwright wage to see whose bag contains the most recently minted coin.

Even though Flem clearly wins, Ratliff is not defeated, fooled in one incident but not made into a fool. As Millgate describes Ratliff's loss, it is only financial and "not accompanied by any defeat in human terms."[40] Watson explains the ease with which an "amoral aggressor" may exploit "the dreams of fair-minded, moral individuals" but goes on to say that such "ravages are not totally debilitating" and describes the moral world as "rejuvenatory and self-regenerative." V. K. Ratliff, according to Watson, returns to the community "no less committed to moral existence than before." His defeat may be termed a "thematic success" since it places him "in the community of fallible human beings from which Flem is alienated."[41] Vickery says that Ratliff "recovers his perspective and with it his

[39] Watson, p. 71. [40] Millgate, p. 199.

[41] Watson, pp. 73, 72.

sense of humor."[42] T. Y. Greet suggests that now that Ratliff is ensnared, "his sympathies will be renewed and deepened."[43]

Ratliff then remains the man who possesses the Faulkner virtues and thus the quality of enduring. Even though he is tricked by Flem and even more disturbing in his trade allows Flem to head for Jefferson to claim partnership in what was once Ratliff's restaurant, Ratliff does not fall in stature as a human being. This personable bachelor, seen by Howe "weaving in and out of the book like a cooling stream,"[44] is consistent in his compassionate response to his fellowman, in his integrity, and in his dignity. He expresses these qualities in positive action. His moral values stand sharply in contrast to the material values seen in Flem. Ratliff illustrates the presence of the virtues seen in action; Flem, the absence.

Even though almost two decades elapsed between publications of the first and second novels of the Snopes trilogy, The Town, first published in 1957, portrays Flem, his wife, her child, and several of Flem's kinsmen now in Jefferson and still observed closely by V. K. Ratliff, plus

[42] Vickery, p. 175.

[43] T. Y. Greet, "The Theme and Structure of Faulkner's The Hamlet," in Three Decades, p. 345.

[44] Howe, p. 249.

Jefferson lawyer Gavin Stevens and his family. The polar positions of Flem and his family and V. K. Ratliff and his associates remain the same. Initial critical response praised The Town for readability and "marvelous tales" but said it "lacked the richness of The Hamlet." Several major critics are impressed by the humor present and make comparisons to Twain in his American folk humor.[45] Brooks, however, sees the finest comedy of this "loose and episodic" novel in those incidental tales with no close connection to the main plot. The focus he discusses is the narration by three different characters who watch Flem climb. In relation to The Hamlet, Brooks finds The Town "a different kind of novel with another atmosphere, "set in another key."[46] There is a moral tone here as Flem ascends, Eula takes her life, Mink is sent away, and Linda grows up.

Blotner records that Faulkner himself admitted upon completion of the novel that "It breaks my heart, I wrote one scene and almost cried. I thought it was just a funny book but I was wrong."[47] Perhaps the sinister presence and triumphant ascension of Flem, even more obviously void of the Faulkner virtues here than in The Hamlet, keeps the

[45] Bassett, p. 37. [46] Brooks, pp. 212, 192.

[47] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), II, 1615.

novel from having a sustained comic tone in spite of several well-told humorous stories. Flem begins his Jefferson experience in a tent behind the restaurant he tricked Ratliff out of; soon he is superintendent of the power plant where he is partially foiled in the theft of brass. The double-crossing technique he uses on his employees ricochets, and most of the valuable brass ends up in the water tank. Flem is described as sitting

> all day now on the gallery of his little back-street rented house . . . looking at his own monument. . . . Except that it was not a monument: it was a footprint. A monument only says At least I got this far while a footprint says This is where I was when I moved again.[48]

His moves carry him first to the vice-presidency of the bank and finally to the presidency. During his deliberate upward movement, he maintains the respectability he sees as essential, ridding himself of several Snopes who threaten him. He also sees the success of a relative who bears the Snopes name but not the character. His wife maintains an eighteen-year relationship with the current bank president before taking her own life; her daughter grows to maturity, an intelligent and attractive young woman.

[48] William Faulkner, The Town (1957; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 29. All further references to this work appear in the text.

As all of these developments take place, Flem remains silent; his only concern is the achievement of his goals, based solely on money and position. Volpe says Flem "remains the money-making machine that he was in Frenchman's Bend" and points to his "total lack of response to people" as well as his successful use of "other people's emotional weaknesses for his own material and social ends." What is most terrifying, according to Volpe, is "his ability to turn any situation that arises into personal profit," but his success stems from his singleness of purpose; his "eyes never waver from goal" of making money.[49] Vickery sees him as "totally unconcerned with the moral qualities of his own behavior "unless his image in the public view might be harmed."[50] Flem intends an image of respectability. His wife admits that the carefully appointed furnishings of their home are not her choosing but her husband's. She relates the revealing response of the salesman in the Memphis furniture store:

> Yes, I think I see. You started out as a clerk in a country store. Then you moved to town and ran a cafe. Now you're vice president of your bank. A man who came that far in that short a time is not going to stop just there, and why shouldn't everybody that enters his house know it. . . . (222)

[49] Volpe, pp. 321-32. [50] Vickery, p. 186.

Years later, this same materialistic image is maintained in the purchase of an Italian medallion for his wife's tomb and the determination to hold her daughter in Jefferson until the monument is ready. Yet neither home, wife, nor the young girl he has raised as a daughter has meaning for Flem. Faulkner describes him as "a manifestation" of the inhuman type of human being, "hopeless . . . in the terms of the humanities, in the terms of the verities of man's condition, compassion and pity and courage, unselfishness, he was inhuman but he was still a living man."[51]

Flem's inhuman treatment of those relatives who mar his respectable image is seen clearly. V. K. Ratliff, who is in Jefferson now also, repeats the Mink Snopes story of the murder of Houston and Mink's desperate wait for Flem to come to his rescue. When the Judge asks if he is guilty, Mink replies: "Don't bother me now. . . . Can't you see I'm busy? . . . Somebody there. Anybody with a car. Go run out to Varner's store quick and get Flem Snopes" (82). Flem, of course, wants no part in Mink's murder trial and by his failure to appear leaves his kinsman who depended on him solely without help. In a later incident involving a Snopes, Flem must take deliberate action to eliminate him from Jefferson. When Montgomery Ward Snopes returns from

[51] Faulkner, "Session Sixteen: Engineering Students," in Faulkner in the University, p. 195.

Europe where he accompanied Gavin Stevens during the war years, he opens a studio; at his formal opening, he invites the Jefferson ladies to tea. He uses the facade of a photography studio by day, but by night his male customers slip into a pornographic show. Montgomery Ward is jailed and seeks help, but he knows not to send for "his uncle or cousin Flem, who had already got shut of one Snopes through a murder charge so why should he balk at getting rid of another one with just a dirty postcard" (166). However, when Flem learns from Gavin, the county attorney, that Montgomery Ward's sentence will be fairly short, he plants illegal whiskey in the studio, and, as Ratliff says, Gavin is "actively watching Flem rid Jefferson of Montgomery Ward" (177).

Finally Flem openly bribes I. O. Snopes to leave Jefferson. Ratliff calls I. O. "the one pure out-and-out fool" (79) and says he "never was worth nothing even to I. O., let alone for anybody else to take a cut of the profit" (150). I. O.'s business is "mulery and arsonery." He and the now deceased Lonzo Hait had a thriving mule business since the railroad company paid them for their mules killed on a blind curve where finally Lonzo lost his life. Now I. O., bristling at the large settlement Mrs. Hait received for her husband, is back to cause trouble. When her house burns, I. O. insists, "It wasn't me that set

that-ere scuttle of live fire where the first thing that passed would knock it into the cellar" (242). Flem, who mishandled the money Mrs. Hait received at her husband's death, now has the mortgage on her house and outsmarts I. O., who is interested in the insurance. He buys I. O.'s mules on the condition "that you move back to Frenchman's Bend and never own a business in Jefferson again as long as you live" (253). Since Flem also that very day has sold the Snopes Hotel where Mrs. I. O. spends the day rocking, I. O. has little alternative and departs with the advice ". . . if Lawyer Stevens has got ara thing loose about him the vice president might a taken a notion to, he better hold onto it since as the feller says even a fool wont tread where he just got through watching somebody else get bit" (253-254).

Flem not only causes his relatives to spend longer prison terms or banishes them from Jefferson, but, when they are unwanted, he mails them back to where they came from. Byron Snopes, who embezzled from the Sartoris bank enabling Flem to buy his way to the vice-presidency, fled to Mexico and was not heard of for ten years. At the height of Flem's ascension in The Town, when he is "busy being a banker now and a deacon in the Baptist church, living in solitary widowerhood in the old DeSpain house which he had remodeled into an ante-bellum Southern mansion"

(359-360), he receives four children, each wired with a "shipping tag written in pencil:

From: Byron Snopes, El Paso, Texas

To: Mr Flem Snopes, Jefferson Mississippi" (350). When the children prove to be totally uncivilized creatures, unable to communicate but carrying switch-blade knives, living in a cave, and dissecting and burning if not devouring an expensive pedigreed dog, Flem reverses the shipping label, printing "To: Byron Snopes" in "big block letters this time, like shouting" (370), and the last undesirable Snopeses, in his view, are gone from his Jefferson. He is left unthreatened, having glorified his wife's memory with a fine monument and allowed her daughter to go to New York. Only Eck's son Wallstreet Panic remains, and although Flem envies his success as an innovative grocer and wholesaler, he does not disturb Flem's image. Like his father Eck, who lost his life in an explosion while searching for a lost child, Wallstreet Panic and his schoolteacher wife are Snopes in name only. Ironically, Flem gave Eck his start, placing him in the restaurant where, Thompson says, because he was "a man of integrity," he served as a "menace to Snopesism."[52] Likewise his son Wallstreet lives his successful life totally divorced from Flem and his ways, even banking in the rival bank.

[52] Thompson, p. 153.

Thus Eck and his son, even though Snopes by birth, do not subscribe to the total regard for the material world and the total disregard of the human world which constitutes Snopesism. Instead they attempt to live decently among the people of Jefferson with honesty and integrity. Also bearing the name Snopes but seen in contrast to Flem are his own wife Eula Varner and her daughter Linda. Neither appears to accept the values Flem possesses even though both accept their superficial roles in his defined respectability. Eula's foremost impression on townsfolk and readers alike is one of undeniable sexual appeal, and the major role in her life in her years in Jefferson is that of mistress to the bank president, Major DeSpain. Even young Charles Mallison, Gavin Stevens' nephew, records:

> She wasn't too big, heroic, what they call Junoesque. It was that there was just too much of what she was for any one human female package to contain, and hold: too much of white, too much of female, too much of maybe just glory, I dont know: so that at first sight of her you felt a kind of shock of gratitude just for being alive and being male at the same instant with her in space and time. . . . (6)

Perhaps because of this very vitality and the contrasting mechanical lifelessness of Flem, the people of Jefferson accepted her infidelity with DeSpain. Young Charles says, "We were his allies, his confederates; our whole town was accessory to that cuckolding. . ." (15). However, in

addition to these dominant impressions of Eula, she also shows on several occasions other vital qualities that differentiate her from her husband Flem, for Eula demonstrates a capacity for the Faulkner virtues of compassion, pity, and sacrifice especially.

When Eula makes one of her rare visits to Gavin Stevens to confide in him and to ask his help for her daughter, she admits that she must guard against sympathy for Flem, a feeling she cannot permit because it would hurt him. She tells Gavin of his impotence and adds, "You see? You've got to be careful or you'll have to pity him. You'll have to. He couldn't bear that, and it's no use to hurt people if you dont get anything for it" (33). Eula repeats more emphatically now her earlier request that Gavin marry Linda. Gavin agrees only if the marriage becomes the final alternative for Linda to escape the smothering of Snopesism. When Gavin drives Eula home with this promise made, he believes that she is ready to leave with DeSpain, leaving Linda's welfare in his charge. Instead Eula that night takes her life, choosing this way, according to Blotner, "to spare her daughter the scandal that was brewing."[53] In Faulkner's explanation, her act can be seen only as verification of her compassion and self-sacrifice. He says

[53] Blotner, II, 1615.

the suicide is for "the sake of that child" because Eula realized that all children, "a young girl especially, needed the semblance of an intact home," complete with both parents as other children had. Eula saw that she had reached "an impasse" with DeSpain's demanding her to leave, and that Flem provided at least "the symbol of the father." Linda, Eula felt, would be better "with a mother who committed suicide than a mother who ran off with a lover."[54] Vickery, who admits Eula's power to stir men, also acknowledges that in "full maturity, she reveals an infinite capacity for love, devotion, fidelity, and self-sacrifice."[55]

The daughter that Eula sacrifices her life for is seen in her adulthood in the final novel of the Snopes trilogy; however, she progresses from infancy to young adulthood in The Town and becomes the special project of Gavin Stevens, who sees her potential if freed from her father and Jefferson. Before Eula dies, Flem has finally secured a hold on the Varner inheritance and has managed to gain the control of the bank; therefore, Linda is allowed to study at the state university. She responds to Gavin's kindness and keen interest with gratitude and love; however, Linda is understandably confused by all that she has experienced.

[54] Faulkner, "Session Twenty-Two," in Faulkner in the University, p. 195.

[55] Vickery, p. 199.

After Eula's funeral, Linda turns to Gavin and is immobilized by her suspicion that Flem is not her father. When Gavin convinces her that Flem is her father, she is able to cry, permitting herself to grieve and explaining, "But now that I know he is my father, it's all right, I'm glad. I want her to have loved, to have been happy" (346). The scene suggests that Linda is her mother's child, scarred by a Snopes upbringing, but perhaps capable of putting it aside, capable of feelings.

Both Linda and her mother have turned to Gavin Stevens, county attorney and, according to Wheeler, representative of "the established class which Snopesism is undermining."[56] More significant, he is the special friend and admirer of both women. Gavin seems drawn initially to Eula because of the vitality of life he senses in her; both mother and daughter seem drawn to Gavin for the wisdom and kindness they sense in him. Gavin certainly proves himself a gentleman with much sensitivity and possessing the Faulkner virtues; however, even though he attempts positive action he rarely achieves positive results. He wishes desperately to remedy the wrongs of Snopesism, most particularly in the lives of Eula and Linda, yet he often draws the wrong conclusions and completely misinterpets Flem's motives.

[56] Wheeler, in Four Decades, p. 81.

Swiggart says Gavin, like Horace Benbow, is idealistic and therefore lacks "full understanding of the evil" he wishes to combat.[57] Noel Polk sees Gavin as a duplicate of Horace Benbow in Sanctuary but gives Gavin the superior standing because he possesses "more resilience" and has the capacity to continue to believe "in the ideals of his profession in spite of his repeated mistakes and defeats." In Polk's view, Faulkner honors Gavin's refusal to give up even in the face of tragedy.[58] With Eula's death, Gavin remains intent on saving Linda, and Page believes that the ideals Linda comes to value are those fostered by Gavin.[59]

The impact Gavin has on Linda and his nephew may represent his greatest contribution to his fellowman, for the Gavin seen in action in The Town is a man of words, not deeds. Kerr says, "His evolution from the thoughtful spectator toward the active participant in community affairs remained incomplete."[60] Everett speaks of Gavin's failure

[57] Swiggart, p. 198.

[58] Noel Polk, "'I Taken an Oath of Office Too': Faulkner and the Law," in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1980), pp. 176-77.

[59] Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), p. 172.

[60] Elizabeth M. Kerr, Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil" (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1969), p. 123.

to understand situations and points to his "inveterate talkativeness."[61] According to Florence Leaver, Gavin "spends his time talking while more practical people . . . do the deeds he talks about."[62] Volpe sees his good qualities but labels his idealism as his dominant characteristic.[63] When Faulkner analyzed Gavin for the University of Virginia students, he emphasized his legal knowledge and his way of drawing conclusions from a legal point of view; he admitted that Gavin was not prepared for the "real world in which people anguished and suffered" and that in dealing with people, "he was an amateur."[64]

While Gavin is in Europe, the messages he sends to V. K. Ratliff, his companion in Snopes-watching, indicate that the two men pride themselves on their awareness of the intentions of Flem but do not move much beyond observation. According to Charles Mallison, Ratliff responds to Gavin's messages with the feeling that their common interest is "a game, a contest or even a battle, a war, that Snopeses had to be watched constantly like an invasion of snakes or

[61] Walter K. Everett, Faulkner's Art and Characters (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1969), p. 116.

[62] Florence Leaver, "Faulkner: The World as Principle and Power," in Three Decades, p. 200.

[63] Volpe, p. 326.

[64] Faulkner, "Session Seventeen: Graduate Course in the Novel," in Faulkner in the University, pp. 140-41.

wildcats and that Uncle Gavin and Ratliff were doing it or trying to because nobody else in Jefferson seemed to recognize the danger" (106). Once Gavin returns, this joint observation of the Snopes, primarily Flem, followed by their arguments of interpretation of his actions, is frequently the extent of Gavin's involvement. Although he seems to reveal compassion and pity for Eula and Linda particularly and he manages his routine life with dignity and integrity, Gavin cannot seem to apply the virtues in positive action except for his attempts to save Linda. Wheeler describes his response to Snopesism as "frantically aware of it and frantically unable to do anything about it."[65] Gavin provides firm belief in the Faulkner virtues rather than strong illustration of them in action. The virtues Gavin possesses find stronger expression in those he influences than they ever do in his own life.

In addition to Linda who incorporates some of Gavin's beliefs in her adult life in The Mansion, Charles Mallison, Gavin's very young nephew in The Town, is also introduced to the virtues and the evil of the Snopes by listening to his uncle. Blotner labels Charles as "one of the generation who would presumably carry on the battle against Snopesism."[66] Faulkner predicted that Gavin's nephew "may

[65] Wheeler, in Four Decades, p. 81.

[66] Blotner, II, 1616.

grow up to be a better man than his uncle. I think he may succeed as a human being."[67] Watson talks of Chick's value as a narrator, focusing on his innocence and showing his effective position since he lacks the "quixotic involvement of his uncle" and has not developed the "hypocrisy of the community."[68] Much of the time Chick is involved with growing up, engaged in typical situations and motivated by characteristic curiosity. After Eula's death, however, something of his sensitivity to community response is felt as he recognizes the protection given Linda, "to keep any part of the guessing or suspecting or actual knowing . . . from ever reaching her. Because I know now that people are really kind, they really are" (340). Chick is in a position to learn positively from his uncle's beliefs and negatively from his inaction.

V. K. Ratliff is the person who listens most to Gavin's theories and impressions of the Snopes' progress. According to Watson, just as Charles has an innocence that Gavin has lost, V. K. has a realism that Gavin has never discovered.[69] V. K. lacks Gavin's professional and personal involvement, and by his very nature, he is more detached. Even though he is keenly interested in the developments of

[67] William Faulkner, "Interview with Cynthia Grenier," in Lion in the Garden, p. 225.

[68] Watson, p. 80. [69] Watson, p. 80.

the Snopes in Jefferson and manages to appear and discuss every new event with Gavin, V. K. admits to being a listener, a people-watcher. When Gavin is explaining his concept of women and their regard for the truth, V. K. disagrees and replies to Gavin's question of where a bachelor learned so much about women: "Maybe by listening" (229). His answer brings to Gavin's mind a picture familiar to all in Yoknapatawpha,

> a group of four or five or six ladies come in sunbonnets or straw hats from anywhere up to a mile along the road, Ratliff himself with his smooth brown bland inscrutable face and his neatly faded tieless blue shirt, sitting in a kitchen chair in the shady yard or on the gallery, listening. (229)

After all the developments have occurred, Eula's death, Flem's move to presidency, matters of inheritance, Ratliff maintains the same watchful position:

> So we had to wait. Which was interesting enough. I mean, Lawyer had enough to keep him occupied worrying the I-talian Government, and all I ever needed was jest something to look at, watch, providing of course it had people in it. (351-53)

What he sees and hears, V. K. uses to provide fascinating stories; he has observed the Snopes long before their entry into Jefferson and fills in much background information for Gavin, embellishing it when he chooses. Gavin recognizes

this and comments on V. K.'s account of Eula's return from her honeymoon with:

> the child already walking. Which (the walking at least) I did not believe, not because of the anguish, the jealousy, the despair, but simply because of Ratliff. . . . Because even if the child had been only one day old, Ratliff would have invented the walking, being Ratliff. In fact, if there had been no child at all yet, Ratliff would have invented one, invented one already walking for the simple sake of his own paradox and humor. . . . (134)

But Gavin also has respect for V. K.'s knowledge and perception, and although Gavin is often a step behind V. K. in comprehending motives, he never dismisses him as a mere gossip. When Flem moves his money from his own bank, Gavin records:

> Oh yes, we knew that; we had Ratliff's word for that. Ratliff had to know a fact like that by now. After this many years of working to establish and maintain himself as what he uniquely was in Jefferson, Ratliff could not afford, he did not dare to walk the streets and not have the answer to any and every situation which was not really any of his business. (141)

Vickery, who calls him "the chronicler of Yoknapatawpha," says he transforms "what he sees and guesses into highly amusing anecdotes" and points out that he is always in his role as "observer and interpreter."[70] Thompson says

[70] Vickery, pp. 182-83.

Faulkner allows V. K. "numerous mistakes in observation and in judgment," yet he always seems to know more than he tells.[71]

With all of V. K.'s interest in following the Snopes' advancement, he has little opportunity to oppose the Snopes or to extend the compassion seen in him in The Hamlet. Although Watson praises V. K.'s "active and effective part in the opposition to Snopesism," he supports this claim with his investment in Wallstreet's grocery business so that Wallstreet will not have to go to Flem;[72] no other examples are given. Steven Marcus sees V. K.'s Jefferson role as simply one of three storytellers and says he is here "more limited and constrained" than in The Hamlet.[73] Richardson admits that in Jefferson V. K.'s actions are limited, but "his influence is not." He cites V. K.'s being a source of information for Gavin, his attempt to show Flem's motives and his desire for respectability; V. K. can provide information but is "out of his element" here; thus "the action falls to Stevens." However, combining the efforts of these two, Richardson sees them as "morally powerful because they possess the verities of the

[71] Thompson, p. 149. [72] Watson, p. 112.

[73] Steven Marcus, "Snopes Revisited," in Three Decades, p. 386.

human heart, which are the qualities of soul totally absent in the Snopeses."[74]

Thus in examining the hearts and minds of the three narrators of The Town, the virtues are evident even if they do not often find expression in positive deeds. Charles Mallison in his youth can hardly be expected to act; he is seen more as the recipient of his uncle's values and beneficiary of Ratliff's wise perception. In Millgate's view, Gavin's principles are so rigid they are disabling in any effective combat of Snopesism. Millgate sees the Snopes combat as that of fantasy for Gavin; the real conflict is internal, between the "principles inculcated into him by his background and his education, and . . . the often contradictory demands of actual living." However, despite this conflict and his subsequent inadequacy for life, Gavin is a man of principles with "a will towards virtue and a fundamental goodness at heart."[75] In Brooks' opinion, V. K. Ratliff is "the most nearly trustworthy observer"; although he lacks Gavin's "book learning . . . and romantic imagination," Ratliff is a shrewd man possessing "something of the funded wisdom of the folk society."[76] He sees Flem and the danger he poses but also realizes that Flem will

[74] Richardson, pp. 147-48. [75] Millgate, pp. 238, 241.

[76] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 217.

find ways to eliminate his more unsavory relatives and perhaps eventually will eliminate himself. Faulkner lists V. K. Ratliff beside Dilsey of The Sound and the Fury as one of his favorite characters, calling him "wonderful."[77] He admits rereading certain pages of his work "to spend time with people that I like" and names Ratliff, saying "I will go back to read about him."[78] In a more extensive comment on V. K., Faulkner perhaps explains his admiration. He points out V. K.'s handling of change without being disturbed, suffering "no anguish, no grief from it." Ratliff, Faulkner says, "will take what's now and do the best he can with it because he possesses what you might call a moral, spiritual eupepsia, that his digestion is good, all right, nothing alarms him."[79]

When The Town closes, Flem has buried Eula, vanquished DeSpain and moved in his mansion, sent Linda to the north, shipped the half-breed Snopes creatures back to Byron, and now sits complacent and solitary. Even in his supposed triumph, however, he is seen in total contrast to Gavin and V. K. Ratliff and the enduring values and principles they

[77] Faulkner, "Interview with Grenier," in Lion in the Garden, p. 224.

[78] Joseph L. Fant and Robert Ashley, Faulkner at West Point (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. 115.

[79] Faulkner, "Session Twenty-Eight: First-Year English Course," in Faulkner in the University, p. 253.

represent. Flem's is no meaningful victory nor are his opponents seen in devastation and despair at his rise. Gavin continues to talk; V. K., to listen; and Chick Mallison, to mature.

In 1959 Faulkner published The Mansion and prefaced the final novel of the Snopes trilogy with a comment about its being "the final chapter of, and the summation of, a work conceived and begun in 1925." In referring to discrepancies within the chronicle, he explained that he had learned "more about the human heart and its dilemma" than he knew when he began the Snopes story years ago and that he also knew the characters better, "having lived with them that long time."[80] Even though early reactions to the Snopes were negative and there was serious concern for Faulkner's focus on the low-life and its triumph, this "final chapter" leaves the Snopes defeated though not extinct. Ironically, rather than the Snopes' losing the battle to a complacent yet more moral majority, the leader of the clan is killed off by his own kin; the Snopes destroy the Snopes. The first two novels close with Flem Snopes' constant climb, his move from Frenchman's Bend to Jefferson in The Hamlet, and from his modest house to the DeSpain mansion in The Town, both moves brought about by

[80] William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Random, 1955), preface.

his deceitful trickery and disregard of humanity. In contrast, The Mansion shows Flem with nothing to climb, and his past disregard of humanity toward Mink finally brings about his murder. The opposing community faction, most represented in all three works by the town-bred Gavin Stevens and the county-bred V. K. Ratliff, are now not merely watching with interest Flem's ascent, but instead they bury him and, in the closing scene, befriend his murderer in a final act of compassion. In the entire trilogy, there are no strong examples of the Faulkner virtues expressed in positive action; however, The Mansion provides clearer direct examples, offers more promise for the permanence of the virtues and fewer disturbing negative examples or statements by indirection.

The major statement Faulkner makes by indirection is through Flem Snopes, clearly the leader of the tribe and the one most deficient in humanity. Even Mink, who comes to murder him, on first viewing Flem's impressive mansion, describes "looking in fact at the vast white columned edifice with something like pride that someone named Snopes owned it; a complete and absolute unjealousy: at another time, tomorrow, though he himself would never dream nor really ever want to be received in it, he would have said proudly to a stranger: 'My cousin lives there. He owns it'" (411). Flem has indeed come a long distance from some

unknown dog-trot cabin to the finest mansion in Jefferson and the presidency of a major bank; however, his triumph is meaningless. He has no additional goals and no capacity to enjoy the remarkable pinnacle he has already reached. He lives a solitary life both as chief executive and as master of the mansion, in both roles spending almost all of his time leaning back in his chair with his feet propped in his mansion on "a little wood ledge, not even painted, nailed to the front of that hand-carved hand-painted Mount Vernon mantelpiece at the exact height" (156). Vickery says that Flem's "omnivorous greed" has not diminished but that it is now trivial since he has achieved the position, power, and all the "external trappings." She says that "he has outlived the time in which success depended upon outmatching and outwitting individual competitors or victims" and points out that now Flem is seen in trading combat with Jason Compson and even that is infrequent. "In short, Flem has destroyed his purpose in life by achieving it."[81] Broughton discusses Flem's focus on objects only, saying that he believes "quality may be established by the ownership." She cites his remodeling of the mansion to age it, his car, his banker's hat, his expecting the "trappings of a heritage to establish his respectability," and although

[81] Vickery, p. 202.

Broughton acknowledges that many judge a man by such tangibles, she concludes by comparing Flem to Thomas Sutpen in acquiring at great expense proper tombstones and thereby expecting "respectability or virtue . . . because their approach to life is abstract, not vital."[82] Flem achieves only quantity, missing quality altogether. Kerr places Flem inferior to Sutpen even though she sees their likenesses, for Flem has no imagination nor the capacity to dream; "he can only copy others" and is confined by the limitations of Jefferson. Kerr says, "Flem began with nothing and ended with emptiness, symbolized by his chewing on air."[83] The emptiness of his life as he sits in his fine mansion surrounded by the proper furnishings is caused by his failure to recognize humanity, his own, as well as that of his family and associates. This failure eliminates the development of the Faulkner virtues. Brooks says the "insidious horror of Snopesism is its lack of any kind of integrity," and he views Flem as "a kind of monster who has betrayed everyone, first in his lust for pure money-power, and later . . . a more loathsome lust, a desire for

[82] Panthea Reid Broughton, William Faulkner: The Abstract and the Actual (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1974), pp. 66, 76.

[83] Elizabeth M. Kerr, William Faulkner's Gothic Domain (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1979), p. 192.

respectability." He calls him "a hollow man indeed, a ghost."[84] When Mink arrives to kill Flem after waiting for thirty-eight years, Flem seems to place little value on his own life. Even when the first shot from Mink's unreliable pistol does not fire, Flem "appeared to sit immobile and even detached too" (415). Flem's funeral followed the pattern of empty respectability, and the assessment of what he was proves the total lack of the virtues:

> He (the deceased) had no auspices either: fraternal, civic, nor military: only finance; not an economy--cotton or cattle or anything else which Yoknapatawpha County and Mississippi were established on and kept running by, but belonging simply to Money. (419)

In Mink Snopes' opinion, Flem refused to belong to the Snopes' family despite the fact that he managed to have a following of them wherever he lived. After Mink served almost twenty years for killing Jack Houston, he remained intent on killing Flem because in Brooks' view, Flem's "refusal to respond to his 'blood cry for help'" violates a major principle for Mink.[85] When Flem's escape scheme set up through Montgomery Ward brings Mink additional years, his determination after thirty-eight years of imprisonment and at sixty-three years of age is even more fervent. Yet the poverty-striken Mink, who murders not once but twice

[84] Brooks, pp. 222, 228, 230. [85] Brooks, p. 223.

and who when last seen has spent more years in Parchman penitentiary than in the outside world, is presented in a better light than the mighty Flem. Flem's entire life is based on an accumulation of tangible evidence of what he is; Mink's life, always destitute of tangibles, is defined in terms of intangibles. Mink's guilt as a murderer of a neighbor and a kinsman cannot be overlooked nor justified; however, The Mansion account of the first murder and the continuing neglect by Flem plus Flem's even plotting against him provide an understanding. Howe points out that the intolerability of the arrogance of Houston, Mink's first victim, is seen more clearly in this retelling. Howe admits the wretchedness and meanness of Mink yet also calls him "a creature with a kind of bottom-dog dignity." As he refers to the second murder, he speaks of Mink's "heroism of the will, a man living out his need."[86] Watson finds "his meanness . . . in some degree justified as an assertion of his innate value as a human being and as a defense of his identity."[87]

It is the worth that Mink grants the human being that distinguishes him from Flem, and when this worth is violated the motive to kill Flem is provided. Mink does claim human qualities although he lives an almost subhuman existence.

[86] Howe, pp. 112, 293. [87] Watson, p. 149.

Blotner says that even though "dogged by unbelievably hard luck from birth, Mink still tried to preserve what he could of dignity."[88] Volpe states that he is presented as "a man who epitomizes human pride in a struggle against the cosmic forces that buffet all men." Furthermore, he feels Mink's "ability to endure harassment and the worry is a test of his manhood." Both Mink's pride and his patience "engage our sympathies," Volpe says.[89] Vickery points to Mink's pride as revealing his "sense of his own integrity" and says it is dependent on "his willingness to engage in 'the constant and unflagging necessity of defending his own simple rights.'" In Vickery's opinion, Mink defines these rights as "being accepted and treated as a man by other men." She goes on to explain that when Mink asks for this recognition and has it denied, "he resorts to the ultimate violence of murder" and even though this is a "demonic" response, it is based on his "recognition of the value of the individual man."[90]

Mink, in his remote prison labor existence, learns of Flem's growing affluence in bits and pieces. Thirty-eight years after Flem disappointed him by failing to appear at his trial, Mink makes a trying journey to finally kill Flem, according to Richardson, "because Flem is inhuman, denying

[88] Blotner, II, 1684. [89] Volpe, pp. 332, 334.

[90] Vickery, p. 205.

life by denying kinship."[91] Vickery describes the murder as committed without "the heat of anger," more with "regret and almost with pity for self and his victim."[92] Leary suggests that the people of the town sympathize with the murderer,[93] and Howe says "the act of retribution" gains support from the outside world.[94] Once Mink has successfully overcome all the obstacles and hardships that separate him physically from Flem, he moves with purpose and carries out his task. He emerges, perhaps, only now, a free man, though ironically in reality, a wanted murderer, a fugitive from justice. Brooks says, "Mink steps outside into the night, . . . a free man, having achieved his aim, completely fulfilled." Having won his battle, "he can even risk lying down;" perhaps he "at last can come to terms with the earth."[95] Throughout the last lap of his journey, Mink has repeatedly voiced his fear of being drawn into the earth if he sleeps on the bare ground. The first reference comes when he spends a night with a black family whose cotton he helps to pick; during his afternoon nap, before entering Jefferson, he describes how "once he began to feel the slow, secret, tentative palping start as the old biding

[91] Richardson, p. 168. [92] Vickery, p. 196.

[93] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 169.

[94] Howe, p. 112. [95] Brooks, p. 242.

unimpatient unhurried ground said to itself, 'Well, well, be dawg if here aint one already laying right here on my doorstep so to speak'" (407). Once his mission is accomplished and he goes to the site of his old cabin, which is no longer standing, he rests for a while in the earthen basement. His feeling toward the pull of the earth seems different. His attitude now is,

> But then a man didn't need to have to keep his mind steadily on the ground after sixty-three years. In fact, the ground itself never let a man forget it was there waiting, pulling gently and without no hurry at him. . . . So when the notion struck him he did so, arranging himself, arms and legs and back, already feeling the first faint gentle tug. . . . But he could risk it, he even felt like giving it a fair active chance. . . . (434-435)

Millgate interprets that after his hard life of "suffering and unceasing struggle against known and unknown powers," Mink now can return "towards that earth which he fears, . . . approaching a final mingling with the myriads of the dead."[96] Page says he "submits himself to the pull of the earth and human mortality" and that he "senses, despite his own frailty, his oneness with all humanity."[97]

As Millgate suggests, Mink "more and more compels our reluctant admiration."[98] This comes not because he can be

[96] Millgate, pp. 249-50. [97] Page, p. 172.

[98] Millgate, p. 250.

held up as one who endures or prevails and expresses all of Faulkner's virtues in positive action, but because he can be given credit for his brand of enduring, for a code of honesty and integrity, for an internal dignity as a human being when the world's materialistic values imply that he is less than human. He gives evidence of these positive values even though he is seen primarily in the two crucial events of his life, both his committing of violent murders. Yet surrounding these acts, there are occasions for Mink to respond. Just as he could not accept escape money that his wife raised by prostitution, neither could he accept bribe money when he was allowed to leave Parchman. Accepting the money meant giving his word he would not return to Mississippi, a condition Mink could not agree to. In his journey to Jefferson, he is amazed at the greatly changed economy and is keenly aware his meager funds may not cover even a pawnshop pistol, yet after having most of his money stolen by a worker at Goodyhay's, he cannot bring himself to take the pistol he desperately needs and has ample opportunity to steal. He reveals his thoughts:

> If I jest had that for two days I wouldn't need no ten dollars. . . . I done been robbed in good faith without warning; why aint that enough to free me to rob in my turn. Not to mention my need being ten times, a hundred times, a thousand more despaired than ara other man's need for just ten dollars. . . . No. I aint never stole. I aint never come to that and I wont never. (274)

His enduring is based on an incredible patience and a confidence in himself and an unknown sense of justice. Once in Memphis, waiting for Monday morning so that he may purchase the pistol, when he cannot even find a place to wait, he remains calm and tells himself, "A man can get through anything if he can just keep on walking" (289). Brooks specifies his "sense of honor" and says that because it is all Mink has, he must "hold on to this," and "the implication is that because it is human it is better than the kind of honor . . . Flem Snopes displays."[99] Still as an example of the Faulkner virtues and meaningful enduring, Mink is limited. In spite of his long-suffering and patience, his honesty and integrity, his dignity and belief in human worth, Mink lacks the essential quality of love made up of compassion, pity, and sacrifice. Without this primary virtue, the other positive qualities he possesses can only serve him in a limited way. Although he is last seen now accepting the money Linda Snopes provided and ready to become a new man, M. C. Snopes, as he tells Gavin Stevens and V. K. Ratliff who come to help him, he may find himself in the same empty situation his cousin Flem was in. Now that he has accomplished the one all-consuming purpose of a selfish life, there is nothing left, nothing to live for, to care about.

[99] Brooks, pp. 183-84.

Gavin Stevens and V. K. Ratliff, who place a value on Flem's empty life, seeking to protect him, yet who later treat Mink, his murderer, with compassion, provide stronger proof of the sacredness of life and the need for all of the virtues. The two of them are in frequent conversation, comparing observation notes and testing theories usually related to the Snopeses; and even though they talk far more than they act, they clearly support a healthy and wholesome employment of all the virtues in contrast to Mink's warped and limited use.

In his role as county attorney as well as in his personality as meddler, Gavin stands for the worth and dignity of the human being, and he has inculcated his ideals in Eula Snopes' daughter Linda and his nephew Chick Mallison. Linda acknowledges to Gavin, on one of the many times she declares her love for him, that "If it hadn't been for you, probably I wouldn't have got this far" (252). When Chick, now a young man, speculates on his uncle's ambivalent role in Linda's life, he says: "She had lost even that one remaining who should have married her for no other reason than that he had done more than anybody else while she was a child to make her into what she was now" (219). On several different occasions, Chick analyzes his uncle's influence on him and his own response and feeling. He recalls Ratliff's analysis of the early relationship and

agrees, "as Ratliff put it, as I had spent the first eleven or twelve years of my existence in the middle of Uncle Gavin, thinking what he thought and seeing what he saw, not because he taught me to but maybe just because he let me, allowed me to" (211). On a Christmas vacation during Chick's college days, he vents his frustration and cynicism to his uncle and receives an affectionate pat on the head "as he used to when I was half as tall and only a third as old, gentle and tender. . . ." Even though Chick now realizes his uncle's frequent "wrong turns," he concludes "he is a good man, wise too except for the occasions when he would aberrate. . . . But he is a good man. Maybe I was wrong sometimes to trust and follow him but I was never wrong to love him" (230). And finally Chick compares his response to his uncle to that of his father:

> Oh yes, I liked Father too all right but Father just talked to me while Uncle Gavin listened to me, no matter how foolish what I was saying finally began to sound even to me, listening to me until I had finished, then saying, "Well, I dont know whether it will hold together or not but I know a good way to find out. Let's try it." Not YOU try it but US try it. (221)

There are occasions in Gavin Stevens' professional life when the stand he takes reveals the value he places on human life and integrity. When visited by a federal investigator who wants to trade Linda Snopes Kohl "her immunity for names" of people she has known who may be

Communist-affiliated, Gavin takes a protective, dignified and firm stand: "Have you a warrant of any sort? . . . Then good day, sir." When the investigator asks if Gavin will suggest to Linda that she provide names and he refuses, the investigator tries to challenge or humiliate him with: "Your country is in danger, perhaps in jeopardy." Gavin stands his ground: "Not from her" (236). When crotchety old man Meadowfill approaches Gavin to put his deed in his nine-year-old daughter's name so that he can claim to be a pauper and qualify for government relief, he illustrates the ordinary citizen's assessment of Lawyer Stevens. Meadowfill chooses Gavin because he knew the dishonor of his plan would so infuriate Gavin he might forget to charge a fee. Meadowfill predicted it would take five minutes to make Stevens mad, but he "was wrong only in his estimate of time, since it required only two minutes for Stevens to reach the boil which carried him into the chancery clerk's vault. . ." (334). Perhaps in the category of meddling as well as contracted professional work, Gavin takes action to help free Mink, pressuring his friend V. K. to sign the petition. However, once the petition is granted with Mink supposedly provided for and leaving the state, when Gavin learns of Mink's move, he makes his way to Flem Snopes' office and informs him:

> Mink left Parchman at eight oclock this morning. I dont know whether you know it or not but

> we--I had some money waiting to be given to him at the gate, under condition that in accepting it he had passed his oath to leave Mississippi without returning to Jefferson and never cross the state line again. He didn't take the money. (379)

Gavin does possess the virtues; he does positively influence many who know him personally and professionally; however, he fails to find any consistent expression of his ideas in action and escapes from total commitment to women especially. Although he eventually marries an old friend, now widowed and with grown children, Gavin continually avoids an intimate relationship with Linda Snopes. Eula had pleaded with him to marry her daughter, and Linda has repeatedly declared her love, but he leads her to the resolution that they "are the 2 in all the world who can love each other without having to" (239). Noel Polk suggests that Gavin fears "his own sexual nature" and sees his marriage as running from Linda, "relieved by a too-demanding sexual responsibility."[100] Page says Gavin can love Linda "as a child but not as a woman."[101] But when the novel closes, Millgate suggests that in the farewell scene of Linda and Gavin, the child is Gavin, and relates Gavin's illusions about Linda to his "adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour." Millgate views the marriage as "final withdrawal and cushioned domestication."[102]

[100] Polk, in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, pp. 124-25.

[101] Page, p. 169. [102] Millgate, pp. 247, 243.

The reluctance to commit himself fully, to become thoroughly involved in a relationship of deep love and happiness offered by Linda, is perhaps characteristic of Gavin's approach to life itself. There is in him a remoteness, a backing away from, a barrier that holds him captive. Although in his beliefs and ideals, he clearly possesses the Faulkner virtues and is equipped with the qualities to endure, even prevail, his tendency to withdraw makes him generally ineffectual. Still Millgate, who questions his relationship with Linda and sees his marriage as a "retreat," calls him a "champion of justice and humanity" and states that Gavin, "despite his defeats, has an important positive role to play: his failures as a man do not invalidate the ideals he seeks to uphold." He goes on to credit Gavin with the thematic value of the novel, identifying him as a touchstone character, a positive measurement:

> It is largely through his humanity, his sensitivity, both to the promise of life and to its pity, that we apprehend the book's deeper levels of suffering and anguish. And it is largely in terms of his own demanding scale of values, his high estimation of man's possibilities, that the characters of the novel, him too, are ultimately judged.[103]

Seen as Gavin's "special crony" (356), V. K. Ratliff is a witness to all that occurs. Even though he does not

[103] Millgate, pp. 248-49.

always agree with Gavin's interpretations of events, he stands with him in the upholding of ideals and belief in the virtues. Kerr praises his "instinctive wisdom" and suggests that he possesses "more knowledge of human nature" than Gavin.[104] Everett points to V. K.'s "unusual sensitivity" and his "deep understanding of human nature." Evidence of V. K.'s response is the immediate friendship he strikes up with the exclusive New York tie designer and the instant rapport he establishes with the sculptor Linda Snopes marries.[105] Both relationships are more significant with the recognition that V. K. has never bought even a cheap tie and certainly has no sculpture in his modest home, at least not until Linda sees that he is given a special piece after Kohl's death. She explains to Gavin:

> Bart liked him. He said he hadn't expected to like anybody from Mississippi, but he was wrong. . . . He made me promise--I mean, whichever one of us it was, would give Ratliff one of his things. You remember it--the Italian boy that you didn't know what it was even though you had seen sculpture before, but Ratliff that had never even seen an Italian boy, nor anything else beyond the Confederate monument in front of the courthouse, knew at once what it was, and even what he was doing? (200)

The personable Ratliff not only meets and responds well to people, but he also acts in behalf of his fellowman.

[104] Kerr, Gothic Domain, p. 218.

[105] Everett, p. 56.

Although it is Gavin's suggestion, he does sign the petition to free Mink from prison, and on his own, he makes the trip to Parchman to check on Mink's plans, probably an act motivated by both curiosity and compassion. He reports his findings to Gavin immediately and also suggests that he tell Flem. In a humorous digression on the political demise of Senator Clarence Egglestone Snopes, V. K. connives to rid the entire state of corrupt representation. Millgate calls him the "voice . . . of intelligence and sanity."[106] Everett sees his role closely tied to Gavin, saying that Ratliff "with his insistence upon the simplicity of life serves as Gavin's continual reminder of the basic human facets, foibles, and potentialities of each man."[107]

Tagging behind Gavin and V. K., occasionally in on the action and always curious, Charles "Chick" Mallison readily admits the influence of both men, particularly that of his uncle. He is pictured here as the supposedly bright, sometimes obnoxiously so, young college man. Brooks refers to his "pertness of a young cynic" and also sees his strong affection for his uncle.[108] Howe calls his vision "callow," his wisdom "sophomoric," and finds him "annoying" as he attempts to imitate his elders.[109] It seems plausible

[106] Millgate, p. 246. [107] Everett, pp. 56-57.

[108] Brooks, p. 219. [109] Howe, pp. 287-88.

that Chick is in a normal stage of disillusionment characteristic of his age and situation. His most caustic venting of this is in response to Gavin's concern for Linda, and her Communist implication:

> She cant help people. They are not worth it. They dont want to be helped any more than they want advice or work. They want cake and excitement, both free. Man stinks. How the hell can she have spent a year in a war that not only killed her husband and blew the bejesus out of the inside of her skull, but even at that price the side she was fighting for still lost, without finding that out? Oh sure, I know, I know, you and Ratliff both have told me often enough; if I've heard Ratliff one time I've heard him a hundred: "Man aint really evil, he jest aint got any sense." But so much the more reason, because that leaves him completely hopeless, completely worthless of anybody's anguish and effort and trouble. (230)

In reality this outburst is probably an invitation to a wholesome response from his uncle whose actions and beliefs, as Chick is clearly aware, oppose what he has just espoused. Thus Chick is seen here on the brink of maturity, surely not yet a finer human being than his uncle, a prediction implied earlier in the trilogy, but the prediction is not lost. With the benefit of exposure to much talk of the virtues and witnessing some action, Chick is a promising character.

The impact of Gavin on Linda Snopes Kohl is seen in a more mature development. She tells him at her final departure, "I know now I've never really had anybody but

you. I've never really even needed anybody else but you" (420). She has always acknowledged "if it hadn't been for you, probably I wouldn't have got this far" (252). In active involvement, Linda surpasses Gavin, although like him, she is not always effective. She loses her Jewish sculptor husband when they fight in the Spanish Civil War; she returns, handicapped by deafness, to fight the Jefferson civil war, trying diligently to upgrade black education; with the outbreak of World War II, she is compelled to make a contribution and works in a Pascagoula defense plant. Her final act is her indirect involvement in freeing Jefferson of Flem Snopes when she helps see that Mink is released from Parchman. Page sees her motives related to the bitterness she has because Flem used her natural paternal feelings and related to the needed revenge for her mother's sacrifice. Although Page labels Linda an "accomplice in murder," she says "the crime fosters life, for it accomplishes justice."[110]

Eula's suicidal death reflects on the value she places on Linda's welfare as well as her own values. The account of her death in The Mansion portrays the woman Eula as being capable of more than the sexual appeal which is her dominant quality as the young girl in The Hamlet. Polk

[110] Page, p. 172.

sees her as "a very real human being," one who "defends the values of the Jefferson community with her very life." He finds only Linda "worthy of her love" which suggests Eula's home is only a sham, yet as Polk says, Eula "manages courageously and compassionately, to look beyond her own problems." Her sacrifice says she sees "love and fidelity and respect important enough as ideals to want Linda to value them, too, important enough, indeed, to die for them."[111]

There are other minor characters whose lives imply the presence of the virtues. The prosperous Wallstreet Snopes family present at Flem's funeral suggest in their very separation from their family tribe that they have an opposing value system. However, their lives are seen so briefly that the inference is simply that, as Gavin taught Linda, Snopesism can be escaped even by those bearing the name.

Mink provides a glimpse into the lives of Brother J. C. Goodyhay and his congregation; here Mink is held up in his journey to Memphis, yet also befriended. Goodyhay, ex-Marine turned ecumenical preacher, gives Mink work and raises the money stolen from him. In this episode, Mink for once in his tragic life is treated as a worthy human being. Although Goodyhay organizes the building of his

[111] Polk, in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha, pp. 128-29, 132.

church in a military manner, laces his sermons and prayers with profanity, and portrays Christ in an extremely human down-to-earth description, the practical expression of his religion in his treatment of Mink can only be termed compassionate and responsive to the needs of a fellow human being.

In all three novels devoted to the Snopes, there are examples of people whose values and actions diametrically oppose Snopesism. Although the Snopes often overshadow other characters and Faulkner as he said shows hatred, fear, and amusement toward them, he includes among them those who possess the virtues and a few who incorporate them into positive action. V. K. Ratliff views the Snopes from all three vantage points, from Frenchman's Bend to Jefferson, first in a tent and finally in a mansion. He is amused and intrigued by their maneuvers; however, he is also realistic in his awareness of their corruption. Always in his interpretation of them and sometimes in his actions to stop them, he stands for the values they lack. Once the Snopes come into the town of Jefferson, the sophisticated city lawyer joins the country sage in observing and at times combatting Snopesism. Handicapped by idealism, Gavin Stevens lacks Ratliff's wise comprehension of human nature and his sense of when to act and when to merely watch because action would be fruitless. Thus at times Stevens' actions are of no

avail, but on several occasions he is successful in carrying out his convictions. These two are a team against Snopesism in the last two novels. In addition, there are minor examples of the virtues often carried out in major action: Eula's sacrificial death, Eck's recognition of a retarded relative's anguish and his final efforts to find a lost child he hardly knows, Linda's work for oppressed people, Mink's twisted beliefs in man's essential dignity. All state that the worth of the human being and the guarding of the virtues far surpass the worth of a country store, an inheritance, brass fittings, a bank presidency, or a mansion.

Chapter VI

THE LAST NOVELS: GO DOWN, MOSES, INTRUDER IN THE DUST, REQUIEM FOR A NUN, THE REIVERS

In the last two decades of Faulkner's life, he was less prolific. His major critics see his most outstanding achievement accomplished in the creative period from the 1929 publication of The Sound and the Fury to the 1940 publication of The Hamlet. Those works most frequently labeled his masterpieces fall within this period. Faulkner, from his mid-forties until his death in his mid-sixties, was a public literary figure, accepting awards, making speeches, traveling abroad, at times in the role of literary ambassador. At the same time, less pressed financially, he cherished his privacy and spent time with his horses and the events of prestigious Virginia hunt clubs. In the late fifties, he bought a home near his daughter Jill in Richmond, Virginia, and spent several enjoyable semesters as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia. He no longer published a Yoknapatawpha novel every year or every two years as he had done fifteen years earlier, but he did continue to write of his "own little postage stamp of native

soil."[1] In many cases, he returned to the families who had filled earlier works, this time developing as major characters several figures previously only mentioned or briefly portrayed. Although his last Yoknapatawpha works, excluding the final works of the Snopes trilogy, have no central theme or common classification, nonetheless each contains characters who search for the virtues and their practice in positive action. In these final Yoknapatawpha novels, Faulkner's content ranges from adventure to murder to comedy; his tone from serious and philosophic to light and humorous, yet he enlarges on a tendency seen earlier, to establish the quality of enduring, the possession of the verities in the most unlikely characters. Published in 1942, Go Down, Moses, seen by many as a collection of short stories only, treats the love of the land, the hunt, and the guilt of racial history. The young boy who learns the virtues of the wilderness as an adult withdraws into his wilderness and into his idealism. Six years later, Faulkner published a murder mystery, Intruder in the Dust, with an elderly woman and a child capable of an understanding not only of the virtues but also of the daring practice of them for the sake of a black man. In 1951, Requiem for a Nun

[1] William Faulkner, "Interview with Jean Stein Vanden Heuvel," in Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random, 1968), p. 255.

returns to Temple Drake of Sanctuary, but the active verities are found in the black ex-prostitute who serves as her maid as well as in the talk of Gavin Stevens. The final novel, The Reivers, Faulkner described as "one of the funniest books I ever read,"[2] yet the virtues are here, found again in a child's learning experiences, a grandfather, and a prostitute.

Go Down, Moses, according to John Bassett, received quite favorable reviews.[3] In the seven stories that make up Go Down, Moses, Faulkner treats the racial question, the vanishing wilderness, and man's ownership of the land, but throughout all the stories he argues for the need to recognize man's basic humanity, and he emphasizes both directly and indirectly the primary virtue, love. Faulkner's belief in enduring and his illustration of the virtues are handled with a thematic emphasis or a composite statement drawn from many characters' lives and attitudes rather than being embodied in a singular champion. The one dominant character who upholds the virtues is remiss in living them in society. An overview of the seven stories, however,

[2] William Faulkner, "Transcript of Questions and Answers during Press Conference," in Faulkner at West Point, ed. Joseph L. Fant and Robert Ashley (New York: Vintage, 1964), p. 68.

[3] John Bassett, William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 22.

provides proof that the virtues and enduring are addressed in direct and indirect ways.

The opening story, "Was," first introduces Isaac McCaslin and his love for the woods despite his having denied his ownership. Ike, pictured here well past seventy, is seen de-emphasizing the material; he "owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man's but all men's."[4] The story abruptly shifts to the previous generation, Ike's parents included, and a comic tale, the only humorous story of the seven, of two parallel chase plots; one, the unorthodox white masters Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy trying to capture their slave who is in love with a slave girl on a nearby plantation and, two, the desperate attempts of Uncle Buck to escape the plot of the spinster mistress of the neighboring plantation, abetted by her brother, to catch a husband. The greatest humor is found in the husband chase when Uncle Buck by great mistake crawls into Miss Sophonsiba's bed. The complications of both situations are settled in a card game. Human beings are comically gambled over to decide for a white couple and a black their fates and their homes, either a run-down plantation labeled by the old maid mistress as Warwick for

[4] William Faulkner, Go Down, Moses (1940; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 3. All further references to this work appear in the text.

the British castle or a slave cabin located behind the big house in which the slaves are locked every night, by the front door latch only. Despite the humorous action and the amusing setting, there is a disturbing factor, the white's disregard for the feelings of the slave Tomey's Turl and his beloved Tennie. The chase, complete with horses and hounds, has an animal, not human, atmosphere. For Tomey's Turl, never fully portrayed, love is clearly the motive, and the denial of humanity, the obstacle.

In "The Fire and the Hearth" the character focus is on Lucas Beauchamp, one of the children of Tomey's Turl and Tennie. Now an adult, farming the land owned by his white relatives and married to Molly, Lucas claims the right to be recognized as a human being and maintains a strong sense of dignity. The symbolic hearth fire represents the love shared by Lucas and Molly, "the fire which was to burn on the hearth until neither he nor Molly were left to feed it" (47). Their love is tested by the landlord's power as well as Lucas' greed, yet ultimately love is triumphant. The first test comes early in their marriage when Molly is called to the big house to nurse and care for Zack Edmonds' infant, left motherless at birth. After six months, Lucas approaches Zack to say, "I wants my wife. I needs her at home" (46), and finally after the unspoken accusations are denied by Edmonds, Lucas states, "I'm a nigger. . . . But

I'm a man too" (47). The situation is a bitter one for Lucas; his revenge is seen in violent threats, and his anguish at his wife's dual role is obvious; however, he endures with dignity. Much of the story relates lighter incidents in which Lucas' shrewd, discreet, and successful twenty-year career of selling homemade whiskey is halted by his worthless son-in-law, George Wilkins. In contrast to George, Lucas maintains his dignity even when caught violating a direct command of his landlord. More significant is the episode when Lucas is an old man carried away with the prospect of finding gold with an expensive divining machine. For a time obsessed with his greed and refusing to listen to reason, Lucas falters and in his wife's opinion is "sick in the mind now" (101). In her desperate feeling of futility, she requests her freedom, a divorce. Only after she almost loses her life does Lucas inform the Chancellor, "We dont want no voce. . . . I done changed my mind" (128). He marches out of court, tells Edmonds to wait, and crosses to the stores, "erect beneath the old, fine, well-cared-for hat, walking with that unswerving and dignified deliberation which every now and then, and with something sharp at the heart, Edmonds recognized as having come from his own ancestry too as the hat had come" (129). He returns and places his purchase, a nickel's worth of soft candy, in Molly's hand, and that night he takes

Edmonds the machine, telling him to "Get rid of it. . . . Clean off this place, where I wont never see it again" (130). Volpe says Lucas "asserts his integrity and individuality by acting as a man rather than a Negro."[5] Blotner praises his "stature and power" and points to his "indomitable pride and independence."[6] In Vickery's viewpoint, Lucas is in charge of his life; he "creates his own world, his own modes of actions and beliefs." Even though Molly almost leaves him, he overcomes his craze for money and returns to be "the man in his house, the head of his family" with the hearth fire he never extinguishes symbolizing "the sanctity of home."[7] Thus the overall impression Lucas makes is one of human worth, and the virtue he most effectively illustrates is dignity in the face of hardship and resentment. His marriage reveals the sustaining power of love, seen from both his commitment and Molly's.

In "Pantaloon in Black," the third story, Faulkner departs from McCaslin genealogy but stays with the themes of love and injustice. Rider, a young black sawmill worker, has been transformed by his love for Mannie. Once a wild

[5] Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Octagon Books, 1978), pp. 235-36.

[6] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), II, 1078-79.

[7] Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1964), p. 128.

and reckless youth, he put that lifestyle aside, married Mannie, and "built a fire on the hearth on their wedding night as the tale told how Uncle Lucas Beauchamp, Edmonds' oldest tenant, had done on his forty-five years ago and which had burned ever since" (138). Just beginning this secure life of love and stability, Rider is devastated when Mannie dies suddenly; he is beyond consolation in his grief. Attempting to escape his pain first in the extreme expending of physical energy, then in alcohol, and finally in drunken gambling, Rider murders a white man who continually cheats his companions with loaded dice. The final assessment of Rider is made by the deputy sheriff who witnessed the lynching of Rider, carried out by the card shark's relatives. His total misinterpretation of Rider subtly underscores Faulkner's call for humanity. The deputy in disgusted tones tells the story to his wife who spent the afternoon in sophisticated card cheating. Blotner says the deputy misreads Rider's story because he is "unable to credit a Negro with such grief at bereavement" and sees the story as one of Faulkner's "most powerful" as he attempts "to penetrate the inner lives of the Negroes."[8] In contrast to the deputy is Rider's elderly aunt who raised him. Her compassion and understanding are obvious as she tries

[8] Blotner, II, 1038.

to reason with the drunken Rider. Only to her does he acknowledge that nothing, not even the searing liquor, can ease his pain, admitting, "Nome. . . . Hit aint done me no good" (150). Her love for and loyalty to Rider extend to following the lawmen who try to prevent the lynching; she is determined to be present and is in the cell Rider demolishes. Volpe sees "Pantaloon in Black" serving a "climactic function" with the first two stories as preludes and the following four as "thematically derived from the basic recognition of the equal humanity of the Negro."[9]

The fourth story, "The Old People" introduces Isaac McCaslin, an eager lad who experiences his first response to the big woods, his first killing of a deer, and the ritualistic ceremony that accompanies that killing; through all the events, Ike is positively influenced by the wise guidance of old Sam Fathers. Both the boy and his mentor reveal the virtues inherent in the life in the woods; the hunt becomes the proving ground for manhood. In this brief episode, Ike steps on the threshold, first responding with

> an unforgettable sense of the big woods--not a quality dangerous or particularly inimical, but profound, sentient, gigantic and brooding, amid which he had been permitted to go to and fro at will, unscathed, why he knew not, but dwarfed and, until he had drawn honorably blood worthy of being drawn, alien. (175-76)

[9] Volpe, p. 235.

Then with the killing of the buck and the blood ceremony Sam ritualistically administers, Isaac feels "marked forever" with

> the first worthy blood which had been found at last worthy to draw, joining him and the man would continue to live past the boy's seventy years and then eighty years, long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it. (165)

With this rites-of-passage experience, Isaac, although only twelve, feels that "that morning something had happened to him: in less than a second he had ceased forever to be the child he was yesterday" (181).

The mixed blood and Indian heritage of Sam Fathers is traced here, revealing his slave mother and outcast image. Yet in his solitary dignity and wisdom of the woods, he proves worthy as Ike's teacher. Richardson says he becomes Ike's "spiritual father."[10] Margaret Walker Alexander recognizes Sam's humility before nature and calls him "the only fit tutor for Ike."[11] John Lydenberg sees Sam as the "high priest . . . alone . . . trusted with the tutelage of the young neophyte." He sees Sam as having the rare

[10] Kenneth E. Richardson, Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner (Paris: Mouton and Co., 1967), p. 47.

[11] Margaret Walker Alexander, "Faulkner and Race," in The Maker and the Myth: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha (Jackson, Miss.: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1978), p. 106.

capacity to possess both pride and humility simultaneously and feels he instills these in Ike.[12] Isaac, son of Uncle Buck and Miss Sophonsiba and thus directly descended from old Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, and Sam Fathers, son of the last Chickasaw chief and a slave woman, bring into focus positive qualities of manhood. The qualities receive full exercise in the environment of the hunt and life in the big woods.

A broader view of the application of what Sam teaches and what Isaac learns is found in the longest narrative in Go Down, Moses, "The Bear." Here in addition to the hunters, including old General Compson and Major DeSpain, is the great bear "Old Ben" called by O'Connor "an apotheosis of the old wild life known to the Chickasaws before man hacked away at the forest."[13] In their hunting for Old Ben, Sam leads Isaac into a deeper awareness of the virtues honored in this environment. Isaac progresses in his knowledge of the terrain as well as self-knowledge when he leaves behind first the gun and then the watch and compass.

[12] John Lydenberg, "Nature Myth in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" in Bear, Man, and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's "The Bear," ed. Frances Lee Utley, Lynn Z. Bloom, and Arthur F. Kinney (New York: Random, 1964), pp. 283, 288-89.

[13] William Van O'Connor, "The Wilderness Theme in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1960), p. 324.

When he is no longer tainted with man-made objects and depends solely on self, he sees the bear. With the finding of the first right dog for the hunting of Ben, the great tradition ends. Ben is brought down by the knife of Boon, fiercely defending Lion, the dog; Ben's death is followed by that of Lion, and several days later by that of Sam Fathers, who falls motionless in the woods when Old Ben's life is over. With the loss of Ben, animal master of the wilderness, and Sam, human master, much is gone from the annual hunt.

In the following story, "Delta Autumn," set years later, the loss and change are felt dramatically as Isaac, now approaching eighty, accompanies a hunting party in much the same role that Sam Fathers served for him. Here the theme of the vanishing wilderness is emphasized, but the plea for humanity inferred by Sam's position in the earliest chapter is voiced more directly late in the novel. While all are away on the hunt, Isaac, left in camp, delivers a money settlement to the black mistress of Roth Edmonds. Realizing the plight of this mother and child, Isaac gives her the treasured horn left to him in General Compson's will, but the woman longs for intangible values, not money or symbols. She departs with a painful question: "Old man, . . . have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you dont remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?" (363).

Throughout the three stories which focus on the hunt in the woods, Isaac has been viewed from a boy of twelve to an old man in his seventies; Sam Fathers has been seen from his move to the solitary life in the woods until his death. The relationship of these two, a strong affection of teacher to pupil, even surrogate father to son, weaves through all three stories, with Sam's influence, as Ike had predicted, lasting long after his life on earth. With the exception of their relationship to each other, the primary virtue love has been neglected in the lives of both, as the forceful question posed by Edmonds' mistress suggests. The virtues of courage, honor, and pride have held top priority in the learning and living of the camp community. Their application has encompassed the animal kingdom and the land itself. Compassion, pity, and sacrifice, usually heading a Faulkner listing of virtues, seem the least significant in the lives of Isaac, Sam, and their associates. The absence of this primary virtue and the positive action that its presence ensures may explain the failure of Isaac to prevail.

In Lewis Leary's opinion, Isaac learns "to respect the great wilderness land and the creatures in it, and to know that face to face with nature all men are equal." He also mentions Isaac's putting aside his inheritance as an adult

and his belief that the land belongs to all.[14] R. W. B. Lewis speaks of Isaac's dissociating himself "from his own particular corrupt legacy" and describes the simple life he lives near the forest.[15] For this, Robert Penn Warren finds fault with Isaac; he sees some parallel to Roth Edmonds' paying for his mistress, suggesting that in neither case "can the consequences of crime be commuted by money."[16] Brooks contends that Isaac is not meant as ideal in his repudiating act, and in response to the question on love, Brooks terms Isaac a failure.[17] Millgate sees the repudiating itself as the cause of his failure; he sees Isaac's life resting in "negation" since he "rejects all opportunities for affirmation." He fails in action even though much of what he says is right. Millgate also notes his failure "to pass on to younger men even the practical training he received from Sam Fathers" and cites as evidence Roth's killing of a doe as "Delta Autumn" ends.[18] Lydenberg

[14] Lewis Leary, William Faulkner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), p. 145.

[15] R. W. B. Lewis, "William Faulkner: The Hero in the New World," in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 211.

[16] Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: The South, the Negro, and Time," in Critical Essays, p. 265.

[17] Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), p. 274.

[18] Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random, 1966), pp. 208-211.

feels that Isaac takes the route of withdrawal when he finds he cannot do anything to lift the curse the South put on itself. In Lydenberg's view, Isaac chose purity with its price of noninvolvement; he learns how to "retain his purity and bring himself into harmony with the forces of Nature" through Sam's guidance.[19] Page sees the price as greater than noninvolvement and states, "Man cannot escape the evil of life without sacrificing life itself."[20] Vickery says in "rejecting sin, Isaac also rejects humanity." In his withdrawal he evades "both the guilt of his forefathers and his own responsibilities."[21] David H. Stewart describes the life Isaac finds after having repudiated the land and written off the guilt of slavery with money and a horn; Stewart says he "constantly evades responsibility to his fellow men, lives alone, isolated, impotent, ineffectual, and childless."[22] Even though Richardson recognizes the virtues Isaac possesses and understands his repudiation of his forefathers' sins, Richardson also points out that Isaac takes "no action to correct

[19] Lydenberg, in Bear, Man, and God, pp. 281, 283.

[20] Sally R. Page, Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning (Deland, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, Inc., 1972), p. 187.

[21] Olga W. Vickery, "God's Moral Order and the Problem of Ike's Redemption," in Bear, Man, and God, pp. 326-27.

[22] David H. Stewart, "The Purpose of Faulkner's Ike," in Bear, Man, and God, p. 332.

abuses" and says he "in a way . . . selfishly seeks a monastic life to escape from the public expressions of courage and love demanded of a true redeemer."[23] Kerr interprets that his "heart remained in the forest," that he substituted a dream for involvement and "missed the realities of love."[24] Herbert A. Perluck argues that man "may only choose life" and says Isaac achieves "a sainthood of unsuccess." Isaac, he says, "ascends without comprehending wherein that only 'sainthood' man is allowed resides: in the anguished, complex heart."[25]

Thus Isaac, exposed early to several virtues and their active cultivation, nonetheless, fails because he lacks the basic virtue of the heart, love. Although his act of repudiation is founded on the concept of brotherhood, he cannot practice the concept fully in daily living. His retreat into the protection of noninvolvement is akin to Horace Benbow's and Gavin Stevens' retreat into idealism and Gail Hightower's withdrawal into "his immunity." All fear the practice of love in positive, individual action.

[23] Richardson, p. 58.

[24] Elizabeth M. Kerr, William Faulkner's Gothic Domain (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1979), pp. 157, 161, 158.

[25] Herbert A. Perluck, "The Heart's Driving Complexity: An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" in Bear, Man, and God, pp. 303, 302.

In the title story that concludes Go Down, Moses, the narrative leaves the hunt atmosphere and focuses on the love, loyalty, and grief of Molly Beauchamp, elderly wife of Lucas. She walks to Jefferson and, with a disturbing intuition, approaches Gavin Stevens' law office for help in finding her missing grandson. Gavin coincidentally finds that the boy, frequently jailed and caught stealing when in Jefferson, is now awaiting execution for murdering a Chicago policeman. In his office, he finds an elderly white woman, Miss Worsham, whose devotion to Mollie has no hint of superiority, only compassion and concern. Informed by Gavin, Miss Worsham questions, "Can nothing be done? . . . Mollie and I were born in the same month. We grew up as sisters" (375). Both Gavin and Miss Worsham take positive action as they attempt to lessen the unavoidable pain and grief by protecting Mollie from the truth of the circumstances of the boy's death. Furthermore, Gavin goes all over town raising the needed funds to bring the body home in the dignified manner that would please Mollie, his acts clearly very benevolent. His visit to convey his sympathy, however, is very uncomfortable, and he apologizes for coming, "I ask you to forgive me. I should have known. I shouldn't have come" (381). However, his call is made to Miss Worsham's house where Mollie has been accepted in love and with her grief shared. When the train with the body

arrives, Miss Worsham and Mollie ride in Gavin's car with the hired driver while Gavin rides with the editor of the paper. Even though Gavin cannot measure up to the love obvious in Miss Worsham, he acts with charity and evidently leads many members of the community to do likewise. Although he does not fully comprehend Mollie's emotion, her loyal devotion more impressive because it is undeserved and perhaps unreturned, still Gavin far surpasses the callous response of the deputy who completely misreads Rider's grief in "Pantaloon in Black." The final story recognizes the humanity and dignity of an elderly black woman, a murderer, a poor white woman, and a lawyer with an European education.

In all seven stories woven in and out of the McCaslin genealogy, the human heart is often found as Faulkner would say "in conflict with itself," but Isaac explains in "The Bear" how to arrive at truth by saying, "The heart already knows" (260). The implication is that those who follow the promptings of the heart and carry out those dictates in positive action discover life at its fullest. By the very dedication of the volume to Mammy Caroline Barr, who was a special part of Faulkner's life from childhood through adulthood, he suggests that there are no qualifications for the fullness of life except the fullness of heart, filled with the virtues. His tribute honors Caroline Barr, "who

was born in slavery and who gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love" (dedication page).

In Intruder in the Dust, published in 1948, Faulkner uses the conflict in the heart of a sixteen-year-old boy to show the worth and dignity of human life. Charles Mallison comes to grips with his individual response to humanity regardless of that of the society he lives in. Although the novel is rarely included in the best of Faulkner, Hoffman speaks of the "abundance of reviews,"[26] and Bassett notes that it exceeded previous works in sales plus the selling of movie rights to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.[27] With murder and strange repeated burials in the plot, the novel was labeled a murder mystery and an adventure story; however, Blotner points out that the "story's deeper level lay in the realm of morality."[28]

The moral issue is based on the developing relationship of Chick Mallison, Gavin Stevens' nephew, and Lucas Beauchamp of "The Fire and the Hearth." In their first real meeting, Chick, a boy of twelve on a hunting trip, is befriended by Lucas Beauchamp, a dignified black man living on his share of the McCaslin land. Taken into Lucas'

[26] Frederick J. Hoffman, "Part One: The Growth of a Reputation," in Three Decades, p. 21.

[27] Bassett, p. 29. [28] Blotner, II, 1249.

modest home, Chick is clothed and fed "what obviously was to be Lucas' dinner."[29] Chick's condescending manner followed by his awkward attempt to pay for Lucas' hospitality gravely offends this proud black man. Rather obsessed with freeing himself of his obligations to Lucas, Chick later sends several gifts to Lucas and his wife Molly, but Lucas responds with a jug of molasses, refusing to let Chick so easily discharge his debt. Against this background of subtle tension between man and boy, the crucial test of daring and selfless involvement is accomplished. When Lucas ia accused of killing Vinson Gowrie, a white man, he sends for Gavin Stevens. Chick is there in the jail to hear their conversation, but he returns later alone. Now Lucas, revealing only what he chooses, tries to hire Chick to dig up the victim and look at him. Although Chick tells his uncle, Gavin dismisses the task with rational and legal conclusions, and Chick is left in a dilemma. He fights the desire to flee until the predicted lynching has taken place; instead he carries out Lucas' request, accompanied by his frequent black companion, Aleck Sander, also sixteen, and the elderly Miss Eunice Habersham, who overheard the conversation while visiting Gavin. The three, with Chick's

[29] William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York: Modern Library, 1949), p. 13. All further references to this work appear in the text.

horse and Miss Habersham's truck, make a courageous midnight trip into the lawless territory of Beat Four and find the wrong man buried. The account from such an unlikely trio is believed by Sheriff Hope Hampton, who concludes, "You wouldn't come here at four oclock in the morning with a tale like that if it wasn't so" (109). These three set in motion an investigation that reveals the double-crossing acts of the Gowrie boys and eventually frees Lucas. In the conversations that follow the discovery of Lucas' innocence, Gavin and Chick continue to reflect on the moral issues and the responses of human beings. Lucas returns to town the following Saturday determined to pay Gavin for his legal services. In their stated beliefs, and even more so in their acts, the major characters of Intruder in the Dust exhibit the Faulkner virtues.

Lucas Beauchamp, with his determined claim to manhood, engenders the philosophy on the virtues as well as their performance. In their first encounter, Chick remembers what he has heard of Lucas' heritage, ". . . how the man was the son of one of old Carothers McCaslin's, Edmonds' great grandfather's, slaves who had not been just old Carothers' slave but his son too" (7). Lucas always appears in town in a black suit and white shirt, worn but obviously of good quality; he wears "a worn handmade beaver such as his grandfather had paid thirty and forty dollars apiece

for" and set at a rakish angle; he carries "a gold tooth-pick such as his own grandfather had used" and has "a heavy gold watchchain" (12). In addition to these items, his proud carriage is evidence of his attitude. Volpe comments on his "pride in his ancestry" and notes his strength and arrogance.[30] Charles Glicksberg calls him "a man not to be contradicted"; he is "self-composed and sure of himself."[31] His solitary composure remains even in the face of possible lynching. Chick notes with a negative reaction that he is asleep when he and Gavin enter the cell. Howe points out that "only he remains calm, stolid, almost indifferent." Howe also notes his refusal to explain himself, give details or "to talk candidly to his lawyer" he sent for.[32] In Edmund Wilson's opinion, Lucas possesses a pride so rigid "he can hardly bring himself to stoop to defend himself."[33] His keen sense of human nature is verified, however. He tells the intellectual Gavin very little but places great trust in Chick, a mere boy. Campbell and

[30] Volpe, p. 256.

[31] Charles Glicksberg, "Review," in Critical Heritage, p. 344.

[32] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 100.

[33] Edmund Wilson, "William Faulkner's Reply to the Civil-Rights Program," in Critical Essays, p. 219.

Foster say that he "endures the imminent danger of lynching and emerges unyielding, free, and recalcitrant, stolid, and stoic to the very last."[34] Seyppel sees the novel's focus on Lucas and discounts the detective label, saying the book is written as a "psychological and moral study of man under duress."[35] Examined in this light, Lucas emerges not just innocent but triumphant. Kerr calls him heroic "in his fortitude and courage" and says he refuses to lose "his dignity even to save his life."[36] Howe sees him as "Faulkner's tribute to strength, suffering, patience."[37] As Leary points out, even after Lucas is freed, he maintains his proud dignity, refusing "to grovel or accept favors from any man."[38] Howe says he "asserts his claim to both equality and continued recalcitrance" by insisting on paying Gavin legal fees.[39] According to Millgate, his is an "invincible independence."[40] In Seyppel's opinion, Lucas comes close to "being a thesis on the inviolability of human dignity as exemplified by the most unsuitable and

[34] Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, William Faulkner (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 144.

[35] Joachim Seyppel, William Faulkner (New York: Frederick Ungar Co., 1971), p. 81.

[36] Kerr, p. 169. [37] Howe, p. 100.

[38] Leary, p. 175. [39] Howe, p. 102.

[40] Millgate, p. 220.

most thankless object--'a dirty nigger.'"[41] According to Margaret Alexander, a black writer and scholar, Lucas Beauchamp is, in the opinion of black readers, Faulkner's greatest black. He "almost never begs the question of his humanity," but "repeatedly asserts his manhood."[42]

Within the major storyline Lucas is seen as the motive for the actions of others; he serves as an object of concern. The window of the jail he is housed in is pictured more frequently than Lucas himself. He strides into town before the murder charge, but his pilgrimages are only once a year. He comes soon after he is free of the charge to pay Gavin Stevens. Always he is seen alone, a solitary and silent figure. To Gavin, he admits without apology that he is friendless, "'I aint got friends,' Lucas said with stern and inflexible pride" (64). Lucas with his detached manner makes few opportunities to involve himself with his fellowman, black or white, yet the initial occasion with Chick shows his compassion even in his harshness. The sorrow he obviously experiences after the death of his wife Molly indicates his capacity for love. Chick, troubled by Lucas' failure to acknowledge his presence during a trip to town, finally figures out that "He was grieving" (25). Even

[41] Seyppel, p. 82.

[42] Alexander, in The Maker and the Myth, pp. 112-13, 115.

though there are only limited glimpses of the virtue love, Lucas provides a strong example of dignity, pride, and honor. These serve him well, for he endures the most trying circumstances and never relinquishes these virtues. If he does not engage in positive action, still he must be credited with sensitivity, for he places his faith in the right people and inspires their good deeds in his behalf.

Lucas sends for Gavin Stevens through a direct request to his nephew who watches Lucas' entry into the jail. From Gavin he seeks advice and explanations of what to expect from the legal process. He is aware of Gavin's position as County Attorney, but he is also aware of Gavin as a person. Admitting to Lucas the likely violent threat of the angry Gowries, Gavin offers to spend the night, but Lucas turns down his offer with "I reckon not. . . . They kept me up all last night and I'm gonter try to get some sleep. If you stay here you'll talk till morning" (65). Obviously Lucas knows Gavin well. He requests from him paid advice and reserves for his nephew the request for action.

Lucas informs Gavin of his awareness of foul play among the Gowries in a lumber business deal but makes no specific statement in his own defense. Gavin never considers his possible innocence but moves into involved speculation of Lucas' acts, drawing probable conclusions, all wrong. Furthermore, once he has explained these acts

to his own satisfaction, Gavin states Lucas' plea and predicts with an assumed authority the judgment and sentence as well as Lucas' death before his parole eligibility. As Vickery concludes, Gavin thinks it likely that he will lose Lucas at anytime; he views his "problems in legal terms" even before he asks him what happened.[43] In the opinion of most critics, Gavin's strengths are overshadowed by his excessive talking. Hoffman says he talks too much and acts too little. He recognizes the worth of his ideas but suggests that just wisdom is not enough. In Hoffman's view, "his verbosity overwhelms a set of simple truths in which Faulkner does genuinely believe."[44] Wilson says he "delivers absurd, strident lectures."[45] Swiggart states that Gavin is "allowed to discuss at length redeeming actions that, as a rational adult, he is incapable of performing."[46] Once Chick has listened to Lucas' request and gone on a frightening mission Gavin readily dismissed, Gavin then joins the cause and takes appropriate action. He is also capable of admitting his failure to listen. He

[43] Vickery, p. 137.

[44] Frederick J. Hoffman, William Faulkner (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 37, 101.

[45] Wilson, in Critical Essays, p. 228.

[46] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), p. 18.

explains to Chick's father why Chick did not inform him earlier, "Because you wouldn't have believed him either. . . . You wouldn't have listened either" (126).

Ironically the greatest service Gavin performs in the novel is, nonetheless, that of listener and lecturer. The same affectionate relationship found in other novels with Gavin and Chick exists here, and clearly Chick admires and respects his uncle's views. When Lucas is freed and the numerous townspeople and countrypeople quickly depart, Chick is extremely disillusioned, hurt by their capacity to shrug off the error and injustice of their recent thoughts. Gavin becomes the sounding board, the therapeutic listener, and although his verbal responses are tediously long and overblown, they enable Chick to reevaluate his bitterness, to deal with it more effectively. Gavin supports Chick with his understanding, telling him, "Yes. Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and sham. No matter how young you are or how old you have got" (206).

From all indications, the Charles Mallison seen here from twelve until sixteen will develop into a man unwilling to bear the injustice and dishonor and willing to act with courage to uphold his convictions. He is not only responsive in a positive way to the needs of a fellow human being,

but he reacts strongly to the mass of people who turn their backs on the virtues. Through the events in these crucial years in his growing up, Chick is learning about himself and his own values, but he also learns to view his idolized uncle more realistically and to comprehend the community at large. Even though he experiences repeated impulses to run rather than help Lucas and later is tempted to turn bitter and cynical in his view of society at large, he does neither. He emerges a wiser if perhaps sadder young man. Vickery describes his initial "rage and indignation upon discovering that his people "are less than perfect." This realization threatens "to catapult him, like Isaac McCaslin, into self-willed isolation," she says. She sees Chick's "spiritual and cultural return to society" at the same time that he realizes "that each individual is responsible for all men's thoughts and actions." He accepts his place and his time "as the framework within which he must maintain his humanity." Vickery gives Gavin Stevens credit for reconciling his views with community life but also points out that Gavin profits from Chick's pronounced reaction. In her view, Chick's "acceptance of responsibility prompts a change of attitude in the older rather complacent Gavin."[47] Millgate sees Gavin, as first presented,

[47] Vickery, p. 249.

suffering "from those characteristic limitations of his time, class, and environment which Charles Mallison manages through youth and innocence to transcend." However, Gavin grows also, according to Millgate, because he "takes to himself the truths his nephew discovers, absorbs them into his thinking," and as the novel closes, he "speaks with the authority of this new wisdom."[48]

Surely both uncle and nephew are better men because of the experience with Lucas, but Gavin Stevens, a middle-aged, well-educated lawyer, is firmly established in his role as primarily a talker. Even though he may reevaluate his thinking, he is not likely to alter drastically a lifestyle of inactivity. On the other hand, Chick, just starting to mature, is pliable, only beginning to form his values and patterns of living. His committed involvement in the interest of another human being may establish him initially as one who acts.

When Lucas tells Chick what he intends to do, Chick's first reaction is serious reluctance. Perhaps from both the time factor and the courage factor, he feels inadequate. He tells Lucas, "I'll have to get out there and dig him up and get back to town before midnight or one oclock and maybe even midnight will be too late. I dont see how I can

[48] Millgate, p. 215.

do it. I can't do it" (73). On further deliberation, Chick realizes he cannot dwell on doubts but must act. He concludes that "the reason he was going out there was that somebody had to and nobody else would. . ." (83). Supported by Miss Habersham, who is determined from the first hearing, and Aleck Sander, who has just joined the group, before he realizes it, Chick carries out the assignment skillfully. In Swiggart's view, the three "act intuitively"; with the two young boys and an elderly woman, there is a disregard of logical evidence.[49] Howe sees the innocence the trio possess as essential, saying that "the mission in behalf of Lucas Beauchamp can be undertaken only by boys who have not yet been contaminated by, or old ladies who have learned to move beyond, the ordinary social world."[50] Once committed, they move with purpose, never giving thought to turning back even though it is a dangerous situation, an invasion not only of a grave but of hostile territory. The success is even more impressive when the task and those who perform it are considered:

> . . . but that it remained for them, a white youth of sixteen and a Negro one of the same and an old white spinster of seventy to elect and do at the same time the two things out of all man's vast reserve of invention and capability that Beat Four would repudiate and retaliate on most

[49] Swiggart, pp. 18-19. [50] Howe, p. 101.

> violently: to violate the grave of one of its progeny in order to save a nigger murderer from its vengeance. (94)

The immediate result of their bravery is to save Lucas, but for Chick, all along there have been additional issues involved. Hoffman says that Lucas "challenges Mallison throughout his life to set aside his conventional views of what a Negro is and to treat him as a man instead." The murder of Vinson Gowrie provides the final occasion, "the most crucial stage in the struggle to understand what he as a white man must be to Lucas, a Negro." Herein, Hoffman says, is the crux of the novel, to reevaluate the Negro's status, from mere label to humanity. Thus Chick's role is "not only to prove Lucas innocent of murder, but also to convince himself that the stereotype is ineffectual."[51] Volpe pictures Chick in a psychological conflict, "torn between the impulses of his heart and his allegiance to the racial code. The truth the heart reveals is the Negro as equal human being; the code proclaims the Negro inferior." Listing Chick's sensitivity, his impressionability, and his honesty, Volpe concludes that Chick "cannot ignore the truth his heart perceives."[52] Richard P. Adams compares Chick's coming to terms with his own beliefs

[51] Hoffman, Faulkner, pp. 99-101, 30.

[52] Volpe, pp. 255-56.

to that of Huck Finn. They are "forced to choose between social formulas and human feelings." Both, he says, reject "the prejudice of society in favor of immediate personal commitments," and both are made to "recognize the unalienable rights and the unassailable dignity of the individual human being."[53]

To many of his townsmen, Chick is the hero because he dared to lead an elderly lady and a black boy on a daring expedition. For this, he must be given credit for saving Lucas' life. With Chick's own development in mind, his greatest glory is based on his reliance on his heart to lead. Here the virtues of compassion, pity, and sacrifice reside. In contrast, Gavin, more dependent on his head to lead him, was unable to respond as Chick did. Chick also exhibits integrity and dignity. His experience confirms his belief in the sacredness of human life. If Chick holds to the position seen now developing, rarely should he need to run home in shame for having wronged his fellowman; his bitter disappointment as he witnesses this in the people on the square indicates even more the likelihood of his meeting life with the virtues intact.

[53] Richard P. Adams, "The Apprenticeship of William Faulkner," in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), p. 37.

Miss Eunice Habersham is a fine example of one who "never stopped refusing to bear the injustice and outrage" as Gavin advised Chick. Surely she provides for Chick the active example of the values Gavin verbalizes. Named Miss Worsham in Go Down, Moses, her connection here is also the childhood relationship of growing up as a sister to Molly, the now deceased wife of Lucas. Kerr says her motivation is "love and loyalty" and explains that Miss Habersham is certain that Molly's husband is not a murderer. Her good qualities are numerous; Kerr names "courage, loyalty, integrity, and compassion, . . . self-respect and independence" evidenced by her means of supporting herself. Categorizing Miss Habersham with Granny Millard and Miss Jenny in her ability to represent "the best in the old tradition," Kerr also praises her for her ability to "adapt to change and live in the present."[54] Chick stops for a moment in the midst of shoveling dirt from the grave and sees "as always Miss Habersham in motionless silhouette on the sky above him in the straight cotton dress and the round hat on the exact top of her head such as few people had seen in fifty years and probably no one at any time looking up out of a halfway rifled grave" (103). Her very presence here indicates the virtues she possesses. Vickery says she should have stayed in the safety of the Mallison

[54] Kerr, p. 170.

house, "unimplicated and uninvolved," but she pays no attention to the apparent facts and "rejects Stevens' neat analysis of Lucas' situation and its legal consequences." This is because she is "moved by something more compelling than logic and propriety." In spite of Gavin's arguments, Miss Habersham values human relationships and "basic intuitions."[55] She too is more governed by heart than by head. Once she has managed the all night investigation with the two young boys, she refuses to be dismissed by the adults. When the suggestion is made to take her home so that she can sleep, "Miss Habersham in the front seat with his uncle said 'Pah.' That was all. She didn't curse. She didn't need to" (116). It is Gavin's idea that she guard the entrance to the jail, an assignment she accepts if she can first get her mending. Fully in command of the situation, she insists, "Drive me home first. . . . I aint going to sit there all morning doing nothing so that Miss Tubbs will think she has to talk to me" (118). In on the details of the investigation to the last, Miss Habersham reveals her feeling for all humanity, not just the old tie to Lucas; this is seen in her strong reaction to the desperate hiding of the murdered brother. She repeats with a strong sense of outrage the fact that even the double-crossing Gowrie

[55] Vickery, p. 140.

was thrown in quicksand. Edmund Wilson says the old lady of best local quality "proves herself a dear, gallant old thoroughbred."[56]

The final member of the team, Aleck Sander, is to Chick what Ringo is to Bayard in The Unvanquished. In on the venture against his better judgment and almost before he realizes it, Aleck Sander remains uncomfortable throughout. Responding to Miss Habersham's disquietude, he suggests, "You aint the one. . . . It's just half a mile back to the truck. Down hill too" (101). Nonetheless, it is Aleck Sander whose keen hearing and analytical thinking provide needed clues to the mystery. Although he is a minor character, his presence is significant, for he lacks the personal motive that Chick and Miss Habersham share and he voices the most fear and hesitation. Still, he overcomes the fear, perhaps in simple loyalty to his friend Chick.

The unlikely trio undoubtedly provide interesting subject matter for many Yoknapatawpha retellings of their rescue mission; more than likely they are seen all the way from glory-seeking heroes to liberal fools. Those who would see them clearly must acknowledge that their deeds were selfless and daring; motivated by their beliefs in humanity, they were guided by their hearts.

[56] Wilson, in Critical Essays, p. 338.

In 1951, Faulkner published Requiem for a Nun, a work that reinforces the idea of listening to the heart. Interspersed with long historical passages on the legal institutions of man, the courthouse and the jail specifically, the story focus is, nonetheless, on several characters whose lives explore the individual response to enduring rather than the response of society at large. Their story is presented in dramatic form. Here Gavin Stevens dares to leave his professional security to assume the role of leadership in matters of the heart. As in Intruder in the Dust, Gavin is involved with a black accused of murder; however, here the misunderstanding concerns motive rather than guilt. Of greater significance is his attempt to rescue the marriage and the guilt-ridden lives of his nephew Gowan Stevens and his wife, the former Temple Drake. Their guilt stems from the events of Sanctuary. Leary sees Requiem for a Nun as a "kind of moral expiation" for Sanctuary.[57] At the time of its publication shortly following Faulkner's receiving the Nobel Prize and other awards, the reception of the book was positive. Bassett says with Faulkner on a literary pedestal, reviewers were reluctant to belittle him, yet seen in the total Faulkner canon, Requiem for a Nun is "rarely considered major Faulkner" now.[58]

[57] Leary, p. 37. [58] Bassett, p. 34.

Even though the novel as a whole may not be classified among Faulkner's masterpieces, it does contain characters who exhibit and argue for the virtues. Some of these are characteristically the least likely; one such is Nancy Mannigoe, the black prostitute maid of Temple Drake Stevens; Nancy is the nun of the title and may be compared to Dilsey of The Sound and the Fury. The story opens in the courtroom with Nancy standing alone; her lawyer Gavin is seated nearby. Nancy is found guilty of the murder of the infant of Gowan and Temple Drake Stevens and is sentenced to hang on the thirteenth day of March, four months away. Nancy calmly accepts her sentence, yet her lawyer Gavin goes directly to the Gowan Stevens' home, probes for information, and tries his theories on Temple. His visit is unproductive, and the Stevens, with their remaining child, a four-year-old son, leave for an extended tour. A week before the scheduled hanging, Gavin sends Temple a haunting telegram, and she returns to Jefferson. On the eve of the execution, Temple, prompted by the firm guidance of Gavin, goes with him to the Governor's mansion with a plea of clemency for Nancy. Rather than save Nancy's life, Temple, pressured relentlessly by Gavin, begins to save her own. She is not aware that Gavin has arranged for her husband to hear her soul-searching account of her past, her relationship to Nancy, and Nancy's selfless motives. Temple reveals

her past, the plot of Sanctuary, admits her voluntary participation in evil, acknowledges her love for Red, Popeye's stand-in, and concedes she hired Nancy after her marriage to Gowan not only as maid and nurse but as confidant. Nancy, well aware of Temple's past nature, witnesses Temple's being lured from the respectable role of wife and mother back to the world of corruption. Blackmailed by Red's brother with letters she wrote Red, Temple is ready to leave her home and children and escape with Pete. After Nancy fails in every argument she can offer Temple, she smothers the child in a last effort to stop Temple. Much of the dramatic plot deals with Gavin's bringing Temple to grips with the truth of her past, present, and future in relationship to herself, her marriage, and the woman who took her child's life.

Gavin has been on the side of the virtues in all his appearances in the Yoknapatawpha chronicles; however, most often he is an observer, speaking and theorizing at length and usually stopping short of acting. Here in the position of the lawyer for the defendant Nancy, once the trial is over, he purposefully sets out to help the murdered child's mother in an act of forgiveness, far more healing than the legal justice rendered by the court sentencing. The irregularity of his acts does not stop Gavin; he sees clearly his position when he says, "After my client is not

only convicted but sentenced, I turn up with the prosecution's chief witness offering evidence to set the whole trial aside--"[59] What is most significant about Gavin now is his willingness to move beyond the role of lawyer. Kenneth Richardson describes him now as "more than a detective-lawyer-judge, more than a valiant knight; he is a high priest ministering at an act of redemption."[60] Hoffman draws on a Faulkner Studies article which sees Gavin's willing destruction of "his own office and function," supplanting the lawyer "by the attendant priest whose duty is to guide not judge." According to the article, he surpasses Horace Benbow in that "his exploration is not for but with people." There is no longer condescension but instead ministration.[61] Hoffman himself sees the role of lawyer as superficial and says that actually Gavin is a "secular father confessor, who must convince Temple Drake of her complicity in evil."[62]

Unlike Temple, Gavin knows all along that the trip to the Governor's mansion cannot help Nancy; all of his efforts

[59] William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun (New York: Random, 1950), p. 84. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[60] Richardson, pp. 136-37.

[61] "Gavin Stevens: From Rhetoric to Dialectic," Faulkner Studies, II (Spring 1953), quoted in Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 108.

[62] Hoffman, Faulkner, pp. 37-38.

are for Temple, whose guilt is now on trial. Gavin has lured Temple home with a telegram a week before Nancy's scheduled death, "You have a week yet until the thirteenth. But where will you go then?" (77); his telegraphed question is echoed by an identical one from her four-year-old son. In a similar manner Gavin pressures her now with his appeals for the truth. Temple's initial concern is Nancy, and she searches for any workable way to free her, but Gavin argues for the truth, telling Temple, "We're not concerned with death. That's nothing. . . . That's all finished now; we can forget it. What we are trying to deal with now is injustice. Only truth can cope with that. Or love." When Temple reacts harshly to love, Gavin adds, "Call it pity then. Or courage. Or simple honor, honesty, or a simple desire for the right to sleep at night" (88). Obviously these are the qualities he wishes to foster in Temple, who when only seventeen and perhaps only an innocent flirt was exposed to and then caught up in a corrupt world. Now a young woman with adult responsibilities, Temple needs, as Gavin sees it, to commit herself to finding peace within, becoming a loving wife and a mother to her remaining child. Gavin is willing to go to extreme measures to save Temple from herself, to help her find a truer self. He presses diligently to help Temple deal with the errors and guilt of her past, and once faced squarely, to free herself to move

on to embrace the Faulkner virtues: compassion, pity, and sacrifice, integrity, and dignity. He is advocating a commitment to living that goes far beyond the marriage and lifestyle that provided a hollow but respectable shelter from the scandal of her past. In Thompson's view, Gavin employs a "psychiatric (or rather the religious) process" to have Temple confess or at least recognize for the first time her responsibility in what has occurred, "that her own past actions have precipitated a sequence of events in which she stands ultimately to blame for the death of her own child and the imminent hanging of Nancy."[63] Hoffman says Gavin attempts "not only to explain Nancy's reasons for the murder but to draw Temple into awareness and open admission of guilt."[64] Waggoner says that as Temple's mentor, Gavin brings her to a realization "that she must accept her full guilt and not only forgive but, what is harder, ask to be given."[65]

Even though Gavin Stevens in other works has been condemned for total reliance on words, here he is seen in a better light. He is vocal, forcefully so, and repeatedly

[63] Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1963), p. 126.

[64] Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 109.

[65] Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World (Lexington, Ky.: Univ. of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 223.

in the Governor's office, Temple tries to get him to be silent. But he accuses her of stalling, dodging the truth, and he leads her persistently to tell all. There is a strength in his words and his manner that proves effective. Vickery says:

> Stevens has something much stronger than words with which to coerce Temple and that is his simple and unflinching expectation of her rising to the occasion. Nancy's life has already been forfeited to law and society, but her death must be given significance by Temple's coming to understand both Nancy and herself.[66]

As Temple starts to leave the Governor's office, now aware of her husband's presence, she says to Gavin that his reason for setting up this confrontation of Temple and Governor or Temple and self was "so good can come out of evil." Gavin's firm reply, "It not only can, it must" (208).

Gavin's concern is for his nephew Gowan also. Thompson points out that Gavin's initial visit after the trial is "to help Gowan and Temple face up to a concept of moral responsibility."[67] At this point, Gowan does not understand at all and tries to dismiss his uncle. Later Gavin has Gowan secretly present in the Governor's office and hopes he will profit by what he hears. Vickery says that Gavin attempts to make Temple and Gowan reach their own

[66] Vickery, p. 118. [67] Thompson, p. 125.

conclusions and to force them "to accept responsibility for their own actions." By so doing, Gavin "transcends his own office and function."[68] Gavin has not only taken a stand for the virtues but has actively involved himself in the tragic lives of other people, working fervently to establish the virtues where they have been nonexistent. As the lawyer for the defendant, Nancy Mannigoe, he lost the case, and although he cannot save Nancy's life, he can take up the burden of her death by trying to save Temple's life. In a sense, he has much in common with Nancy--their motive to show Temple what moral responsibility is all about. Nancy pays dearly for her efforts; she gives her life. Gavin also pays dearly, for active involvement does not come easily for him.

The resistance Temple puts up makes Gavin's job that much harder and also casts Temple in a poor light to start with. In the opening scene with Temple, her bitter and stubborn stance reveals how difficult her case will be, a case further complicated because it is spiritual rather than legal. Her initial response to Gavin is caustic:

> Let me be bereaved and vindicated, but at least let me do it in privacy. . . . Put it this way then. I dont know what you want, because I dont care. Because whatever it is, you wont get it from me. . . . If what you came for is to see me weep, I doubt if you'll even get that. (56-58)

[68] Vickery, p. 118.

Howe explains that Temple is "wearied by her regimen of cautious goodness"; this is why she would have run off with Pete.[69] Millgate concludes that Temple has not been able to free herself from the influence of the corruption she embraced or "even genuinely to desire to free herself."[70] In Everett's view, "the throes of admitting the truth are the more intense because Temple must tear down the facade of Mrs. Gowan Stevens and rip clear through to Temple Drake, about whom confession must be made before any hope can exist for redemption."[71] Volpe sees Temple as "a tortured being, engaged in a desperate moral battle." She is more than a grief-stricken mother. The death of the child and the impending death of Nancy "are direct consequences of her past." Volpe feels that she "knows the guilt is hers, but she cannot face and accept the terrible responsibility of acknowledging her guilt."[72]

In forcing her to face the truth and responsibility of her own life, Gavin is unremitting. Gavin is well aware of the difficulty he faces with the hardness and spiritual poverty of Temple, yet he realizes, as Brooks says, that

[69] Howe, p. 106. [70] Millgate, p. 223.

[71] Walter K. Everett, Faulkner's Art and Characters (New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1969), pp. 74-75.

[72] Volpe, p. 270.

Temple and Gowan can have no "enduring bond" until they can "forgive."[73] Gavin will not yield and pushes on for the truth. Temple wishes to withhold the painful truth of her own life, demanding,

> So how much will I have to tell, say, speak out loud so that anybody with ears can hear it, about Temple Drake that I never thought that anything on earth, least of all the murder of my child and the execution of a nigger dopefiend whore, would ever make me tell? (124)

At this point Temple still deludes herself that Nancy is the object of concern. Eventually and gradually the truth emerges. Admitting that she hired Nancy to have someone to talk to and to listen, Temple goes on to condemn the church for its departure from the function of listening. She reels off a list of violent deviates and says the cause is not maladjustment

> but simply because the embryonic murderers and thieves didn't have anybody to listen to them: which is an idea the Catholic Church discovered two thousand years ago only it just didn't carry it far enough or maybe it was too busy being the Church to have time to bother with man. . . . (150)

The inference here is that for Temple, being listened to may aid redemption. As the session in the Governor's office progresses, Vickery says Temple moves to "sincerely desiring

[73] Brooks, p. 139.

at last to tell and face the truth" even though she has "practically forgotten how." As Vickery analyzes, it is "only when Gowan takes the governor's place that Temple's playacting collapses." Temple moves toward "the final step to self-knowledge," and Gowan is made to see "his share of guilt." This forced confrontation allows "some form of communication" with the admission of "the other's suffering, guilt, and responsibility." Still Vickery sees her redemption "far from certain" and describes her as "confused and bewildered." Temple refuses to see that "the only guide man needs is the truth of his own heart and the divinity of his own soul."[74] Temple, however, does reveal the truth of her past, and she presents Nancy's role in her home, not just as listener but as the attempted cohesive force that Dilsey was to the Compsons. Furthermore, she gives an accurate and painful account that shows Nancy's desperate motive when Temple is leaving. Dealing with the truth enables her to see both herself and Nancy more clearly. She becomes aware Nancy will die and acknowledges, "because all this was not for the sake of her soul because her soul doesn't need it, but for mine" (196). She also admits her problem with her grief, comparing herself to a man she has only heard about; the story she relates is that of Rider of

[74] Vickery, pp. 121-23.

"Pantaloon in Black." Temple too speaks of her inability to cry. She handles Gowan's presence and leaves to visit Nancy. Here her penetrating questions about Nancy's faith are the strongest indication of a different Temple. Temple leaves the jail with Nancy's parting word, "Believe." Even though for Temple at present there are more questions than answers, at least there are questions, a spiritually healthier state than the bitterness first seen in her.

Temple may find a new strength in her husband Gowan. Evidently in their eight years of marriage, Gowan has contributed to its emptiness by feeling that now that he has performed honorably by marrying her, he has no further obligations. Blotner says Gowan "felt he had expiated his sin of abandonment by marriage, fatherhood, and eight years of abstinence."[75] In his initial appearance, immediately following the trial and in conversation with Temple and Gavin, he comes across as a weak and shallow man, resentful and bitter. There is no conclusive evidence of any change in Gowan; however, hs has quietly listened to his wife bare her soul, hearing gruesome details inflicting guilt and shame. The fact that he comes to this session and remains may indicate his willingness to examine moral responsibility. Also Gowan is there waiting when Temple leaves the jail. His being there, even if silent, may suggest some change, or at least some desire to change.

[75] Blotner, II, 1314.

Nancy Mannigoe's background and status are in total contrast to the prominent Stevens couple with their wealth and education. Temple was restored to social position because she was Judge Drake's daughter, and Gowan prides himself in his University of Virginia training as a gentleman. In Nancy's past she has probably

> chopped cotton, cooked for working gangs--any sort of manual labor within her capacities, or rather, limitations in time and availability, since her principal reputation in the little Mississippi town where she was born is that of a tramp--a drunkard, a casual prostitute being beaten by some man or cutting or being cut by his wife or his other sweetheart. (50)

Yet even in the face of her death sentence, Nancy exhibits a peace and serenity missing in the couple whose pain is supposedly vindicated by her sentence. Vickery says that the "knowledge which Temple has to struggle to attain, Nancy possesses intuitively." Nancy is able to accept "full responsibility for her violent act without attempting to minimize or justify." Having done what she felt necessary, she is "ready to pay." Regardless of the horror of Nancy's act, she "stopped Temple from starting yet another pattern of evil" that both she and her children would have paid for. Clearly admitting her guilt, Nancy reaffirms "her own moral nature, her own responsibility not only to the law but to herself and to God."[76]

[76] Vickery, p. 120.

Nancy is seen directly only as the trial ends and she is sentenced and again at Temple's farewell visit. On both occasions she speaks little. Her one drastic act is described in Temple's confessional scene in the Governor's presence. Yet it is apparent that Nancy, in spite of her history of mistreatment, has a commitment to life and the virtues that is not equalled. Brooks says her "terrible deed" is "dictated to her by love."[77] According to Leary, as Temple comes to accept her portion of responsibility for what has happened, "she realizes that Nancy has offered herself as a sacrifice." She is the nun who tries to save Temple's soul, for "Nancy will die for Temple's sin, so that Temple may find redemption."[78] In addition to her anguish at Temple's planned return to evil, Nancy also voices concern for the Stevens' baby she cares for. Aware that Temple has already abandoned the older child now away with his father, Nancy asks pressing questions about the baby. She describes Temple's dilemma and paints a picture more horrifying than the quick snuffing out of life she performs:

> That's right. Of course you cant leave her. Not with nobody. You cant no more leave a six-months-old baby while you run away from your husband with another man, than you can take a six-months-old baby with you on that trip. That's what I'm talking about. So maybe you'll

[77] Brooks, p. 139. [78] Leary, pp. 123-24.

> just leave it there in that cradle; it'll cry for a while, but it's too little to cry very loud and so maybe wont nobody hear it and come meddling, especially with the house shut up and locked until Mr Gowan gets back next week, and probably by that time it will have hushed--(185-86)

In Howe's view, Nancy begs Temple to stay "in the name of the children" and, "when rebuffed, strangles Temple's baby in order to forestall the greater tragedy of both children being left motherless."[79] According to Page, her love for little children "symbolizes her commitment to life," and she achieves the "height of human nobility" as she overcomes the evil of her own life.[80] In her concern for both the mother and the children, Nancy is motivated by compassion, pity, and sacrifice.

Her act must be labeled as murder, yet it must be seen as a last resort in Nancy's mind and heart. Thompson says that Nancy, before turning to such a drastic move, "had done her fumbling best to resist and overcome an evil which threatened to destroy Temple Drake Stevens and both her children." All her other efforts failed and she chose to "sacrifice her own life, together with the life of the infant," hoping that in so doing she would save the other child, Temple, and a "precarious marriage."[81] Once the act

[79] Howe, p. 106. [80] Page, p. 181.

[81] Thompson, p. 123.

is done, Nancy calmly awaits her death. Pictured throughout as generally inarticulate, she now depends on her simple statement, "All you have to do, is just believe" (273). This is her basic statement to Temple in their final meeting as she continues to plead for Temple to reevaluate her life. There is no evidence of bitterness or resentment even though Nancy must know that had Temple told all at the appropriate time, her sentence might have been different. Still Nancy not only illustrates the virtues but also the full impact of moral responsibility. Understanding her reason for the murder does not free her of responsibility for it, as she has recognized all along. In her account in the Governor's office, Temple recalls vividly Nancy's unorthodox response as she entered her plea, "just raising her head enough to be heard plain--not loud: just plain--and said 'Guilty, Lord'" (200).

Gavin Stevens attempts to complete what Nancy started. He also employs the virtues trying to save Temple, who questions if her soul is worth saving. The efforts of both, paid for with two human lives and difficult involvement, are not rewarded with certainty; the Gowan Stevenses show promise, not fulfillment. For Nancy, however, Gavin speaks with certainty, picturing her as he leaves her to die:

> The harp, the raiment, the singing, may not be for Nancy Mannigoe--not now. But there's still the work to be done--the washing and sweeping,

> maybe even the children to be tended and fed and kept from hurt and harm and out from under the grown folks' feet? . . . A heaven where that little child will remember nothing of your hands but gentleness because now this earth will have been nothing but a dream that didn't matter? (279)

Thus Gavin extends his compassion as he provides Nancy with the Faulkner virtues for eternity.

In the final work, The Reivers, published in 1962, the year of his death, Faulkner uses the rites of passage theme found also in The Unvanquished, Go Down, Moses, and Intruder in the Dust. The relationship of age to youth also used before is present with the added dimension of the grandfather narrator recalling in detail for his grandson an unforgettable episode of his childhood. This provides a nostalgic mood, and Faulkner subtitled the work "A Reminiscence." Millgate calls the tone "warm" and "intimate" and senses that it was written in a "mood of obvious enjoyment."[82] Faulkner read the horse race episode from a prepublication copy to the West Point cadets, and when asked if he had "a good time" writing it, he replied: "Yes, delightful. I wish I hadn't written it so I could do it again."[83] As Bassett records, the work was "generally

[82] Millgate, pp. 253-54.

[83] Faulkner, "Transcript, Press Conference," in Faulkner at West Point, p. 68.

joyously received" and even though few would rate it as a masterpiece, "few claim it is not great fun." Labeling it social comedy, Bassett finds it both "hilarious and meaningful."[84] Brooks notes that Faulkner has familiar material here in theme, situation, and technique but defends its freshness, insisting "there is nothing tired or mechanically repetitive" in this last work. He praises The Reivers' tone and the "golden retrospective atmosphere" cast over Yoknapatawpha County and states that "some of his basic convictions about human nature receive their happiest and most skillfully dramatic treatment here."[85] In William Rossky's view, there is a sense of "the old novelist . . . casually, almost unconsciously going back to touch characters, and events, ideas, and places."[86]

Although the Compsons, the Sartorises, the Stevens, even the Snopes are left behind in this narrative told in 1961 but occurring in 1905, the McCaslins, who have woven in and out of the chronicle since The Unvanquished, are here in both black and white lineage. Boon Hogganbeck represents the Chickasaw heritage. Miss Reba's "boarding house" provides part of the setting, and Jefferson is, of course, the place erroneously left and later returned to for

[84] Bassett, p. 38. [85] Brooks, p. 35.

[86] William Rossky, "The Reivers: Faulkner's Tempest," in Four Decades, p. 360.

consoling and comfort. The major action is carried out by a trio, a combination as mixed and unlikely as that of Intruder in the Dust. The leadership is shared, even rotated; at first it belongs to Boon Hogganbeck, "tough, faithful, brave and completely unreliable . . . six feet four inches tall . . . two hundred and forty pounds and . . . the mentality of a child."[87] It is Boon who borrows the handsome Winton Flyer for a holiday in Memphis while the Priest family it belongs to attends a funeral a long distance away. Boon takes with him the car owner's eleven-year-old grandson Lucius Priest, who has heard himself compared to Boon, "that at any moment now I would outgrow him" (19). Lucius, disturbed by the coverup lies required as well as the theft, realizes he has the power to revoke the trip but describes himself trapped in the clutches of "Non-Virtue" and, by his silence, approves their journey. Ten miles out of Jefferson, Boon and Lucius discover the third member of the party, Ned McCaslin, who has been hidden under a tarpaulin. Ned, coachman to Boss Priest, the grandfather of Lucius, is the "family skeleton . . . inherited . . . with his legend that his mother had been the natural daughter of old Lucius Quintus Carothers himself and

[87] William Faulkner, The Reivers (New York: Random, 1962), p. 19. All further references to this work appear in the text.

a Negro slave" (30-31). Ned uses this relationship for status, frequently needling Boon about Ned's closer ties.

Perhaps the finest comic scene of the novel comes in their crossing of Hell Creek, an impassable stretch of creek, tended by an unnamed mudfarmer who makes his living charging to pull vehicles from the mud with the very mules who keep it plowed into swamp. Boon gleefully anticipates his revenge on the stowaway Ned who must get out in the mud to push. Lucius steers and Boon and Ned push, trying desperately to avoid the mule-owner watching with amusement. This mudfarmer, surely a relative of the Snopes though not named so, refuses to do more than furnish the mules and overcharge, claiming, "Dabbling around in this water hooking log chains to them things undermined my system to where I come down with rheumatism if I so much as spit on myself" (88-89). Defending his increased price from two dollars last year to six now, he explains: "That was last year. There's more business now. So much more that I cant afford not to go up" (90). When Boon tries to argue the per passenger charge on the basis of Lucius' age and Ned's race, the retort is for the child, "Walking back to Jefferson might be lighter for him . . . but it wont be no shorter," and for Ned, "Both these mules is color-blind" (91).

The Hell Creek episode merely foreshadows the comedy for the reader, the calamity for the characters, that is to

come. Once in Memphis, Boon and Lucius move into Miss Reba's, where Boon's friend Corrie and her visiting nephew are expecting them; they agree to meet Ned at a specified time to return home. Instead Ned trades the car for an unproved race horse and sets up a race in the nearby Parsham community to win both car, horse, and money. The race involves not only extended time, but complications of transporting the horse, a traveling company of a madam, a maid, a prostitute, moral and immoral lawmen, and several jail stays for Boon. Eventually Boss Priest himself arrives to witness Lucius as jockey and restore both car and family to some semblance of normal life. Back in Jefferson, Boss attempts to aid his grandson to learn from his early exposure to the evil world he has experienced.

Lucius' brief sojourn in Memphis and Parsham involves first of all lying and deceit simply to get there; then Lucius witnesses prostitution, gambling, and fighting as well as other forms of corruption foreign to a lad trained to bow when meeting adults. At the same time within this environment he finds unforgettable examples of the virtues. Blotner records that over twenty years earlier Faulkner had described such an adventure for a story with the comment that the boy

> goes through in miniature all the experiences of youth which mold the man's character. They happen to be the very experiences which in his

> middle class parents' eyes stand for debauchery and degeneracy and actual criminality; through them he learned courage and honor and generosity and pride and pity.[88]

These qualities are learned first from his two traveling companions and also from the assortment of characters that surround them.

Lucius is aware from the outset that Boon's background and behavior are quite different from his own; still their relationship is a long-standing one, as Boon emphasizes in his awkward talk with Lucius on their arrival at Miss Reba's. Supposedly trying to convince Lucius of the need for an education to tuck away and have on hand when needed yet in reality requesting his silence, Boon tells him, "Me and you have been good friends as long as we have known each other" (104). Boon, not unlike Lucius in his boyish excitement and sense of adventure, shares the joys of the trip appropriate for Lucius' age. When Boon takes Lucius to the outskirts of Jefferson and allows him to drive the wonderful car, Boon's "soul's mate" (23), his generosity is perhaps not genuine but is based on the ulterior motive of luring Lucius to go along with his grandfather's car. However, once well past the point of no return, Boon unselfishly permits Lucius to drive on the "broad highway

[88] Blotner, II, 1794-95.

running string-straight into the distance," giving him confidence with, "All right. Slide over. You know how. Just dont get the idea you're a forty-mile-a-hour railroad engine" (94). When the three spend the first night of the journey at Miss Ballenbaugh's house, Boon also treats her to a car ride and insists that the cook and the cook's husband come along also. Ned accuses Boon of "Showing off" (77), but there is an apparent unselfishness in his response to people and his simple joy of living. Lucius, in his initial conscience-stricken moments, acknowledges that Boon is aware of his own recklessness and depends on Lucius to provide the strength to turn back. Lucius in condemning himself also praises Boon for the qualities Lucius lacks: "If things had been reversed and I had silently pled with Boon to turn back, I could have depended on his virtue and pity, where he to whom Boon pled had neither" (68). With Corrie, the girl of his choice at Miss Reba's, Boon reveals sympathy and understanding when she tried to explain her good intentions for her incorrigible nephew, Otis. After Otis steals Miss Reba's personal maid Minnie's gold tooth, Boon comforts Corrie with, "Its all right. . . . You were doing the best you knowed. You done good" (203). Boon cannot be as unselfish with Corrie, however, as he is with Boss Priest's car. Totally confused and frustrated by her decision to quit her profession and violently jealous when

the deputy sheriff shows an interest in her, Boon includes Lucius with his affection in his hostility: "Lucius is the one that's got tin badge and pullman cap rivals now. . . . Let him [Lucius] alone. . . . He's in love" (217). It is, of course, Boon who is truly in love, a condition Lucius not only observes but precipitates. Lucius' readiness to see Corrie as a pure and caring human being prompts her change. This, coupled with the jealousy Boon experiences over Sam Caldwell, Corrie's friend who helps transport the horse, and the deputy sheriff Boon fights in Parsham, leads to his awareness of caring for much more than the purchased time he speaks of earlier. Vickery says that "through love, one of the eternal verities, . . . Boon is changed from an unrestrained, lustful male to a knight in shining armor."[89] Lucius as an eyewitness to this transformation must find much positive influence to offset any negative impact of his night in the attic room of a brothel. The final illustration of the friendship of Boon and Lucius and now of Corrie as well is his visit to their home which Boon "was buying by paying Grandfather fifty cents every Saturday" (304). Here he views an infant, "just another baby, already as ugly as Boon even if it would have to wait twenty years to be as big" (305).

[89] Vickery, p. 235.

When Lucius asks, "What are you going to call it?," he is told Lucius Priest Hogganbeck.

With the complications that develop on the Memphis holiday, Lucius actually spends more time under Ned's tutelage than he does with Boon. It is Ned who masterminds the race and trains Lucius as the jockey. Brooks describes him as "a man of the world" and says he is "not innocent at all."[90] From the beginning Ned is obviously a good judge of man and beast. Without being told and without eavesdropping, he knows of Boon's plans and makes his to go along undetected. Before Boon delivers Aunt Callie and the younger children to relatives in the country, Ned asks knowingly, "Are you coming back to town before you leaves?" (58). Ned knows immediately the unusual sensitivity of the race horse and how to make him perform. He recognizes just as quickly the worthlessness and phoniness of Carrie's nephew Otis, skillfully calling his bluff about riding in the race and setting him up for the sale of Minnie's gold tooth. Likewise, he quickly sizes up deputy sheriff Butch, revealing an immediate dislike. With the same perception, Ned recognizes the good in his fellowman and stands up for his belief in humanity as quickly as he outsmarts the corrupt. When Lucius is willing to spend the night with a

[90] Brooks, pp. 354, 349.

dignified old black gentleman Uncle Parsham Hood, and the Constable objects on the basis of racial prejudice, Ned calmly resolves the question with, "There's somewhere you stops. . . . There's somewhere the Law stops and just people starts" (243). None of his responses goes unobserved by Lucius. Toward him Ned is both firm and sympathetic. He shames Lucius for crying over all their difficulties and his own homesickness, but shortly after accusing him, "Been crying again. . . . A race-horse jockey and still aint growed out of crying" (262), he stops and buys him peppermint drops and bananas. He offers them along with reassurance to ease Lucius' concern. What Lucius and Ned share in a most significant way is the unspoken commitment to complete with a sense of pride what they have started, and although neither may be able to explain the basic motive, both agree it is not for money. In going over the bets won Ned, as Lucius had expected, states, "Because we never done it for money," and Lucius responds, "You aint going to keep yours either?" (282). Only in the cross-examination conducted by Boss Priest and Colonel Linscomb, legal owner of the race horse, does Ned finally tell how the trade of the automobile and the horse came about. Ned admits his compassion for the plight of Bobo Beauchamp, a young black in dire circumstances because of his corrupt dealings; the horse was a part of their complex plot to pay

off Bobo's pressing debts. In the unfolding of the tale, Lucius also learns that in his shrewd betting on the event, Ned earned twenty dollars for Parsham Hood's church. As Lucius observes Ned keep going in the face of sheer physical exhaustion after several sleepless nights, he also sees an endurance that is more than physical.

When the trio first arrives in Memphis, Ned goes his own way with the parting comment, "Mind where you're going and nemmine me" (96). Boon and Lucius check into Miss Reba's establishment. Here Lucius meets three women, Miss Reba, the manager of the house, with her huge "yellowish-colored diamonds" (99) and her open hostility toward Boon's bringing a child, Minnie, Miss Reba's maid, with her fascinating gold tooth, and finally Corrie, "big, but still a girl, young too" (102). Lucius watches all three with interest, observing the exchange of Miss Reba and Minnie after the departure of Mr. Binford, Miss Reba's gambling-addicted landlord and lover. Later in Parsham, Lucius sees Miss Reba handle herself with poise and dignity, in command of the situation as she deals with the hotel management as well as the deputy sheriff. The colorful Miss Reba and Minnie are interesting to Lucius but not influential. It is to Corrie that he is drawn.

Lucius sees in Corrie a sincere concern for the welfare of others as he watches her comfort Miss Reba repeatedly

and hears her defend her deprived young relative referred to justifiably by Miss Reba as "hell-on-wheels" (99). Lucius finds in Corrie a serenity that is sincere and appropriate, "not smug nor coy: it was just serene . . . she was exactly right for serenity" (131). Later, on hearing her argument with Boon, he again describes "a big girl that stillness suited" (164). In one situation after another, Lucius is exposed as he frequently comments, "I was having to learn too much, too fast unassisted" (155). It is Corrie who offers Lucius an appealing stability, a security. Lucius also becomes the object of her concern. Angered by the evil Otis' attack on Corrie's professional background and confused by the crude sex education Otis relates, Lucius physically attacks him, "hitting, clawing, kicking" (157). Boon, who is responsible for Lucius, humiliates him with, "Eleven years old . . . and already knife-cut in a whorehouse brawl," but Corrie, much to Boon's dismay, stays devotedly by Lucius, providing comfort and making promises. Deeply touched by Lucius' defense of her and inspired by the image of her he projects, Corrie promises to find a new life. She tells him, "You fought because of me. I've had people--drunks--fighting over me, but you're the first one ever fought for me" (159). Vickery says that her conduct must "vindicate his faith" and interprets that the "evil of the past has been dispelled by the magic of a young boy's

faith and his beautiful but absurd code which makes him treat a whore like a lady."[91] Although Corrie breaks the promise on one occasion and Lucius is devastated, Lucius comes to realize her act was one of compassion and sacrifice, a last resort she felt would save a desperate situation and those she cared for. Blotner describes Corrie as a "big, pretty, gentle, country girl"; she is a "whore with a heart of gold" and with Lucius she acts as a "paradoxical vehicle of initiation into virtue as well as experience."[92]

Lucius comes to Memphis with the code of gentlemanly behavior fully ingrained. He is amusing to Miss Reba as he bows to "make his manners" (100). It is the violation of this gentleman's code that disturbs Lucius most as he faces his grandfather when the ordeal is over. Yet in the midst of the conniving and racing, Lucius is acquainted with an unforgettable example of a gentleman, Uncle Parsham Hood, an elderly black man that Brooks calls "every inch" a gentleman.[93] Kerr calls him "fully the patrician gentleman,"[94] and Lucius says, "the aristocrat of us all and judge of us all" (176). Uncle Parsham Hood provides Lucius, now drained emotionally and physically, with the security

[91] Vickery, pp. 238, 234.

[92] Blotner, II, 1796, 1795. [93] Brooks, p. 351.

[94] Elizabeth M. Kerr, Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil" (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1969), p. 141.

and peace of a temporary home. He is sensitive to the boy's predicament, the moral dilemma that he feels, the loyalty to Boon, yet the homesickness. He offers him the option of going home and wisely provides the emotional outlet Lucius needs. Lucius responds warmly and offers to sleep with him: "I dont need to take Lycurgus's bed. . . . I can sleep with Uncle Parsham. I wont mind. . . . I sleep with Boss a lot of times. . . . He snores too. I don't mind" (250). Kerr describes "the dignity and decorum of his way of life and the delicate tact with which he helped little Lucius to regain self-control, "making him a wholly adequate substitute for Lucius' own grandfather."[95] Brooks calls him "the natural aristocrat, the devout churchman, the man of high ethical sense and of the deep insight that comes from purity of heart and range of sympathy." In Brooks' view, Uncle Parsham has earned the sincere respect "from a grudging world by a lifetime of sanity, moral strength, and dignity."[96] Finally Uncle Parsham pays Lucius the tribute of being a comparable gentleman himself with a capacity to endure. When Ned withholds unsettling information about Boon, Uncle Parsham interrupts with, "Tell him. . . . He's stood everything else you folks got

[95] Kerr, Yoknapatawpha, p. 141.

[96] Brooks, pp. 356, 358.

him into since you brought him here; what makes you think he cant stand the rest of it too" (255).

Most of the people Lucius has come in contact with in the situations he has experienced have illustrated in some way the virtues. However, two individuals stand in sharp contrast to the others. In their absence of the virtues and their lack of regard for humanity, Otis Wheeler and Butch, the deputy, are effective examples of misdirection. Otis, the fifteen-year-old nephew of Corrie, is contemptuous. He alienates everyone with his constant slang talk of his materialistic goals and his offensive way of having an impertinent answer whether asked or not. Lucius recognizes his disregard for humanity immediately when Otis cursed Ned and called him a "'nigger,' . . . something Father and Grandfather must have been teaching me before I could remember because I dont know when it began, I just know it was so: that no gentleman ever referred to anyone by his race or religion" (143). Blotner calls Otis a "child-sized fifteen year old . . . miniature version of Popeye, gratuitously vicious and cruel."[97] Lucius observes the attitudes of adults who treat him with respect and concern; for Otis their concern is only for the damage he causes. There is a sense of satisfaction when Ned relates

[97] Blotner, II, 1798.

how "Whistle-britches," his name for Otis, is captured, forced to return the gold tooth, and at last banished.

Butch, the second negative example, is an adult in a responsible position; however, he is described as debasing the badge he wears, and this attitude extends to life itself. In one of the encounters between Butch and Boon over Corrie, there is the need to "shield a woman, even a whore, from one of the predators who debase police badges by using them as immunity to prey on her helpless kind" (176). When Butch finally succeeds because he uses Corrie's goodness for his degrading purposes, Boon loses his chance to get out of jail by "trying to tear that-- . . . Butch's head off." Lucius, who had attacked Otis for his verbal abuse of Corrie, understands and defends Boon with, "He had to do that" (277). Hoffman refers to Butch and Otis as the "petty villains" of the novel.[98]

Lucius, from the very beginning of the journey, is conscience-stricken; before leaving Jefferson, he realizes that the only hope is "to be as little soiled as possible" during the "passage" through "Non-Virtue" (52). Brooks says, however, that he "eventually enjoys a reasonable triumph, though he experiences some anguish because of his sense of guilt, his somber apprehensions of a deserved

[98] Hoffman, Faulkner, p. 116.

punishment, and the homesickness."[99] The triumph Lucius experiences may be twofold: what he gives and what he receives. Thompson says that Lucius' "idealism reawakens a sense of human decency among several disillusioned characters, including a prostitute."[100] Vickery elaborates on his impact on Corrie, stating that, "By fighting for her, Lucius makes her worth fighting for, by defending her honor, he makes it a reality."[101] Lucius receives an education on the reality of good and evil and their coexistence in his world, but just as significant, he learns, according to Rossky, that "he must accept responsibility for his actions . . . no matter how painful." Additionally, he learns and demonstrates the "virtues of pity and pride, endurance, respect for the weak, . . . honor in defending . . . and loyalty." In this learning there resides great hope for his manhood.[102] Blotner admits a "fall from virtue," yet says that in the end the test is passed, for Lucius has attained "not only a knowledge of good and evil but awareness, compassion, and maturity."[103]

In Lucius' newfound maturity, he realizes that the punishment he has dreaded must be the appropriate one,

[99] Brooks, p. 350. [100] Thompson, p. 15.

[101] Vickery, p. 238.

[102] Rossky, in Four Decades, p. 368.

[103] Blotner, II, 1800.

consistent with the nature of the violation. Following his father into the familiar cellar, Lucius senses the unsuitability of the whipping:

> So here we were at last, where it had taken me four days of dodging and scrabbling and scurrying to get to; and it was wrong, and Father and I both knew it. I mean, if after all the lying and deceiving and disobeying and conniving I had done, all he could do about it was to whip me, then Father was not good enough for me. And if all that I had done was balanced by no more than that shaving strop, then both of us were debased. (301)

It is Boss Priest who intervenes, sensitively fitting the punishment to the crime by helping Lucius carry his learning experience yet further and place it in the proper perspective. Boss handles Lucius' shame for his lying by making even the negative aspects of the experience of value, telling him, "Nothing is ever forgotten. Nothing is ever lost. It's too valuable" (302). He follows with a reaffirming definition of the gentlemanly code he has always instilled in Lucius:

> A gentleman can live through anything. He faces anything. A gentleman accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences, even when he did not himself instigate them but only acquiesced to them, didn't say No though he knew he should. (302)

Vickery says that Boss Priest "with the wisdom of old age" realizes Lucius' "prank demonstrates not only disobedience

and irresponsibility but courage, fidelity, and responsibility."[104]

The final Faulkner character exhibiting the virtues is an eleven-year-old who by the narration of The Reivers proves that fifty years later he values these virtues still and passes them on to his own grandson with the same fervor that Boss Priest instilled them in him.

In these works of Faulkner's last twenty years, he has illustrated the virtues in a wide spectrum of humanity, with Isaac McCaslin, Chick Mallison, and Lucius Priest discovering the old verities while still children, with Lucas Beauchamp epitomizing dignity and integrity, with the black Nancy Mannigoe exhibiting love and sacrifice though simultaneously admitting the murder of a child, plus many minor characters involved in acts of compassion, pity, and sacrifice, honor, and integrity.

[104] Vickery, p. 239.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

In the world of literature, William Faulkner's stories of Yoknapatawpha will indeed "endure and prevail." From the population of Beat Four, Frenchman's Bend, and Jefferson, those who fail miserably will be known for what their lives say about how not live; those who triumph will be known for what they say about how to live. Faulkner has illustrated his beliefs in both direct and indirect ways. Although concrete statements of his creed outside of the literature itself came late in his career, what he espoused in the Nobel Prize speech and other public occasions during his mature years provides a foundation for evaluating the positive and negative qualities of his characters. His basic affirmation is that man will "endure and prevail," and the virtues he deems essential are "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice,"[1] called by him "the old verities and truths of the heart." From additional comments he

[1] William Faulkner, "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature," in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, ed. James B. Meriwether (New York: Random, 1965), p. 120.

made and in the opinion of his leading critics, the quality of love, embracing compassion, pity, and sacrifice is top priority, the primary virtue, with honor seen in the light of integrity and pride defined as dignity. Furthermore, both his speeches, his characters, and his critics support the view that mere possession of the qualities is not enough; they must be expressed in positive action. Closely related to the implementation of the virtues in positive action is the emphasis Faulkner places on the individual. Repeatedly he honors the worth of the individual man, the value that he places on himself, self-regard, and the value he places on each of his fellow human beings. Throughout the Yoknapatawpha chronicles, Faulkner honors the humane and dishonors the inhumane.

According to those who knew William Faulkner as a literary figure and those who knew him as a personal friend, the author himself must be classified with the humane and must be honored for his sure possession of the virtues. From his own standpoint, Faulkner wished only his works in the public domain, always keeping his own life as private as possible. More than a decade after his death, Joseph Blotner, who could present Faulkner from a literary and a personal view, published a comprehensive biography revealing a man who endured. Although fraught with financial insecurity at times as well as personal and health problems,

Faulkner is seen as a strong yet gentle spirit. Blotner describes the impression Faulkner made on the Japanese during the Nagano trip. Never at ease when on display and also not wholly recovered from recent emergency medical treatment, Faulkner favorably impressed the waiting Japanese scholars, and one recorded: "His face gives the general impression of mildness, but also indomitable strength which can bear suffering."[2] From one of his last public appearances, an English professor at West Point noted his "innate humility, grace, and dignity."[3] Outside of his immediate family, Phil Stone of Oxford perhaps knew William Faulkner as well and as long as anyone; many see him as the most influential person in Faulkner's early development as a writer. Faulkner dedicated the Snopes trilogy to him with the added inscription in The Town, "He did half the laughing for thirty years."[4] Blotner tells of periods when their friendship suffered, but Stone spoke and wrote about Faulkner with truthfulness, authority, and the highest praise. For an informal collection of impressions by Oxford people, Stone described his friend as:

[2] Joseph Blotner, Faulkner: A Biography (New York: Random, 1974), iii, 1548.

[3] Joseph L. Fant III and Robert Ashley, Faulkner at West Point (New York: Vintage, 1969), p. viii.

[4] William Faulkner, The Town (1957; rpt. New York: Vintage, 1961), dedication page.

> The sanest and most wholesome person I have ever known. . . . At times and in some small ways, . . . the most aggravating damned human being the Lord ever put on this earth. Still, and all in all, the true likeness is of a person far and away superior to the great mass of human beings.[5]

Numerous people in Oxford were interviewed about Faulkner after his receiving the Nobel Prize. Phil Stone's tribute shows Faulkner as a man of positive action, illustrating the old verities:

> Bill and I are getting to be old men now and perhaps someone who knows should say it, someone who knows that he is even greater as a man than he is as a writer. A lot of us talk about decency, about honor, about loyalty, about gratitude. Bill doesn't just talk about these things; he lives them. Other people may desert you but this would only bring Bill quickly to your side if you are his friend. If you are his friend and if the mob should choose to crucify you, Bill would be there without summons. He would carry your cross up the hill for you.[6]

Critics through the years have attempted to identify Faulkner's personal character within the life of a particular literary character; however, all suggestions are unproved opinions. There seems to be more authority, based on Blotner and other biographers plus numerous people who

[5] Phil Stone, "The Man and the Land," in William Faulkner of Oxford, ed. James W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1965), p. 4.

[6] Phil Stone quoted in Robert Coughlan, The Private World of William Faulkner (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 133-134.

knew him, in saying that Faulkner attempted to live the virtues he honored, to express them in positive though often private action and that he honored the individual as well as his own individuality.

According to his friends and associates, Faulkner revealed his high regard for the virtues in his attitudes toward his own life, and according to his literary critics, he illustrated the value of the virtues and his faith in man as an individual in his fiction. In Swiggart's opinion, Faulkner placed "love and intuitive understanding above a codified moral law."[7] Rubin cites humanity as the "one essential quality that everyone must display" regardless of the circumstances, and he states conversely, that "the one crime of which no man must ever be guilty is inhumanity."[8] Cowley defines Faulkner as an idealist, explaining that he often exaggerates "the contrast between the life around him and the ideal picture in his mind," but Cowley insists that always there is "a sense of moral standards and a feeling of outrage at their being violated or simply pushed aside."[9] In Warren's view, Faulkner

[7] Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1967), p. 26.

[8] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Writers of the Modern South (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 49.

[9] Malcolm Cowley, "William Faulkner's Legend of the South," in William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage, ed. John Bassett (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 312-13.

emphasizes "the capacity to make the effort to rise above the mechanical process of life, the pride to endure."[10] Howe says that in novel after novel, Faulkner shows "how fearful is the cost and heavy the weight of human existence, yet he illustrates how fulfillment and perhaps even salvation may come to those who stand ready to bear the cost and suffer the weight."[11]

The conclusion may be drawn from Faulkner's own comments and from the characters he portrays that the heart of man allows man to bear the cost of humanity. Faulkner told the West Point cadets that a writer must write of human experience, "the anguishes and troubles and griefs of the human heart, which is universal, without regard to race or time or condition." He repeated a phrase he had often used, "the human heart in conflict with itself," and he spoke of the unchanging nature of man's drives springing from the heart, the old verities, "for the verities have been the same since Socrates." Finally he responded to a question a cadet asked with, "I think that, if I had to depend on something, I would depend on what my heart tells

[10] Robert Penn Warren, "William Faulkner," in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1960), p. 113.

[11] Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 305.

me."[12] To an English Club of the University of Virginia, Faulkner stated that the problem of the young writer and indeed of everyone is "to save mankind from being desouled . . . to save the individual from anonymity before it is too late and humanity has vanished from the animal called man."[13]

Faulkner's own attempt to save man from being desouled is found in his application of the virtues needed to endure and prevail seen in the people of his fiction. Throughout Yoknapatawpha those characters whose hearts and souls contain love, integrity, and dignity and who express these verities in positive action do, in fact, endure and sometimes prevail. Those who violate the truths of the heart merely exist. While no single character is the ideal representation of the virtues, positive action, and individuality and thereby achieves a total sense of prevailing, throughout the Yoknapatawpha novels, many appear who possess several, occasionally all, of the virtues; some implement the virtues more than others; some maintain their individuality more than others. Conversely, there are those

[12] William Faulkner, "Transcript of Questions and Answers Following Reading" and "English 152: The Evolution of American Ideals as Reflected in American Literature 7:55 A.M.-8:50 A.M. and 9:30 A.M.-10:25 A.M., April 20, 1962," in Faulkner at West Point, pp. 50-51, 76, 122.

[13] William Faulkner, "Address to the English Club of the University of Virginia," in Essays, Speeches, p. 165.

who show also in varying degrees the absence of the virtues. All support either by positive or negative statements Faulkner's beliefs. In the opinions of Campbell and Foster, those who prevail have always been present but as the novels continue, "there are simply more of them."[14] In Faulkner's sixty-fourth year he was asked "if he was the same writer now that he was when he had started out." He responded that he hoped he was not, that as one gets older "he prefers to believe he understands more. He's not always able to forgive human folly but he is able to understand it."[15] Here Faulkner echoes the sentiments he expressed in his introductory statement in The Mansion, a statement made to handle discrepancies yet which indicated his growing understanding of the human heart.

Faulkner published novels of Yoknapatawpha for fully half of his life, beginning with Sartoris in 1929 and ending with The Reivers in 1962, published just months before his death. In the fourteen novels set in his mythical demesne, Faulkner presents the whole spectrum of humanity and those who possess the virtues as well as those who violate them

[14] Harry Modean Campbell and Ruel E. Foster, William Faulkner (Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 138.

[15] Blotner, II, 1787.

are drawn from all classes, all races, all levels of education, young and old, male and female. There is no sociological pattern to identify; those upholding the virtues range from the inarticulate Dilsey, black and aging, to the voluble Gavin Stevens, aristocratic and highly educated; the virtueless include Flem Snopes, low-class and shrewd, and Narcissa Benbow Sartoris (Sanctuary), high-class and hollow. Throughout the novels there are those who fall in the middle, perhaps longing for the virtues yet unable to grasp them or leaning toward their violation. In the progress of his composition, Faulkner does include more who exhibit the virtues as he moves through the Yoknapatawpha saga; also with some exceptions, these are given increasingly dominant roles rather than the minor positions first seen. Consequently, in the later novels, the virtues are seen with heavier domination; the violation of the virtues diminishes.

Faulkner first revealed Yoknapatawpha with Sartoris, a study of an aristocratic family. Although the frustrated life of Bayard, who longs for the virtues yet evades them, dominates the plot, Miss Jenny with a minor role still provides the order of the Sartoris world, firmly demonstrates love in action, maintains her dignity throughout, endures, and at times prevails. In even lesser roles, Doc Peabody, the hill-folk MacCallum family, and an unnamed black family provide glimpses of compassion expressed in daily living.

The Benbows, Narcissa and Horace, reveal a middle ground of detachment, even estrangement. Only Byron Snopes represents the virtueless world, revealing lust in the place of love.

Faulkner continues to write of aristocrats in even later stages of decay in The Sound and the Fury, a much more recognized work. Here the Compson children, Ben and Caddy, provide limited portraits of the virtues. Ben, even in his restricted mental capacity, demonstrates pure love to be received, and Caddy in her time at home gives him compassion, pity, and sacrifice. The outstanding example of the virtues and of enduring is provided by Dilsey who serves the Compsons with devotion. Caught in the middle in their worlds of abstraction, alcohol, and hypochrondria are the son Quentin and the parents. In complete contrast to Dilsey is the materialistic son Jason who reveals an abuse of all the virtues and of positive action.

The first focus on the lower-class white family is seen in As I Lay Dying. Here the Bundren family, poor hill farmers, come together with a sense of family pride and determination to accomplish the Jefferson burial of the mother Addie. As a family, they endure throughout this mission and reveal their own type of integrity and nobility. Seen individually, they reveal a need for human

communion. Both Addie and her favorite son Jewel indicate their distrust of words and reliance on deeds; both submerge their strong feelings and create their own isolation. Jewel proves himself capable of sacrifice by giving up his treasured horse so that the journey can be completed. Darl is the sensitive son who illustrates a yearning for the virtues. The daughter Dewey Dell and the young son Vardaman are also in need of the virtues; neither receives them. Anse, the father, is a man of words only, a mere bystander. The strongest sense of enduring and the best illustration of the virtues is found in the son Cash, whose selflessness and capacity to forgive clearly places him above all others. Cash exhibits incredible physical endurance and impressive spiritual endurance. Aiding the family are several other hill farmers; most are seen as compassionate people. Two stand out as negative examples, Cora Tull in her piety and the Reverend George Whitfield in his hypocrisy.

Faulkner moves from the sometimes bizarre Bundren story to the perverted and violent world of Sanctuary. Here the environment of the underworld dominates, and the tone is pessimistic. Still the virtues are found in Horace Benbow, whose blind faith in truth and justice proves his downfall yet whose compassion is clearly seen. The example of the virtues expressed in action is Ruby Lamar whose bleak

life is based on love, sacrifice, and dignity. A minor character Miss Reba Rivers reveals compassionate concern in the management of the brothel. In contrast to the limited examples of the virtues and positive action, the abuse of the virtues is clearly seen in the depraved nature of Popeye, the acceptance of evil by Temple Drake, the artificial values of Narcissa Sartoris, and the vulgar manner of Senator Clarence Snopes, a minor character.

Still dealing with plain people, Faulkner achieves more balance in Light in August. Although the protagonist Joe Christmas is a man whose mixed blood leads to identity problems and alienation, there are positive characters whose stories are told also. The novel opens and closes with Lena Grove's unquestioning faith and trust in man's essential goodness. She is not only befriended by Byron Bunch but loved and cared for in selfless devotion. Byron develops his own expression of positive action as a result of his love and restores his withdrawn friend Gail Hightower to the mainstream of life, where the application of the virtues makes life worth living. The negative examples are related to the alienated life of Joe Christmas and those he encounters, a crazed, violent grandfather; a distorted, fanatical foster father; a trapped prostitute; and an outcast, perverted mistress.

With Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner turns more to the method of indirection, using the driving ambition of Thomas Sutpen and depicting a major character totally without love, the primary virtue. In addition to the ultimate wreckage of his own life, he at least partially destroys or distorts the lives of those he touches. His wife Ellen escapes in an illusionary world, but his sons Charles Bon and Henry Sutpen and his sister-in-law Rosa Coldfield all reveal some capacity and longing for the virtues, yet they are thwarted by his inhumane ways. Only his white daughter Judith and his partially black daughter Clytie are strong enough to endure their barren lives and exhibit compassion and determination.

Continuing to examine the codes men live by, Faulkner shifts to direct treatment of the virtues in The Unvanquished. Young Bayard Sartoris comes to realize the hollowness of codes that deny the sacredness of life. He is greatly influenced by Granny Rosa Millard, one of the best examples of compassion, pity, and sacrifice, integrity, and dignity expressed in positive action. Unable to repudiate violence, John Sartoris, Drusilla Hawk Sartoris, and Ringo, Bayard's black companion, are caught between the positive and negative positions; in their daily lives and last seen attitudes, they are more positive. Only Ab Snopes and Grumby clearly represent the negative.

With the Snopes trilogy, Faulkner provides his outstanding negative example, Flem Snopes, the clan leader who moves through The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion. Flem, beginning in The Hamlet, works his way up by exploiting others. Flem is totally lacking in emotion; his every act is a violation of the virtues. He is trailed by relatives with many of his ways, though none so advanced or shrewd as he. A minor character, Lump, who exploits their retarded relative Ike is most like Flem. In comparison to Flem, even Mink, his murderer and cousin, exhibits positive qualities, a dignity, trust, and integrity. Like Benjy Compson of The Sound and the Fury, Ike reveals pure love and appeals to the virtues in others. The one character who stands for humanity in The Hamlet is V. K. Ratliff.

In The Town, Flem continues his ascent and his inhumanity. Although Flem is not defeated or even halted, there are more positive examples here. V. K. Ratliff is joined by Gavin Stevens. Both possess the virtues and are clearly aware of Flem's corruption, yet they are talkers here rather than doers. In closer association with Flem, there are family members who withdraw from his ways. Eck Snopes and his son Wallstreet Panic are minor characters yet obviously outside the philosophy of Snopesism. Flem's wife Eula commits suicide in a sacrificial act of compassion. Her

daughter Linda is influenced by Gavin Stevens. Flem is more recognized and more isolated in his evil ways; still he moves on toward his goals.

Flem reaches the top and the end in The Mansion. He is still closely observed by Gavin Stevens and V. K. Ratliff, both obviously good men, but he is stopped by his relative Mink who even in his second murder exhibits a code of honesty and integrity and a brand of patience and enduring. In minor passages, Linda Snopes, now an adult, is seen applying the values taught her by Gavin as she works diligently for the welfare of fellow human beings. Mink is befriended by the leader and the congregation of an unusual church group.

In the final novels where the Snopes do not appear, Faulkner uses negative influences but few individual negative characters. In Go Down, Moses, a series of short stories, the virtues are seen in the home with the sanctity of the family and the redemption of love; this is seen briefly with Tomey's Turl and Tennie in "Was," with Lucas and Molly Beauchamp in "The Fire and the Hearth," with Rider in "Pantaloon in Black," and with Molly and Miss Worsham in "Go Down, Moses." The virtues of courage, honor, and pride taught and learned in the hunts in the Big Woods are seen in "The Old People," "The Bear," and "Delta Autumn." Here the relationship of Sam Fathers and

Isaac McCaslin illustrates the secondary virtues dominating the primary virtue, love. Consequently, Isaac, who has a major role in several stories, fails because he evades responsibility and avoids involvement with his fellow man. Gavin Stevens is seen in the final story involved in acts of charity. The most negative example of the novel is the failure of the deputy sheriff in "Pantaloon in Black;" he illustrates a denial of humanity in his misinterpretation of the life-destroying grief of a young black widower.

Intruder in the Dust presents several positive characters with only the negative reaction of the town and the meanness of the Gowries of Beat Four in an antagonistic role. The major characters possess at least some of the virtues, and several of the characters apply their virtues in daring and positive action. Lucas Beauchamp exhibits extreme pride and dignity. Gavin Stevens honors the virtues but fails to apply them until led by his young nephew Chick Mallison. Chick leads a trio composed of his black companion Aleck Sander and the spirited, elderly Miss Habersham. These three clearly depend on the heart and apply the virtues in positive action.

In Requiem for a Nun, Faulkner illustrates even more dramatically the leadership of the heart in a sacrificial application of the virtues. Nancy Mannigoe gives her life and that of an innocent child in an attempt to save the

soul of Temple Drake. To insure that Nancy does not die in vain, Gavin Stevens, always on the side of the virtues, now exhibits a willingness to involve himself. His commitment and sense of moral responsibility illustrate the virtues expressed in positive action and a strong awareness of individual worth. Both Temple and her husband Gowan Stevens are seen as recipients of the virtues; their response is unresolved but hopeful.

In Faulkner's last novel, an assumed negative environment is populated with characters who possess the virtues. Although light in tone, The Reivers provides examples of compassion, pity, and sacrifice, integrity, and dignity from a variety of characters. The examples are taken to heart by eleven year old Lucius Priest whose memory holds them indelibly. Elizabeth Kerr states:

> Of all the narrators, Grandfather Lucius Priest speaking to his grandson, is closest to Faulkner at the time of writing, not only in age and circumstance but perhaps in mood. The mellow tone, the emphasis on the old verities as discovered by a boy in his initiation into the adult world and confirmed by his elderly self, the combination of hilarious comedy with the truths of the heart,--all may well reveal Faulkner the man. . . . An appropriate though unpremeditated conclusion.[16]

[16] Elizabeth M. Kerr, Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil" (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1969), p. 236.

Rubin says that "when in the Nobel Prize speech, Faulkner spoke of 'love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice' as the eternal verities by which men live, and to which the novelist must cleave, he was describing the central thesis of his fiction."[17]

If one would know Faulkner and his understanding of the human condition in its baseness and its glory, he must know the people of Yoknapatawpha. He must know Flem and Jason, and more important, he must know Dilsey and Nancy, Aunt Jenny and Granny, V. K. and Gavin, Byron and Cash, Ruby and Judith, and even children, Chick and Lucius.

[17] Rubin, p. 50.

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