TOOLS IN THE CARPENTER'S SHOP:

A STUDY OF FAULKNER'S USE OF THE CHRISTIAN MYTH

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis describes the consistent thematic use of and the steady artistic development in the Christian myth as it appears in William Faulkner's novels. Although I concentrate on the use of Biblical allusions, other mythical references are examined when they become a part of the pattern described, as in Soldier's Pay and The Sound and the Fury.

A Fable is examined first because its explicit allegorical use of the myth clearly indicates the direction Faulkner takes in the earlier stages of his artistry. It presents the fundamental conflict between "Authority," which would shape man in its own image, and the corporal-Christ's belief in the primacy of the whole being unconstrained by ideology. Such belief is "capable of containing all of time and all of man in one unutterable vision."

In order to emphasize Faulkner's development toward this articulation of the myth, I analyze his "apprentice works," Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, and Sartoris, and then the later novels in which the myth is a primary element, The Sound and the Fury and Light in August. Each of these novels rejects institutions which repress man's self-expression and contains a movement toward the "timeless moment" of a vision of the essential wholeness of life. In Soldier's Pay that moment occurs amidst the sterility and fragmentation that society has instilled into Donald Mahon. At the end of the novel, the Negro church service overwhelms Joe Gilligan and Rector Mahon with its effusion of a perfect conjunction of life's elements, "sweat,...sex and death and damnation," and it enables them to experience their own profound humanity. Mosquitoes juxtaposes the superficiality and impotence aboard the Nausikaa with Fairchild's comprehension of the same primary unity of "the hackneyed accidents which make up this world." Sartoris portrays Bayard's rejection of life because of his inability to fuse his family tra-
dition with the meaninglessness of his own war experiences. Then, fore­
shadowing the rebirth motif in *Light in August*, Bayard dies on the day his
son is born; but his wife rejects the Sartoris tradition by naming the child
Benbow Sartoris, thus uniting the placidity of her own life as a Benbow
with the energy of the Sartorises.

In *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*, both poles of the con­
flict are expressed in terms of the Christian myth. The Compson narrators
all have rigid perceptual frameworks which are linked with a view of Chris­
tianity as an oppressive ideology. In contrast, Dilsey's experience in the
Easter service is an expression of the acceptance of the whole man which al­
 lows one to see the integrity of life and is timeless because it subsumes
all of time, "de beginnin' en de endin','' into an instant of perception.

*Light in August* deals with society's imposition of its definitions on in­
dividuals and Joe, like Christ, is martyred because his life is perceived as
a threat to its pattern of order. Then, in the conjunction of Joe's death
with the birth of Lena's baby, one sees a union of the suffering brought by
"evil" and the ecstasy of creation. Both poles, nativity and crucifixion,
are part of the Christian myth; both are part of life itself and when con­
joined, bring a comprehension of the divinity of life experienced in its
wholeness. Thus, in Faulkner's works, the Christian myth becomes, in Mark
Schorer's words, "a large controlling image... which gives philosophical mean­
ing to the facts of ordinary life." The thematic consistency with which the
myth is used underscores that meaning.

Approved:

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INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of George Marion O'Donnell's seminal study, "Faulkner's Mythology" in 1939, the conjunction of the two words Faulkner and myth has become a commonplace. The study of the mythical aspects of Faulkner's works has generally moved in two directions, and not always divergently. O'Donnell used the term myth rather loosely to refer to "the Southern social-economic-ethical tradition" in which there is a tension between the traditional Sartorises and the "modern," anti-traditional, opportunistic Snopses. With this essay, O'Donnell heads a long train of critics who speak of Faulkner's work as encompassing the "Southern myth." In The Art of Faulkner's Novels, Peter Swiggart states: "Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha mythology corresponds very closely to the South's romantic legend of a proud society compelled to endure humiliating defeat..."  

1 George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in Frederick Hoffman and Olga Vickery, eds., William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (New York, 1962), p. 82. The essay originally appeared in The Kenyon Review, I (1939), 285-299. In reading O'Donnell's essay, one feels that he is using the word myth in a more significant manner. For example, O'Donnell states that Faulkner's characters "are people, in a certain way of life, at a particular time, confronted with real circumstances...And their humanity is not limited by their archetypal significance. Moreover, in each book, there is a dramatically credible fiction which remains...coherent as action, even though the pattern is true, in a larger sense, as myth. In short, Mr. Faulkner's successful work has the same kind, though certainly not the same degree, of general meaning that is to be found in Dante's Divina Commedia or in the Electra of Sophocles" (p. 88). Unfortunately, O'Donnell does not elaborate on what he means here by "myth." It does seem to be more than just the Southern tradition, however,  

2 Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin, 1962), p. 13. In the years between O'Donnell and Swiggart, the critical ground of Faulkner's myth did not lie fallow. Malcolm Cowley, in the introduction to The Portable Faulkner outlines Faulkner's "mythical kingdom," and, in fact, the book is designed to illustrate the unity of Faulkner's achievement and to be something like a chronological survey of the myth. Also, Robert Penn Warren, in an essay in 1946, praised Cowley's work and further elaborated on what he, too, called "Faulkner's Mythology."
Olga Vickery also fits into this category. She entitled her chapter on Sartoris "The Making of Myth," by which she meant that Faulkner, with this novel, began working with Yoknapatawpha County material and that the theme of Sartoris is, on one level, the development of a romanticized "Southern myth." R. A. Ranald in an essay published in 1964 more or less repeats the findings of O'Donnell. In Ranald's terms, the myth is that of the aristocratic Sartorises who have been reft of their tradition through their own sins against the land and the Negro. As late as 1968, Allen Tate reiterated this concept of Faulkner's mythology: Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha "was more than a legend; it was a myth..."

That myth is "the South afflicted with the curse of slavery--a curse, like that of Original Sin, for which no single person is responsible--had to be destroyed, the good along with the evil...this old order, in which the good could not always be salvaged from the bad, was replaced by a new order which was in many ways worse than the old." 3 So, again, Tate is speaking of the conflict between the Sartorises and the Snopses.

With the interpretation, or at least embellishment that Tate gives the Southern myth by recognizing the context of the Biblical Garden of Eden, we move almost imperceptibly into the other major mode of mythical inquiry in Faulkner's novels: an examination of the allusions to or patterns from other mythologies present in various Faulkner novels. In such studies, the term "myth" no longer refers to Faulkner's creation of Southern history and tradition in Yoknapatawpha; rather, it refers to the body of Biblical, classical and folk traditions and literature which

describes the actions and characteristics of the cultures' deities and superhuman heroes. With examples of these works, my bibliography abounds, so perhaps an examination of two or three such articles will serve to illustrate the general trend. One of the first attempts along these lines was Carvel Collins' "The Pairing of *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*," which first appeared in 1957. In this essay, Collins is primarily concerned with the allusions to and overtones of the Christ myth and the Demeter-Persephone myth to indicate certain parallels with Christ in Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, and then proposes that we regard them as three complementary parts of a whole: the id, the ego, and the super-ego, respectively. According to Collins, the parallel is one of inversion because it points out the real lack of Christ-like attitudes in all three men. "To merge the three sons together into one in this way helps not only to pull together the parallel with Christ, but to elucidate further the theme of the lack of love."  

Similarly, Robert M. Slabey has put the allusions to Christ in *Light in August* within a larger framework. Rejecting the efforts of previous critics to mold Joe Christmas into a Christ-figure, Slabey prefers to view the myth in the novel in terms of the Adonis myth, indicating that

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Christ is but a type of Adonis. He sees the novel as "in a sense a night journey, a ritual of death and rebirth, of withdrawal and return." The novel, says Slabey, portrays a confrontation with existential nothingness, resulting in the reconciliation of Joe, but not of society, with the total life process. He also sees in the novel a "...purification ritual, the expulsion of sins and evils from the community." At the same time, however, he says that the people of Jefferson "...fail to understand the rhythm of life." It seems to me that a contradiction is involved here, because participation in a purification ritual is in fact a recognition of the rhythm of life that Slabey is describing, that life requires death. Although Slabey does point out the various elements he sees in Light in August, he does not provide the necessary framework in which all of these mythical strains can function integrally.

Lennart Bjork's examination of Absalom, Absalom! in mythical terms is a rather good illustration of the particular pitfall to which this sort of criticism is prone. Bjork notes that Faulkner's novel has certain parallels with the Biblical story of David and Absalom and with Aeschylus' Agamemnon, and states that "...by working within the Greek, the Hebrew, and the Christian cultures...Faulkner gains a widely embracing referendum for moral behavior." He then goes on, however, to claim:


7 Ibid., p. 345.

"Agamemnon, David, Sutpen--different names for the tragic hero, the
man who has admirable traits but who lacks those crucial qualities that
Faulkner paid homage to in his Nobel Prize address: 'a soul, a spirit
capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.'"9 Unfortunately,
however, David does not quite fit into the category established by
Bjork. In order to discover David's capacity for compassion, sacri­
fice and endurance, one has but to read the account of his trials while
he was pursued by Saul.10 One also has to admit that David's actions in­
volving his son Absalom do not exhibit a soulless, compassionless man.
David, after all, explicitly commanded that Absalom should not be killed.
It was David's henchman, Joab, who, acting against David's order, killed
Absalom, and the title of Faulkner's book comes from David's passionate
cry upon learning of the death of Absalom. The rest of that passage is
even more revealing: "...would God I had died for thee."11 Absalom, like
Henry, did react violently and kill his brother because of the brother's
incestuous acts with their sister, Tamar. But we cannot, in turn, at­
ttribute this to David's blind attempts to establish a dynasty. The dif­
ferences between a narrative and a previous myth which it uses are fre­
quently as important as the similarities. Bjork, for example, also­
states that "Sutpen, and all men like him, are condemned no matter what
moral code they are measured against."12 I assume from the passage
quoted earlier that this statement applies to David. The Biblical story,

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9 Ibid., p. 204.
10 I Samuel, chapters 9-31.
11 II Samuel 18.33
that is the Hebrew moral code, does not condemn David; it is David who has been sinned against, both by Absalom and by Joab. Bjork has, without warning his reader, reinterpreted the Biblical story to fit his own concept of *Absalom, Absalom*!—a somewhat questionable critical procedure.

Ilse Dusoir Lind suggests that the novel's mythical allusions to the Old Testament and to Greek tragedy create "a grand, tragic vision of historic dimension...Sutpen falls through innate deficiency of moral insight, but the error he commits is also socially derived and thus illustrates with equal finality the aspirations of a whole culture. Events of modern history, here viewed as classic tragedy, are elevated through conscious artistry to the status of a new myth." Donald Kartiganer connects Sutpen with the myth of the tribal god, which makes the theme of the novel "...no less than the epic one of changing orders, of Rome rising out of the shambles of Illium...and because the god himself [is] destroyed by his unwillingness to kneel before necessity, the dynasty of the Old South passes away." So, we are back to the "Southern myth" articulated in terms of another mythological framework.

*A Fable* presents a slightly different problem because the mythological framework there is so obvious, and with few exceptions critics have

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14 Donald Kartiganer, "The Role of Myth in *Absalom, Absalom!*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, IX (1963), 368.

15 The major exception here is Heinrich Straumann whose article, "An American Interpretation of Existence: Faulkner's *A Fable*," originally appearing in *Anglia* in 1955 and translated and reprinted in *Three Decades*, remains, to my mind, the best work on the novel.
found little that is new and less that is worthwhile in a novel that took Faulkner more than ten years to get from the typewriter to the publishing house. Since Carl Ficken has recently provided a rather good survey of the literature on *A Fable*, I need not reproduce his efforts here. Rather, I shall only remark that critical exploration of *A Fable*, on the whole, seems not to have moved much beyond the surface of the novel. Most critics arrive at the conclusion that the novel with its presentation of the second crucifixion of a Christ, is a condemnation "of the unreason, the savagery, the old heroic slogans that qualify mass warfare." On this point, I strongly agree with Delmore Schwartz who has stated that "...from the beginning, it is taken for granted that the war is wrong, so that anti-war sentiment is the starting point, not the conclusion." Critics who do move beyond this view vary widely in their summation of the novel, from Walter Taylor's opinion that the novel is "A grim naturalistic picture of man the filthy collective animal...the repellant and nauseous...dominate the imagination," to Brylowski's statement that the novel presents

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16 Michael Millgate has indicated that Faulkner had the idea for the novel as early as 1942 (see Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, p. 41), and the book was not published until 1954. Also, both the American and English editions bear the rather cryptic post-script, "December, 1944/Oxford-New York-Princeton/November, 1953."


19 Delmore Schwartz, "William Faulkner's *A Fable*," *Perspectives U.S.A.*, no. 10 (1955), 128.

"...ritualistic sacrifices reaffirming the strength by which man endures and even prevails."\(^{21}\)

The two critics who seem to me to move closest to the core of the novel are Frank Turaj and Walter Brylowski who, though working from different critical viewpoints, arrive at similar conclusions. Turaj sees in the novel a modified dialectical struggle of the "idealism of idea vs. idealism of humanity."\(^{22}\) The struggle is between those who operate from the basis of an all-encompassing ideology and those who ground their beliefs in humanity itself. The dialectic is modified because there is no real synthesis; the battle is continuous. Brylowski is essentially noting the same struggle when he states that "...the conflict is between the forms of society (the military) and man's indomitable spirit..."\(^{23}\) But even these two critical frameworks are incomplete not because they do not enumerate all of the mythical allusions, but because they do not move as far as the novel itself does; they do not make as explicit a statement as the novel allows.\(^{24}\)

In addition to other articles which focus on mythical aspects of particular novels, there have been two booklength studies. Richard P. Adams, in *William Faulkner: Myth in Motion* (1968), combines the mythic

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\(^{22}\) Frank Turaj, "The Dialectic in Faulkner's *A Fable*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, VIII (1966), 94.

\(^{23}\) Brylowski, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

\(^{24}\) I deal with this at greater length further on in the introduction.

\(^{25}\) See the bibliography at the end of the paper for a complete listing of such articles.
approach with stylistic analysis, and examines each of Faulkner's works in terms of the major myths involved as well as the imagery of the "frozen moment." Adams sees the frozen moment as an "artificially fixed and isolated moment... which has the effect of compressing a life time into a single event... Motion is lost or stopped, and time is held still for esthetic contemplation." In his analysis of Faulkner's techniques for arresting motion, Adams classifies the use of mythical materials as part of the "contrapuntal method." "These materials bring some of their own connotations with them, and represent their own times. When we find them in a modern work, and especially when several of them appear side by side, a startling sense of temporal dislocation may arise... the resulting intrusion of the Biblical, the classical, the feudal, or the American legendary past into the modern situation contradicts the flow of time and provides an artificially static moment into which Faulkner can compress great quantities of life." It seems to me that an equally strong case could be made for the opposite view: that the presence of the mythical allusions emphasizes the movement of time through the differences between the original context of the myth and the modern situation. In other words, as Quentin thinks in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different

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27 Ibid., p. 11.
temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall is did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm.28

The presence of the mythological allusions, then would emphasize this "ineradicable rhythm," indicating the repercussion of events within the flow of time. Adams' description of the effect of the mythical allusions is only part of the total picture, and he depends much too heavily upon that one part. In fact, what he does in his study is to describe the various mythological allusions he sees in Faulkner's novels and then restate what I have just quoted. He really makes no effort to see how the myths work in the structure of the novel, and his examination of them is certainly not as rigorously presented as Walter Brylowski's, who does much the same thing within a different framework. Adams neglects a primary function which his study could serve: an analysis of the way each mythical structure is used in each of the novels in which it appears.

Walter Brylowski, in his *Faulkner's Olympian Laugh*, does more than simply point out the mythic allusions in the novels. He examines the novels in the framework of Ernest Cassirer's distinction between the "mythic mode" of thought and the "rational-empiric" mode and traces a "progression through Faulkner's work of his coming to grips with the

problem of evil in terms of this mythic mode of thought." He discusses the myth in each novel on three levels: allusion, plot, and epistemology of the characters. Basically, Brylowski sees in Faulkner's novels the constant tension of the polarity of the misery and corruption in the rational world and the transcendence of these preoccupations in the mythic world. For him, myth is a factor in the sense of being a way of perceiving reality and a method of transcending ("the way down is the way out"), only in the novels of the "great middle period," The Sound and the Fury, As I Lay Dying, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! In the earlier novels, according to Brylowski, Faulkner has yet to develop the technique, and in the later novels, he abandons the technique for "a vision already realized, the problem of evil no longer endangering the survival of the 'verities.'" In the mythic aspects of these particular novels, Brylowski sees not specific Christian references, but rather a broader reference to the archetype of the pharmakos, the sacrificial scapegoat who attains an identity only through his death. Light in August is the total expression of the achievement of a harmony resulting from the negative force of Christmas' tragic death being counterbalanced

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29 Brylowski, op. cit., p. 15. Brylowski distinguishes the two modes of thought in the following manner: "When I speak of the mythic mode of thought I shall mean the spiritual activity of the individual seeking to create a configuration of reality, an activity that is determined by laws other than the rational-empiric...This much will suffice for the characters. However, when we speak of the artist, we must remember that in the creation of his work he has already divorced himself from the primary quality of myth, the immediacy with which the mythic mode seizes upon the essential unity of the subject-object relationship. The artist's world of the logos acknowledges at once a removal into the area of pure forms where this primary unity does not exist." (p. 14)

by the positive mythical elements. The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! are both pessimistic in that they do not present a strong enough mythic counterforce to the evil in the novel and to the unredemptive deaths of Quentin and Charles Bon. The novels do not "...accept the promise inherent in the Christian myth of the fall and the resurrection. On the one hand, Faulkner "is fully aware of man's potential for making his life a hell; it is the documentation of this activity which constitutes his pessimistic naturalism."\(^{31}\)

However, it seems to me that Brylowski gets caught up in his own configuration and, to a certain extent, walks into the trap pointed out nearly a decade earlier by Walter Slatoff:

> To attempt, as some critics have, to interpret Faulkner's vision or even individual novels in terms of any single thematic antithesis is to give his work a simplicity and order it does not possess...Different antitheses operate at different times, or several operate simultaneously and more or less independently. What we have in Faulkner's writing is not so much variations on a theme as a multiplicity of themes.\(^{32}\)

I think Brylowski has reduced the impact of the mythical references too far. However, I will deal with this at greater length when I consider the novels individually.

Although, as I have indicated above, Faulkner's individual novels have been rather carefully examined in terms of their mythic symbolism, we still lack a detailed study of the continuity or development of those symbols. If indeed the mythic patterns are so common to the novels as

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31 Brylowski, op. cit., p. 84.
the amount of critical material on the subject would suggest, can we not determine a consistent, symbolic use of those patterns? Obviously, I think we can, for it is not just the stable set of characters acting in a particular geographical location which gives Faulkner's canon the unity we so strongly sense in it. Along with his Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner has invented what I have chosen to call his own "symbology." In his study of William Blake's symbolic system, Mark Shorer defines myth as a "large controlling image... which gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life, that is to say, which has organizing value for human experience." 33 He then states that "a mythology is a more or less articulated body of such images." 34 It is such a conception of Faulkner's novels which I wish to pursue, for in constructing his mythology or "articulated body of images," within the framework of the quasi-historical record of the South, Faulkner repeats words, phrases, scenes, events and even formal structural patterns. Each of these individual, repeated units has a symbolic value. Similarly, Faulkner has incorporated structures from previous mythologies, which he called on a number of occasions "tools in his lumber room." In using parts of other mythologies, Faulkner imparts a particular, idiosyncratic value to them and these values remain fairly constant for each "tool" in its appearances throughout his novels. The purpose of this paper, then, is to take one major aspect of that symbology and trace it through Faulkner's works to show how it functions. I have chosen to work with his use of

34 Idem.
the Christian myth for two primary reasons: it is quite dominant in his work, and it comes from an existing mythology. The allegory of *A Fable* presents the myth in its most complete and explicit form, and in it one can readily detect a technical and thematic use of the myth which Faulkner developed in his earlier works.

The essential elements in the novel's overt correspondences to the New Testament are easily identified. The corporal was "born in a cow-bye behind a roadside inn," begotten extra-maritally by a man who has supreme power. He later gathers twelve followers and the thirteen go about the front lines of World War I preaching pacifism. A mutiny results and the corporal is sentenced to death. He has a "last supper" with his followers, is denied by one of them whose name is Piotr, is betrayed by another, is tempted with the gifts of power and life to give up his cause, and, at the age of thirty-three, is finally slain between two criminals, a murderer and a thief. When he dies a barbed wire crown encircles his head. He is taken to a tomb and is "resurrected" by a bomb blast which blows him out of his grave, and he is then taken to occupy the eminent position in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at *L'Arc de Triomphe*. Three women, Marya, Marthe, and Magda, a whore, figure prominently in his life. During his ministry at the front line, he provides wine for a wedding, money for an operation to restore sight to a blind child, and respite for a man driven insane by the war. Further, his Christ-like role is recognized internally in the novel and explicit

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references are made by characters speaking of the corporal. When the
runner learns of the corporal's activities, his informant says, "Wasn't
it just one before?...Wasn't one enough then to tell us the same thing
all them two thousand years ago...? (p. 64). Later, the runner thinks
of the corporal, "His prototype had only man's natural propensity for
evil to contend with; this one faces all the scarlet-and-brazen impreg-
nability of general staffs" (p. 186). Even the military establishment
teeters on the brink of officially recognizing such an identity. In the
meeting of the Old General with representatives from the other allied
nations, both the British and American officers have witnessed the death
of a man who looks exactly like the corporal. The General then face-
tiously remarks, "...all that remains for us is to witness his resur-
rection..." (p. 252). Thus, the correspondence between the corporal
and Christ is firmly established, and it presents problems precisely
because it is so obvious. The question that remains unanswered is the
question of the significance of so blatant a "Christ-figure." Rephrased,
this is, of course, the fundamental question of the corporal's relation-
ship to the rest of the novel's material. That relationship is one of
conflict between the corporal-Christ who represents the indivisible
nature of the human "self" which must be accepted in its essential
wholeness and the military which imposes an external, limiting definition
on the individual, thus abstracting the individual's being into a
manipulable form.

The novel's opening scene presents this relationship metaphorically.
The first thing one sees is the crowd itself, that "...one vast tongueless brotherhood of dread and anxiety" (p. 9), which flows, "pressed on by the weight of its own converging mass...stopping now because of its own massy congested weight..." (p. 10). The crowd confronts the symbols of the military, the three allied nations' sentries and watches the perfectly executed ritual of the raising of the three flags precisely at daybreak. The cavalry, "led by a light tank," parts the crowd, leaving a cordoned path through their midst. This is an extremely important image because it portrays the force with which the rigid order of the military imposes its will. But the hold is tenuous because it has a difficult time establishing the desired order, and only with the force of its machinery, the tank, can the military establish its order. Even then, the cordon of soldiers could not maintain the order without the tacit consent of the people.

Then, the first car containing the supreme commander and two allied generals speeds along the pathway through the crowd. As the troops present arms, "...the car seemed to progress on one prolonged crash of iron as on invisible wings with steel feathers..." (p. 17). Faulkner's description here makes it clear that what is important is not the individuality of any of the three generals but the pennon, the symbol of supreme authority and the "rigid glitter of aides," significant of the power maintained by the very iron of the guns clashed in salute. Above all, the description is one not of persons but of prescribed ritual and the generality of classification. Then follows the repetition of the "curiously
"identical" lorries bearing the mutinous regiment.

The last lorry, containing the corporal and his twelve followers, drives along the path, and of the massed people in this military ritual, the corporal alone loudly proclaims his ineffaceable individuality. The lorry itself, though identical to the others, seems different because it contains only thirteen men. The men, though identically dressed, seem different because of their chains and their faces which were not "dazed and spent," but "grave, attentive, watchful" (p. 20). Of the thirteen, four are different because they are not French. Finally, of these four, the corporal himself stands out:

...now the crowd itself had discerned that the fourth one was alien still somehow even to the other three...He stood near the front, his hands resting quietly on the top rail, so that the loop of chain between his wrists and the corporal's stripes on his sleeve were both visible, with an alien face like all the other twelve, a mountain peasant's face like the last three, a little younger than several of them, looking down at the fleeing sea of eyes and gaped mouths and fists with the same watchfulness as the other twelve, but with neither the bafflement nor the concern--a face merely interested, attentive, and calm, with something else in it which none of the others had: a comprehension, understanding, utterly free of compassion, as if he had already anticipated without censure or pity the uproar which rose and paced and followed the lorry...(p. 21).

The corporal is thus singled out because his very being announces his selfhood as the pennon of the first car announced the rank of the man it carried. The corporal faces the crowd unafraid, neither wanting nor needing the protection of anonymity. The supreme general stands out be-
cause of his rank, his classification in the military ritual; the corporal stands out because his actions and his expression declare that he is an individual.

With the same gaze that the crowd remarked, the corporal looks at the supreme commander and the terms of Faulkner's description alter:

...the peasant's face above the corporal's chevrons and the shackled wrists in the speeding lorry, and the gray inscrutable face above the stars of supreme rank and the bright ribbons of honour and glory on the Hotel steps looking at each other across the fleeting instant...the old generalissimo turned, his two confreres turning with him, flanking him in rigid protocol; the three sentries clashed and stamped to present arms as the limber and glittering young aide sprang and opened the door. (p. 21).

The confrontation is presented in the abstract, impersonal terms which the military can handle. The shackles and chevrons of an accused corporal face the stars and ribbons of the army's highest officer. This is the realm of epistemology and we have witnessed the confrontation of two opposing modes of perception. The general can only represent that most rigid of social structures, the military. The terms of its perceptions must always be abstract classifications which do not denote an individual but the place in the "rigid protocol" which that individual represents. In such a system, the symbols and titles themselves assume more importance than their wearer. By his actions, the corporal demands to be seen in his humanity, his selfhood. By deliberately and methodically going against the dictates of the military, the corporal demands that others recognize his individual will to act, to form his own self-con-
cept which is outside the domain of the imposed military structure and which cannot be rendered in abstractions. This is the central conflict in the novel and each segment of its multiple plot turns on it.

Throughout the novel, the military way of life consistently involves a process which works against individuation to produce the perfect military specimen bereft of all identity save his symbols of rank and achievement within the system. The military, however, is but part of a "design vast in scope" which has actually planned the war:

...the Prime Ministers and Premiers and Secretaries...and the modest unsung omnipotent ones who were the priests of simple money...politicians, lobbyists...ordained ministers of churches and all the other accredited travelling representatives of the vast solvent organizations...which control by coercion or cajolery man's morals and actions and all his mass-value for affirmation or negation—all that vast powerful terror-inspiring representation which...comes indeed into its own in war, finding its true apotheosis then, in iron conclave now decreeing for half the earth a design vast in its intention to demolish a frontier and vaster still in its furious intention to obliterate a people...(pp. 209-210).

It is this array of inertia-filled forces for the obliteration of the individual that the corporal and his likenesses, Sutterfield and the British runner, oppose.

Sutterfield, who is not an "ordained minister," is analogous to the corporal, and both carry the same almost inarticulate message which is a witness not to God but to man. Sutterfield's message is simply one of acceptance of man as he is, perception of man in his unity:

36 See pages 163 and 180.
Evil is a part of man, evil and sin and cowardice, the same as repentance and being brave. You got to believe in all of them or believe in none of them. Believe that man is capable of all of them, or he ain't capable of none. (p. 184).

As the corporal carries the weight of numerous parallels to Christ, several of the novel's other references to Christ are connected with Sutterfield. In his "bearing witness" to man, he is like "Jesus Christ who is the true witness." He also takes on the responsibility of telling the groom "...how the head of heaven knows he ought to act" (p. 184). When the lawyer questions Sutterfield about the money won with the horse, Sutterfield responds with the faith that it will be sufficient. "Like the loaves and the fishes?" the lawyer asks (p. 163). The analogy is not denied. Also, Sutterfield carries the same message of pacifism potently enough to convince a rich widow that her money supporting her dead son's air squadron is being used wrongly. With that money, he starts the société, a simple sanctuary of belief. Sutterfield, with his beliefs in the integrity of the individual man becomes "Tooleman," everyman, as does the corporal in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The British runner assimilates the corporal's example and Sutterfield's words of belief, and it is his developing insights from meditation to final act which provide the reader with a significant interpretation of their words and actions.

As a commissioned officer, the runner begins to understand the involuted and rigid nature of the military. He then forces the hierarchy to demote him because he realizes that he himself cannot be free (the word

37 Revelations 1.5.
is his) until he releases the men below him and by that act, affirms that they are all individuals, all unclassifiable. Then, as a result of the mutiny instigated by the corporal, the runner can articulate his realization: "...even ruthless and all-powerful and unchallengeable Authority would be impotent before that massed unresisting undemanding passivity" (p. 64). "Authority cannot deal with those who deny its very premises. The runner puts this knowledge together with the belief in man gained from Sutterfield and plans not just a mutiny but a mass rejection of war and "Authority." "What he was armed with was capable of containing all of time, all of man!" (p. 189). When his scheme is successful and the men in the trenches rise and affirm their individual power to decide for themselves and thus renounce "Authority," the military's only possible response is to destroy them. But the runner gets the final word, for he appears, mutilated by that shelling, at the Old General's state funeral to throw at his casket the abstract symbols and phrases representative of the military's view of man as only a "functioning machine." The runner then states his own affirmation: "'That's right,' he said: 'Tremble. I'm not going to die. Never'" (p. 392). The Quartermaster General, who is holding the runner's head in his lap, replies, "I am not laughing...What you see are tears" (p. 392). This conjunction of tears and laughter echoes Sutterfield's words of acceptance of the whole man: "[Tears and laughter] are all the same to Him; He can grieve for both of them" (p. 183), because they are both the expressions of an individual heart in the totality of its humanity.
Similarly, the corporal had countered all of the temptations, couched in the irrefutable logic of state and organized church, with the profound silence of his humanity or with the simply asserted humanity of his followers.

Faulkner's Christ would bring a salvation which is related neither to the fact of physical death nor to the horrors of war. Rather, it is salvation from the anonymity which inevitably accompanies the reduction of man's individuality into an inflexible category. This salvation, too, involves a kind of religion, but it has nothing to do with the institutional Christianity so roundly condemned in *Light in August* and rejected by the corporal in *A Fable*. This religion has its only belief in man himself; it is essentially the belief that the individual is worth whatever it takes to understand him, to perceive him as he is, and the faith that such perception is possible. This belief contains the paradox that man's life accepted in its wholeness, "the vast burden of his long inexplicable, incomprehensible tradition and journey" (p. 50), is his divinity.

*A Fable* is Faulkner's most concentrated use of the Christian myth, and is also his most difficult novel from a stylistic point of view. Joseph Gold has stated that the difficulty arises because Faulkner tries "...to take a rational approach to the irrational, the mythical." On the contrary, I think that Faulkner's method here is not rational, but the irrational method of the metaphor. The fundamental element in metaphor

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is the undeniable logic of analogy: it purports to establish a pre-
cise relationship between two things. But the content of the metaphor
quickly moves into the illogical since the objects it compares are
logically unrelated, like crowds of people and "fields of harvest wheat."
The metaphor forces one to see an object from a new perspective because of
the unexpectedness of the implied comparison, and one cannot necessarily
depend upon his preconceptions to be of much use. Similarly, A Fable
presents a multitude of analogies which form a subtle pattern of
various juxtapositionings of the novel's elements. It is in that shifting
pattern that the novel's artistic statement lies. The seemingly dis-
jointed segments of the novel, the Old General's life, the horse racing
episode, David Levine's disillusionment, finally take on a startling
unity like that of the units of a metaphor.

For an example, the novel's opening scene, as I have already in-
dicated, presents the novel's central conflicts not by direct statement
nor by narrating a physical or psychological struggle. The conflict is
presented by means of a series of visual images which are simply juxta-
posed in the narrative without further development or authorial comment:
the military men with their symbols and rituals, standing in rigid at-
tention; the formless mass of people temporarily controlled by the military
order; the corporal, relaxed, facing without fear both the hostility of
the crowd and the detached neutrality of the military. The tone of the
narrator is completely objective, and the chapter's power and any trans-
latable statement of meaning are derived from the dynamic interplay of
these images. This is the technique of the metaphor which presents
without comment a juxtaposition of two images.

One could at this point object that I have presented nothing new,
that such a technique can be found in any number of scenes in particular
novels. While that may be true, my point is that this technique is the
primary structural principle which gives A Fable its coherence. This
same technique provides the key to understanding the relationship be­
tween the race horse episode and the rest of the novel. Again, two
images, though now quite complex are juxtaposed and an analogy is im­
plied: the groom has cast the existence of the horse into a rigid mold
just as the generals have done to the people. Both processes have a long
unbroken tradition and both melt into the single tradition "...of earth's
splendid rapers" (p. 140). The final significance of the two parallel
stories results from their juxtaposition. Neither is complete in itself
but depends upon the reader's simultaneous perception of the two images.

Finally, this metaphorical structure is also employed when Faulkner
superimposes the Christian myth on the narrative of the mutinous regiment.
The juxtaposition of the corporal's rebellion against "Authority," his
assertion of his "self," with his superficial Christ-like attributes re­
sults in the reader's perception of the corporal's divinity in his humanity
and of man's salvations in the individual's unmitigated and uncompromising
assertion of the primacy of his being. Again, the reader must perceive
simultaneously the two images of the corporal as man and as Christ.

A Fable's dependence upon this perceptual simultaneity is both its
strength and, ultimately, its flaw. To the extent that it is successful, it allows for a rich complexity of vision as I have tried to indicate in my analysis above. Moreover, it permits a kind of universality since the combining of the images of Christ, the corporal, Sutterfield and the runner admits a timelessness to the novel. The struggle depicted herein is a battle that man first began when he grouped together to divide his labor and thus assumed roles. The battle can never really be lost or won since societal structure is a necessity and societal roles, therefore, inevitable. Although "Authority" builds more powerful weapons, there will be "runners" who throw its symbols of rigidity back into its face. In other words, the struggle is but repeated through each camp's various avatars from generation to generation. The metaphorical structure better than any other kind can emphasize this essential identity of images.

However, such a metaphorical structure is doomed to a degree of failure because the novelist cannot overcome the sheer linear time involved in reading a lengthy fictional work. Inevitably, the reader first perceives the images as a succession of events because he must read them in succession. In combatting this inevitability, Faulkner occasionally lapses into tedium because of the repetition and into obscurity because of his style. Nevertheless, the novel remains an interesting experimentation with allegorical form.

When one examines Faulkner's developing use of the Christian myth, he can see that A Fable is an extension of Faulkner's concerns with the primary opposition between a mechanical, oppressive structure which would
deprive the individual of life experienced in its wholeness and of his attempts to express his "self" by living his experiences in freedom from external constrictions. A Fable employs some of the same basic structural devices which shape earlier novels. As in The Sound and the Fury, the chapter names are the days in the week of Christ's judgment, crucifixion and resurrection, and although the novel's time present is primarily limited to these days, Faulkner uses a kind of flashback technique, for as much as forty years in the case of the Old General, to fill in each of the major characters' lives and to indicate how he arrived at this point in time with this particular modus vivendi. As in Light in August, Faulkner has so fixed a character's life as to indicate that in certain ways, the character is parallel to Christ. Therefore, in order to illustrate Faulkner's development toward the ideas and techniques of A Fable, I will return to his "apprentice" works, Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, Sartoris, in which the myth appears on the level of allusion, and work through the novels of his "middle period" in which the myth is a primary element, The Sound and the Fury and Light in August.
CHAPTER I

Although the Christian myth is not dominant in Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, or Sartoris, they are important nonetheless because in these novels we can detect a particular attitude toward it that in the later works emerges as one of the major ideas. In these three works, the myth appears, for the most part, only on the level of allusion.

Soldier's Pay, Faulkner's World War I novel, is a book of not very subtle irony. The mutilated and dying soldier, Donald Mahon, returns from the battle field to a rather indifferent community which is no longer interested in either war or war heroes. We see this indifference from the opening scene on the train to the scene of Mahon's sparsely attended funeral. What interest the community does show is but morbid curiosity. They really cannot bear to look at what they have caused. The novel is quite reminiscent of Hemingwayesque disillusionment, and, as Hyatt Waggoner says, "...the disillusioned, returning soldiers, drinking to deaden their awareness of the great nothingness behind and before them, are like classroom examples of lost generation attitudes."¹

Most of the characters in Soldier's Pay are motivated by selfishness. The constant awareness of Mahon's rapidly approaching death pervades the entire novel. So, the general impression one gets is that of a completely disjointed society with only an occasional humane response

to be found in it. There is also an exasperating feeling of incompleteness because no one in the novel is able to fulfill himself. Margaret Powers and Joe Gilligan do not really express the love that they feel for one another, and they admit that they have failed in their attempt to aid Donald. Cecily Saunders marries George Farr, but returns from the honeymoon in tears. The rector, Donald's father, cannot maintain his illusions of Donald's eventual recovery. Emmy receives no solace for her now lost love for Donald. Januarius Jones, though he finally succeeds in having Emmy's body, gets that and no more; her mind and heart are filled with anguish over Donald's death.

Coupled with this rather pessimistic view of man's condition is a view of God, or the controlling power, as detached from and indifferent to man. Margaret Powers "...thought of her husband youngly dead in France in a recurrence of fretful exasperation with having been tricked by a wanton Fate: a joke amusing to no one."2 A few pages later, this idea is reinforced when Margaret and Joe are discussing Mahon's lamentable position, and Margaret says, "Everything is funny. Horribly funny" (p. 44). Even Rector Mahon in his remark to Joe at the end of the novel seems to yield to this view: "God is circumstance, Joe" (p. 317). There is also a series of adjectival phrases describing a "...detachment impersonal as God" (p. 45; see also pp. 27, 89, 151, and 271). Faulkner, however, goes even further and connects this god with the inevitable movement of time. Not only are there repeated references to the diurnal

2 William Faulkner, *Soldier's Pay* (New York; [1926] 1954), p. 36. All further references are to this edition and will appear parenthetically within the text.
movement from spring to summer (see, for example, pages 22, 37, 252, 284, 309 and 315), but there are also overt statements about the continuous, all-enveloping movement of the earth. When Cecily Saunders is lying in her bed, "Lying on her back in her bed, in her dark room, she, too, heard the hushed sounds of night, smelled the sweet scents of spring and dark and growing things: the earth, watching the wheel of the world, the terrible calm, inevitability of life, turning through the hours of darkness, passing its dead center point and turning faster, drawing the waters of dawn up from the hushed cistern of the east, breaking the slumber of the sparrows" (p. 244). Also, twice in the novel Faulkner describes the clock in the town square, ironically, as a "benignant god" (pp. 235 and 313). The cumulative effect of these references is to establish a tension between this inhuman and uncaring "clock-god" and the supposedly Christian setting. There are also copious allusions to classical mythology. Jones is several times compared to a satry or a faun, and after he trips over a bucket of water, to a "sodden Venus"; Cecily is called a hamadryad; the rector is referred to as Jove. There are also passing references to Atalanta, Cerberus, Mirandola and Mercury. Although he draws few conclusions about them, Richard Adams lists the occurrences of such allusions; Walter Brylowski also enumerates them, concluding that they really are not integrated into the novel and, "self-conscious as they are, may serve only as evidence that in his first novel, Faulkner was interested in one area of myth." Taken as a cumulative

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4 Brylowski, op. cit., p. 47.
effect rather than examined individually, however, the weight of the imagery of the impersonal God and the allusions to pagan mythology overpower the Christian setting and suggest that Christianity is no longer an operative force in society. In the words of Edmond Volpe, "Faulkner's juxtaposition in the novel of the Pan image with Parson Mahon whose god is Circumstance produces the antiphonal cry of the modern world: Pan is dead and so is God." A pattern of references to Christianity reinforce the picture of utter disillusionment. This pattern begins in the first chapter with the long parade of expletives, God, hell, and Christ. Nearly every page of the first chapter contains at least one such expletive. This is, of course, the scene of the drunken soldiers whose verbal motif, even in their inebriation is "Ain't war hell" (p. 9-10). As proof of that hell, Donald Mahon, the war victim, is introduced, and we are presented with "...a world that had forgotten Spring" (p. 37).

Several further allusions repeat this feeling of sterility and helplessness. The first, that of the "falling cross," appears early in the novel in the scene of the meeting of Jones and the Rector:

Januarius Jones, caught in the spire's illusion of slow ruin, murmured: 'Watch it fall, sir... it was ever my childish delight to stand beneath a spire while clouds are moving overhead. The illusion of slow falling is perfect. Have you ever experienced it, sir?'
'To be sure I have, though it has been...more years than I care to remember'...from the Gothic mass of the church the spire rose, a prayer imperishable in bronze, immaculate in its illusion of slow ruin... (pp. 57-58).

We later learn that even the rector no longer believes in the principles which the spire and his clerical collar symbolize. They are empty like the idle, meaningless chatter of Jones as he makes small talk and flouts his classical and philosophical education:

'...we of this age believe that he who may be approached informally, without the intercession of an office-boy...is not worth the approaching. We purchase our salvation as we do our real estate. Our God...need not be compassionate, he need not be very intelligent. But he must have dignity.' (p. 58)

Such a concept can exist only because, for these characters, the divine element in life is, like the church spire, disassociated from the earth, a notion that is reinforced by a series of references to a disinterested deity: "enigmatic as a god" (p. 89), "impersonal as Omnipotence" (p. 271).

The climax of such allusions occurs at Donald Mahon's funeral service with the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord. Whosever believeth in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (p. 297). In context, we can only take these words ironically because we have yet to see anyone who could meet the qualifications for such a resurrection. Then, these words are juxtaposed to the scene in which Jones finally takes Emmy to bed. But surely we must take into account the quality of the scene. The lack of love between Jones and Emmy suggests its ironic intention. For Jones, the act is merely another method of bolstering his ego; for Emmy, it is but a sublimation and a release of the emotions which have been building up inside her since Donald's return: "It was Jones who had
touched her, but anyone would have been the same and she turned in a passion of weeping, clinging to him" (p. 297). Immediately after Jones and Emmy have left for the bedroom, the narrator says, "The sun had gone, had been recalled as quickly as a usurer's note and the doves fell silent or went away" (p. 298). This world had forgotten spring because its patron saint is Narcissus. After one of his attempts to impose himself on Cecily Saunders, Jones looks at "...the bulky tweeded Narcissus of himself in the polished wood" (p. 92). Also, at the end of the novel, the trees are described as leaning over a stream, Narcissus-like" (p. 309). In fact, Narcissus is the god to whom all of the characters pray since each of them is concerned only with fulfilling his own desires, and as a result, can have no significant relationship with anyone. Such narcissistic involution coupled with the references to a god who is removed from the concerns of living, who is "...the sorry jade Circumstance" (p. 30), indicates the irrelevance and ineffectiveness of the orthodox Christian concept of God.

Two final references, however, because of their strategic placement and their strength, suggest a positive conclusion to the novel. The fertility of the natural world and the allusions to fertility myths posit, if only by implication, an alternative to the rampant sterility, and, similarly, these two allusions suggest an alternative view of the Christian myth which would lead toward fulfillment rather
than frustration.

The first of these allusions occurs after Joe Gilligan has seen Margaret leave on the train and has gotten drunk and sober again. He walks back toward town and passes some Negro cabins:

The cabins were dark but from them came soft meaningless laughter and slow unemphatic voices cheerful yet somehow filled with all the old despair of time and breath. Under the moon, quavering with the passion of spring and flesh...something pagan using the white-man's conventions as it used his clothing, hushed and powerful not knowing its own power: "Sweet chariot...comin' fer to ca'y me home...Yes, Jesus, comin' fer to ca'y me hooooome..." (pp. 212-213).

This scene is tremendously effective, partially because it is placed between Joe's temporary achievement of consolation in liquor and his final, meaningless battle with Jones. In both the Negroes' song and the narrator's comments, we sense an ability to attain some sort of truce with the seeming absurdity, "the old despairs of time and breath." The passage strongly hints that the Negroes have somehow managed to accept this despair and live in spite of it. It is significant, too, that they have "used the white man's conventions," but have changed them to fit their own particular human needs. The passage presents a surcease from the desperate feeling of frustration and exasperation felt throughout the novel. For the reader, the "meaningless laughter" and the "slow unemphatic voices" are completely new and fresh experiences and they, once mentioned, point up their conspicuous absence until now.
The hymn, with its literal meaning of looking toward a final reward in the afterlife, becomes a symbol of the peace attainable here. It voices a kind of spiritual and emotional freedom attained not by renunciation but by acceptance of both the despair and the passion of "spring and faith," even though both will inevitably yield to the force of time.  

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This feeling is recaptured and enlarged in the final scene in which Rector Mahon and Gilligan hear part of a Negro church service.  

The singing drew nearer and nearer; at last, crouching among a clump of trees beside the road, they saw the shabby church with its canting travesty of a spire. Within it was a soft glow of kerosene serving only to make thicker the imminence of sex after harsh labor along the mooned land; and from it welled the crooning submerged passion of the dark race. It was nothing; it was everything; then it swelled to an ecstasy, taking the white man's words as readily as it took his remote God and made a personal Father of Him. Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. All the longing of  

6 There actually has been a subtle preparation for this scene; several times earlier, there have been suggestions of this same simplicity and natural faith. One Negro, speaking of Donald, says to another, "Well, he's been closter to the Lord than you'll ever git" (p. 11). Then Faulkner describes the Negro children walking along the street, "...who seeming to have no arbitrary hours, seemingly free of all compulsions of time or higher learning, went to and from school at any hour of a possible lighted eight..." (p. 115). Finally, when the funeral procession passes, a Negro says, "Well, Jesus! We all gwine dat way some day" (p. 296).
mankind for a Oneness with something somewhere. Feed Thy Sheep, 0 Jesus...Feed Thy Sheep, 0 Jesus. The voices rose full and soft. There was no organ. No organ was needed as above the harmonic passion of bass and baritone soared a clear soprano of women's voices like a flight of gold and heavenly birds. They stood together in the dust, the rector in his shapeless black and Gilligan in his new hard serge, listening, seeing the shabby church become beautiful with mellow longing, passionate and sad. Then, the singing died, fading away along the mooned land, inevitable with tomorrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation; and they turned townward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes. (p. 319).

As in the earlier passage, the juxtaposition of the Negroes' and the white man's churches is made both explicitly and symbolically. The "canting travesty of a spire" recalls the "falling spire" of the rector's church. Here, however, the spire is really tilted, reflecting the Negroes' adaptation of the white man's "clock-god" of circumstance. The Negroes have humanized what has become for the white man an empty shell of disbelief, and they have been able to achieve an atonement, making themselves "at-one," symbolized in the harmonious mixture of male and female voices. Their acceptance of their own humanity is the important factor. Their kerosene lanterns thicken "the imminence of sex" which becomes a palpable part of their worship. The avoidance of sexuality and meaningful physical responses has been one of the main problems in the lives of all the characters in the novel except for Donald and Emmy in their youth. Jones and George Farr, each in his own narcissistic way, is obsessed with his maleness and his response to women is an engagement only of the body and the ego. Cecily Saunders is afraid of her sexuality. Margaret Powers seems to have developed a phobia for close relationships as
a result of the death of her husband, to whom she gave herself "...for
the purpose of getting of each other a brief ecstasy" (p. 36). Gilligan,
in spite of his warmth, allows rigid social mores to curb his self-
expression. On the other hand, Faulkner here implies that the Negroes,
perhaps intuitively, realize the inevitability of "to-morrow and sweat
and death and damnation," and they readily accept these things as well
as their sexuality as part of the pattern of life itself. So, the Negro
church service, the voicing of the name of Jesus, are not theological
abstractions but the Negroes' voicing of their recognition of their com-
plete humanity which they see reflected in Christ, the perfectly human
god, and which we see reflected in the image of the tilted spire. Nor is
their achievement of unity an otherworldly thing; the harmony in their
singing mirrors the harmony they have achieved with one another.

In Soldier's Pay, the allusions to Christ actually serve two different
purposes, then. In the context of the exasperating world of social pre-
scriptions and theological abstractions, such as those voiced by the
rector and Jones, in the world of the falling spire, God is dead, or
at least is what the people demand him to be, a detached "God of cir-
cumstance." In such a world the concepts of divinity and humanity are
mutually exclusive, and a reconciliation of the two is impossible. The
things which we see connected with God, the spire and the clock tower, are
above man, unapproachable and unchanging. Jones' statement early in the
novel which appears to be more of his verbal camouflage intended to im-
press and seduce, is actually quite an apt observation: "Our God...need
not be compassionate, he need not be very intelligent. But he must have dignity" (p. 58). But behind this social structure is a more profoundly human realm in which one can achieve a union with God in his humanity. There is no intrinsic dignity in the "canting spire" because the concept of dignity, which is but a wall, has been replaced by simplicity. It is significant that the Negroes sing "Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus," for this at once recognizes the need for physical and spiritual fulfillment. It is, of course, the world of the Negro church service which is rendered desirable in the novel, and in that world Faulkner emphasizes the Negroes' adaptation of the religion to reflect their humanity. In fact, Faulkner explicitly calls it "...something pagan using the white man's conventions" (p. 312; emphasis mine). They bring Jesus out of the remote sky and put him on their canting spire, and He becomes a symbol for an achievement of "oneness" on earth. Through a contact with this kind of faith, and prepared for it by the force of their own newly-felt losses, Gilligan and the rector sense the significance of what is being expressed within that church; they can, I think, not only feel but savour "the dust in their shoes."

When we turn to Faulkner's second novel, *Mosquitoes*\(^7\), we discover, not unexpectedly, that with the radical shift in subject matter and tone, there is a concurrent shift in the nature of the allusions which are of a more "literary" nature. They range from overt allusions to

\(^7\) Millgate (*The Achievement of William Faulkner*, pp. 23 - 24), indicates that this novel was actually written after *Sartoris*. But I shall deal with them in order of publication since the order of writing of these early novels has little bearing on my argument.
literary figures, such as Shelley and Ibsen and Shakespeare, to thinly disguised echoes of T. S. Eliot and Thomas Carlyle. In fact, the novel as a whole has been styled an imitation of both Aldous Huxley and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This, again, is not very surprising since one of the main concerns of much of the novel and of the dialogue in the novel is art. The center of conflict in the book seems to turn on the opposition between talking and doing, in terms of creative activity as well as life in general. The voyage on the *Nausikaa*, on which are gathered esthetes, artists and two "common" people, is a device

8 "Spring and the cruelest months were gone, the cruel months, the wantons that break the fat hybernant dullness of time." (p. 10), sounds like a prose rendering of the first stanza of "The Waste Land": "April is the cruelest month, breeding/Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/Memory and desire, stirring/Dull roots with spring rain./Winter kept us warm, covering/Earth in forgetful snow, feeding/A little life with dried tubers..."

9 The passage on page 231 of *Mosquitoes* in which Fairchild muses about the coming of consciousness and the concomitant loss of spontaneity and exuberance for living is quite reminiscent of Carlyle's essay "Characteristics" in which he diagnoses his age's illnesses as stemming from consciousness of consciousness.

10 See, for example, Olga Vickery, *op. cit.*. p. 8; Frederick Hoffman, *William Faulkner* (new York, 1961), 42; and Edmond Volpe, *op. cit.*. p. 57.


12 The name of the yacht, of course, is also the name of the daughter of King Alcinous in Homer's *Odyssey*. She discovers Odysseus who has been shipwrecked and brings him to her father's court where he gains favor by excelling in their athletic competitions and by recounting the history of his travels. The latter so moved the king that he provided for Odysseus to be returned to Ithaca. The parallel is obvious; Mrs. Maurier thinks of herself as a *Nausikaa* to artists, so that by her help they can enter the court of the muses. The parallel is ironic because her superficiality and her preoccupation with trivia better suit her to be a *Circe* who would, if the artists abided by her wishes, detract them from their task and eventually turn them into aesthetic swine.
to concentrate on the difference between the real artist and the pretender and that between those who live their lives and those who can only talk. Olga Vickery, who has defined as clearly as anyone the structure and the concerns of the novel, says: "One of the basic attitudes running throughout all Faulkner's work is the view that language and logic act to obscure truth rather than to reveal it. Accordingly, a primary concern is to demonstrate the barrenness that attends all discussion. In *Mosquitoes*, as in the later novels, truth is dependent not on words but on a moment of comprehension which usually occurs when the individual is least concerned with intellectual activity."\(^{13}\) Similarly, the art of living is dependent not on the ability to explain one's plans and experiences, but to act. This is the difference between Talliafero and Mrs. Maurier on one hand, and Jenny and Pete on the other.

Such a "moment of comprehension" as Vickery describes occurs when Gordon, Dawson Fairchild, and Julius are getting wildly drunk after their return to New Orleans.\(^{14}\) The metaphor with which Fairchild chooses to express his revelation is that of Christ's sacrifice, and it is the key to Faulkner's rather limited use of the Christian myth in the novel. Fairchild says that creative, artistic genius "...is that Passion Week of the heart, that instant of timeless beatitude...that passive state of the

\(^{13}\) Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

\(^{14}\) Besides this and one other similar passage which I discuss later, the allusions to the myth in *Mosquitoes* are relatively insignificant. There are two descriptions of the cathedral spire on the New Orleans skyline (pp. 14 and 28), and two rather wordy discussions of religion which seem to be only indications of the meaningless semantic juggling which occupies much of the novel (pp. 40-42; 229-230). There are also several expletives using God or Christ, and a description of a painting of the Madonna and Child which Mrs. Maurier purchased (p. 17), indicative of her complete lack of artistic taste.
heart with which the mind, the brain, has nothing to do at all, in which the hackneyed accidents which make up this world—love and life and death and sex and sorrow—brought together by chance in perfect proportions, take on a kind of splendid and timeless beauty.\textsuperscript{15}

It is the involvement of the heart which is the important factor in both art and, by implication, the Passion Week. All things which constitute human life, "love and death and sex and sorrow," are a part of this response. As in the earlier passage in Soldier's Pay, we see here the expression of a need for a harmonious conjunction of those factors which are the essence of man's humanity. The concept of God, or at least of the god in Christ, as something extra-human is removed and the expression of divinity is found in "the hackneyed accidents which make up this world." As the use of the word "timeless" indicates, this fits Adams' description of "an artificially fixed and isolated moment...which has the effect of compressing a life time into a single event."\textsuperscript{16} In the above passage, Faulkner indicates that this kind of experience is achieved when one allows the wholeness of life to subsume him completely so that for the moment, his individuality is

\textsuperscript{15} William Faulkner, Mosquitoes (New York, [1927] 1955), p. 339. All further references are to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text. Faulkner continued to link art and Christ's sacrifice, and in various interviews made explicit remarks on the subject: "Art is not only man's most supreme expression; it is also the salvation of mankind" (James Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., Lion in the Garden (New York, 1968), p. 71.) He later remarked, "...the species which created the fine picture, the music,...the books, is too valuable for omnipotence, God whoever he is, to let perish. That is the immortality of the race, not of the individual" (J. Fant and R. Ashley, eds., Faulkner at West Point (New York, 1964), p. 114).

\textsuperscript{16} Adams, op. cit., p. 7.
not lost but elevated and made almost tangible as he participates in the force of life itself. The moment is "timeless" because Fairchild is temporarily removed from the artificial structures of his immediate surroundings and because this moment, whenever it occurs, is always the same profound experience. The participants are not of a particular moment in history, but achieve identity because they have experienced the essence of life.

The Passion, then, is an expression of an achievement of unity which is emphasized by Fairchild's own feelings immediately after he makes this statement: "He leaned against the wall, staring into the hushed mad sky, hearing the dark and simple heart of things" (p. 340). Through his "epiphany," Fairchild gains not only an insight into art but a complete experience of life, expressed by this feeling of intuitive communication of hearts, his and nature's. It is a temporary surmounting of conflict in a moment of "splendid and timeless beauty." Paradoxically, that moment is achieved through those things which bring about conflict--the seemingly opposing forces of love and death, for example. So apparently one moves, by virtue of his humanity, from one level of awareness in which he can only see these elements in conflict, to a higher, more encompassing vision in which the conflicts resolve themselves into a unified pattern: it is indeed, as the narrator of Soldier's Pay remarks, "per ardua ad astra."

Perhaps in order to further our understanding of this passage, we should examine a similar incident which occurs at the beginning of the
novel and involves Gordon, the sculptor, and his thoughts which are again expressed in terms of the Christian myth. Just after he is visited by Mrs. Maurier and her niece, Patricia, Gordon goes for a walk along the dock, thinking of art and Patricia and his desire for both. He feels a strong sense of conflict within himself since he thinks that involvement with Patricia, even to the extent of going on the yachting party, would interfere with his work. Then, he looks in the water:

\[
\text{stars in my hair and beard i am crowned} \\
\text{with stars christ by his own hand an} \\
\text{autogethsemane carved darkly out of pure} \\
\text{space but not rigid no no an unmuscled} \\
\text{wallowing fecund and foul...(p. 48)).}
\]

Several ideas present themselves at once here. First, there is the equation of god the creator with the artistic creator, which is actually continued from an earlier paragraph in the same section, "shapes out of a chaos more satisfactory than bread to the belly form by a madmans dream gat on the body of chaos" (p. 47). But then the later passage brings in the mediator, Christ in the garden of agony, Gethsemane, and it is a self-willed sacrifice, losing the rigidity of a remote god-in-heaven who was compelled by a scheme for salvation. In fact, the repeated phrase, "cursed and forgotten of god" emphasizes the absence of the remote godhead from the creative acts of both the artist and Christ and is reminiscent of Christ's cry from the cross, "Eloi, eloi, lama sabacthani."\(^{17}\) It is also an artistic vision of Christ connected not with

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\(^{17}\) Mark 15.34.
his godly omnipotence but with his "unmuscled wallowing fecund and foul." This, it seems to me, looks forward to Isaac McCaslin's statement that man is god when he unites with woman in the sexual act, which is, like art, fertile and creative. As the passages here imply, the pain and pleasure are an inextricable part of creation, of living, for Gordon immediately thinks of the placid tragic body of a woman who conceives without pleasure bears without pain" (p. 48). At the end of the book, Gordon, after completing his bust of Mrs. Maurier, and after getting quite drunk, seeks out a prostitute to fulfill his physical desire. Gordon still perceives his life in two distinct halves, artistic and sexual or spiritual and physical. However, as the continual metaphorical conjunction of art and physical fertility indicates, these two selves are but part of the same drive for self-expression. The result, then, seems to point us back to the Negro church in Soldier's Pay and the expression there of "oneness" through the acceptance of sweat, sex and death; even those very words are repeated in the scene in Mosquitoes. In fact, one can see the same duality in both novels. Each presents a set of characters who seem to embody sterility because they depend upon the rationality of logic and of words to explain the profundity of experience which is at the heart of both life and art. In contrast to this emotional impotence, Faulkner presents that experience itself without explanation, and each time, he presents it in sexual terms. The essence of life is creativity and that requires

18 "I think that every man and woman at the instant when it don't even matter whether they marry or not, I think that whether they marry then or afterward or don't never, at that instant the two of them together were God" (Go Down, Moses (New York, 1942), p. 348).
the participation of the whole being at once.

In *Sartoris* the use of the Christian myth, though certainly not dominant, does help to shape the narrative and, particularly toward the end of the novel, provides the basis for a rather complex, concise and quite significant set of juxtapositions. With *Sartoris*, of course, Faulkner turns to the Yoknapatawpha County which would occupy his mind for the rest of his career, achieving, as Richard Adams notes, one of the requisite steps before "...he could emerge on the high ground of his genius." Faulkner is concerned in this first novel set in his own "postage stamp of native soil," with the conflict set off by the juxtaposition of the romanticized South and the comparatively stale, empty existence of the man in the modern South. The conflict is focused in Bayard Sartoris, the last of a long line of Bayard and John Sartorises.


\[20\] The use of the name Bayard which comes from the Romance tradition is itself indicative of the stature to which the Sartorises have elevated their legend. In his short article on *The Unvanquished*, James Kibler has identified the romantic connection here. "...Faulkner's use of the name Bayard also recalls Chevalier Bayard, the knight sans peur et sans reproche, who is said to be the main figure of the waning chivalric tradition in medieval France." In a footnote to this remark, Kibler further identifies possible allusions: "Seigneur Pierre Terrail de Bayard. Mentioned frequently in *Orlando Furioso* is Bayardo, Rinaldo's bay-coloured horse. He is praised for his strength and swiftness, many times being compared to a storm (Canto I, Stanzas 72-76; Canto 5, 82). One might possibly relate him to the bronze-coloured wild stallion that Bayard rides in *Sartoris* (pp. 132-134); but this comparison should not be carried too far. To be noted also in *Sartoris* in connection with Faulkner's use of allusions to the Middle Ages is the indirect reference to Roland on page 380." (James E. Kibler, "A Possible Source in Ariosto for Drusilla," *Mississippi Quarterly*, XXIII (1970), 321.)
The significance of the past is here fully documented. Bayard must reconcile himself, not only to the violence of his war, but to its sources in history. When his reaction to his war is seen in its shocking and excessive way, it is both an inheritance from and a check upon the legend emerging from the past...

Here again Faulkner is concerned with examining perspectives upon the truth. Bayard Sartoris cannot bring himself to accepting such violence of any kind as romantic; he is frustrated beyond belief by his own experience and his mad dash for annihilation is, therefore, a result of his having found the legend disastrously misleading.²¹

In Sartoris the Christian myth is seen in two uses of Christmas celebrations, one near the beginning of the novel and one at the end, during both of which we are concerned with the mad antics of a Bayard Sartoris. The backdrop of the Christmas festivities forms a contrast to the destructive activities of the Sartorises and points up the differences between various characters as they respond to Christmas in their own ways.

When Jenny Du Pre is first introduced into the novel, Faulkner tells of her arrival at the Sartoris home at Christmas in 1869 and of the story she brought with her of the death of Bayard Sartoris, who was shot by a Yankee cook while raiding a commissary for some anchovies. "And Bayard Sartoris' brief career swept like a shooting star across the dark plain of their mutual remembering and suffering, lighting it with a transient glare like a soundless thunder-clap, leaving a sort of radiance when it died."²² So, at the beginning of the novel, the two stars, Bayard's vio-

²² William Faulkner, Sartoris (New York, [1929] 1956), p. 18. All further references are to this edition and appear parenthetically within the text.
lent "shooting star" and the Christ's peaceful star of exultant annunciation are juxtaposed, contrasting Bayard's self-sacrifice for a jar of anchovies with Christ's act of atonement.

Then, with the later Bayard Sartoris' efforts at self-destruction, the contrast is repeated and amplified. Before killing himself, young Bayard first succeeds in being the immediate cause of the death of his grandfather who, confusingly enough, is also named Bayard. Young Bayard can no longer face the consequences of his actions, for he now has two deaths on his conscience; he also holds himself responsible for his brother's death in World War I. On the day on which he "kills" old Bayard, about two weeks before Christmas, Bayard flees to the MacCallum home which is almost completely isolated from the town. Bayard stays there until Christmas Eve. During that interval, Faulkner increases the tension in the novel and makes the reader aware of the steady, inevitable movement of time toward Christmas when Bayard will be forced to act: he must either leave or explain why he is not returning to celebrate Christmas with his family. Thus, the joy of the approaching holiday is adumbrated both by the recent death of old Bayard and the turmoil within Bayard. Bayard decides to leave the MacCallums' home, and his Christmas Eve trip to the Negro's barn is something of a travesty of the original Christmas trek to the Bethlehem stable because Bayard's actions are grounded not in hope but in despair. He has rejected life and is moving toward death. Bayard is running away from a world he cannot cope with; he cannot make the fragments of his own life, of his background and of the world which
he is experiencing mesh together into a perceivable unity. In fact, his flight from the responsibility of his acts contributes directly to the disintegration he so strongly feels. His actions, like those of the earlier Bayard, are antithetical to those of Christ because his life is exclusive and stagnant rather than inclusive and expansive.

When he arrives at the Negroes' home, Bayard's actions are juxtaposed not only to Christ's but also to the simple but meaningful response of the MacCallums and the Negro family to Christmas. For both families, "Christmas ain't Christmas lessen a feller has a little something different from ever'day" (p. 335). So they respond by making it different: for the MacCallums, it is a "store bought" turkey; for the Negro family it is a few trinkets for the children. Nonetheless, one feels the sincerity of their celebrations, for they are accompanied by other gifts they give freely to Bayard who simply receives and cannot return the gesture. Faulkner emphasizes the unquestioning faith of the MacCallums: "Perhaps he'd just stay on [with the MacCallums], without even offering that explanation which would never be demanded of him" (p. 333).

By comparison, Bayard's hypocrisy in never explaining his real reason for accepting their hospitality becomes even more odious. For the Negro family, offering their food and their blanket to Bayard is a real sacrifice since they have little indeed. The "Chris'mus" that Bayard does give in return is a few drinks of the liquor meant as a gift for his dead grandfather.

The Christian myth as represented by the Christmas festivities in
Sartoris serves as a standard against which we can measure Bayard's actions. It is representative of the harmony that can be achieved, the simple charity that can be offered, the faith that can be practised, a faith in man. All three, the MacCallums, the Negro family and the Christ story, show a simple but integrated existence in sharp contrast to Bayard's lack of love, faith and "oneness."

As in the earlier novels, the fecundity of life accepted in its totality is juxtaposed to the sterility that results from fragmenting it. Bayard, though he begets a son, is also saddled with the responsibility for two deaths, and his wife rejects Bayard's life, the Sartoris tradition, as a pattern for her son: "He isn't John. He's Benbow Sartoris!" (p. 379). Bayard's struggle can be attributed to the chasm he sees between belief and reality. He has been brought up on the charisma of the Sartoris tradition, a tradition of gallantry and noblesse oblige, exemplified by Miss Jenny's story of his namesake. As Hyatt Waggoner observes, the heroic, the beautiful stories of dead Sartorises clash with Bayard's own war experience. Although the reasons for it are never explicitly stated, Bayard's guilt feelings for his brother's death seem to stem largely from the fact that he himself did not die such a death and that he now finds such a death, even his brother's, meaningless. Bayard is caught between his attempts to deny the validity of the romantic vision and his attempts to affirm that vision because his brother died believing in it, and he does not want to betray his brother who, as Miss Jenny remarks, is the only person he has ever loved.
His own death, though he realizes its ultimate futility, is the only possible reconciliation he can see. Because he cannot reject a rigid preconception of life, he cannot live in the present. His son is born on the day Bayard dies (see page 366); however, this is not a resurrection but a rejection of Bayard and the validity of the romantic tradition of the South.

In these first three novels, then, we see Faulkner responding to the fragmentation he senses around him. He expresses a yearning for the now lost existence of man in a harmonious, unified state, of which the Christian myth is symbolic. I say "lost" because the people who appear, as the allusions suggest, to retain some connection with the wholeness of life are dissociated from the social mainstream. The Negroes in both Soldier's Pay and Sartoris are separated from modern society, the former by their "pagan" adaptations of Christianity and the latter by geographical distance. Likewise, the MacCallums live in their own, nearly self-sufficient, natural environment, with only infrequent trips to Jefferson. Mark Gordon, the artist, though living in bohemian New Orleans, has renounced the normal social activities in order to gain a total immersion in art to become, like Poe's Israfel, near the seat of God. He is nearly always, even on the yacht, separated from the crowd. He does, in fact, come away from the yachting party with an inspiration for another piece of sculpture, that of Mrs. Maurier.

23 Gordon himself makes this association. See, for example, pp. 48 and 187.
24 Using the Passion Week metaphor as a basis, perhaps it is not totally ludicrous to suggest that Gordon's "resurrection" (see page 264) has something to do with his inspiration for the bust of Mrs. Maurier.
The Sartorises, on the other hand, retain the shell of an earlier, less complicated existence in their use of the horse and carriage, for example, but theirs is merely an empty ritual. Old Bayard is, after all, at the heart of modern, economic society in his position as president of the bank. Young Bayard, however, is caught between the two worlds giving his allegiance to neither, and this kind of separation results in death. The Sartorises are the opposite of the MacCallums who can maintain a strong sense of the "family" and also live in harmony both with one another and with their environment.

It is extremely important to remember that in all three novels Faulkner not only alludes to the Christian myth but associates it with people; he shows Christ not as a theological principle but as a life style. Faulkner shapes the myth in these early novels to stand as an image of reunification. The reconciliation of man with himself and of man with man is man's apotheosis. What arises from these allusions is the sharp outline of the total humanity of Christ's sacrifice and the total humanity, striving toward divinity, of man's sacrifices. The two contexts, the Christian myth and the setting of the novels, work off each other to show shadows of divinity in man: "I still believe in man. That he still wishes, desires, wants to do better than he knows he can and occasionally he does do a little better than anybody expects of him. This man is immortal."

It is an immortality achieved on a human level.

Faulkner is, it seems to me, by no means asking for any sort of return to a previous, simplified way of living, but rather is asking for a progression from the present fragmentation to a state which will allow the parts to be put back together: "...we mustn't go back to a condition in which the dream made us think we were happy, we were free of trouble and sin. We must take the trouble and sin along with us, and we must cure that trouble and sin as we go." In his later novels, Faulkner continues to deal with this sterility and fragmentation, but his use of the Christian myth is more consistent and complete.

26 *Faulkner at Nagano*, p. 157.
CHAPTER II

In the novels of what has been called the "great middle period," Faulkner seems suddenly to discover what he meant when he wrote Fairchild's speech concerning art as "the Passion Week of the heart." His allusions to the Christian myth quickly leave the surface level of mere allusion and become a part of the structural fabric of the novel, and "the hackneyed accidents which make up this life...take on a kind of splendid and timeless beauty." One of the most intriguing critical questions is, as Irving Howe phrases it, "What happened to Faulkner between Mosquitoes and the novel that followed it in composition, *The Sound and the Fury*? What element of personal or literary experience can account for such a leap?" However, I think that one can observe a clear pattern of development in methodology, particularly from *Soldier's Pay* and *Sartoris* to the novels written in this middle period. In this chapter, I will closely examine the two novels which illustrate most clearly Faulkner's continuing preoccupation with the Christian myth, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*.

The structure of *The Sound and the Fury* is dominated by the movement in the passion week from crucifixion to resurrection, and concurrently, there is a movement from the sterile rigidity associated with the mythical allusions in the first sections to Dilsey's experience of communion with the very heart of life in the last section. Each of the days from Thursday

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through Saturday is associated with one of the men of the last generation of Compsons. Within this general framework of the Christian myth with its implicit promise of "life and that more abundantly," there is a rich texture of allusions in each of the four sections of the novel. In his germinal essay, Carvel Collins proposes that we see Benjy, Quentin, and Jason as three fragments, id, ego, and super-ego respectively, of one Freudian whole, and that taken together these three characters make one character "...in parallel with Christ but, significantly, by inversion." The Compson heirs, then, are representative of the lack of Christian love in the modern world. R. P. Adams agrees with Collins' interpretation, adding only that "...the brothers are not merged by the Freudian pattern, but it represents a potential wholeness toward which they need to grow," and that Caddy is parallel to the libido. From this somewhat altered pattern, then, Adams is able to state: "Symbolically, if Caddy could combine her three brothers into one complete, positively Christ-like man, and then commit the incest that Quentin talks about but cannot consummate, a rebirth of life as

2 Carvel Collins has pointed out that Quentin's section, which appears to be out of the passion week sequence actually occurred on Thursday, "...so that even though it is in 1910 rather than the 1928 of the other three carefully dated sections, it makes Quentin's section form with them a sequence of Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday." ("The Pairing of The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying., p. 118.)

3 Collins, op. cit., p. 117. In contrast, Sumner Power, "William Faulkner Celebrates Easter," Perspective, II (1949), 195-218, attempts to make a case for viewing Benjy as the Christ figure. But it seems to me that he grossly overstates his case by grasping for rather far-fetched parallels, and, as a result, he is far from convincing. I hardly think that one can see the hat which Dilsey puts on him before his trip to the cemetery as a crown of thorns nor the flower which Luster picks for him as coming from the Garden of Gethsemane.

4 Adams, op. cit., p. 233.
motion might result."

As inviting as such a neat structure is, since it combines the Christian myth of godly love with the fertility myths, it seems to me that it ignores an equally powerful motif present in each of the interior monologues: the function of the assertive will. As nearly every critic has pointed out, the novel concerns the decay of the Compson family in particular and, implicitly, that of the South. What we must do is discover the reasons for that demise as Faulkner presents it in the novel. Surely the novel allows one to do more than simply point to a lack of love; that is obvious enough without even looking at the novel's mythical texture. It is my contention that the mythical pattern elucidates the central thematic concern with a society that is not harmonized but is rather a conglomeration of individuals isolated by their separate wills which assert the particular pattern of order which they perceive. Therefore, before turning to the specific uses of the Christian myth in the novel, I think a fairly detailed analysis of this will to order is necessary for two important reasons. The first is to illustrate that the seemingly dissimilar activities of Benjy, Quentin and Jason are actually quite similarly motivated, and the differences are only in the external expression of that motivation. So, it seems to me that both Collins' Freudian interpretation and Adams' slight alteration of it are quite misleading because they classify the three brothers in three rigidly defined and mutually exclusive categories. Other critics have presented

5 Adams, op. cit., p. 233.
different but equally distinct categories. Joseph Gold has remarked that "...each character is recognizable by a distinctive outlook": Benjy is irrational; Jason thinks only in clichés; Quentin is "sensitive and intelligent." Walter Slatoff's analysis is based on a similar distinction between the three brothers. According to John L. Longley, "Jason embodies the instinctive, irrational love of self, the monstrous, incestuous self-concern that leaves no room for love of others." Quentin is "weak, defeatist," lacking a will to fight and so his is "...the self-inflicted death of so much sensitivity and perception." On the other hand, "Benjy's characteristics are steadfastness, loyalty, and a constancy toward the things he loves... and he is too retarded to realize these qualities do not pay." Walter Brylowski's mythic categories, according to which Benjy represents "pre-mythic thinking," Quentin, "mythic thinking," and Jason, "rational-empiric thinking," are equally misleading. Brylowski's distinction turns on the mythic quality of identification of the perceived object and the perceiver, the ideal and the real. In fact, all three brothers identify the perceived object with the perceived self, and the basis of their failure is that the central object is a human being who must

6 Joseph Gold, op. cit., p. 27.
7 Slatoff, op. cit., pp. 149-151.
9 Ibid., p. 221.
10 Ibid., p. 222.
change and who cannot or will not be dominated by an external will. Benjy's and Quentin's self-definitions are grounded in their perceptions of Caddy; when she changes, their identity must either change or be destroyed. Jason's perception of himself includes a perception of Caddy via Miss Quentin. In his section there are several references to the ties of blood and the responsibilities which that entails.\(^ {11} \)

The central concern here is that Jason's self-concept depends on his role in the community which, as he sees it, depends on Miss Quentin's actions. In effect, then, she becomes a central part of Jason's perception of himself.

The second and more important reason for introducing the analysis is that the allusions to the Christian myth in each of these three sections of the novel are directly related to the main sphere of concern in the section. Further, it is exactly because of their extremely limited perceptions that none of the Compsons can be the savior of himself or of anyone else. The voicings of their rigid stands are also their pronouncements of self-damnation.

Each of the sons of Jason Compson III is, to varying degrees, incapable of operating effectively in society, and the basic reason for that inability is that each demands that society, or at least as much of it as directly concerns him, fit into his particular ordered system of thought. In other words, each attempts to make the external world conform to his will; each is completely egocentric, and Benjy's narcissus

\(^ {11} \) See pages 199, 227, 237, 247, 260, and 263.
and the mirror and water-reflections become thematic symbols of the involuted nature of the three sons and their basic opposition to change.

Some critics, following Faulkner's statements in the Appendix to the novel and elsewhere in interviews, have seen Benjy as a kind of norm, but one can see that his demands are even more stringent and basically static than either Quentin's or Jason's. Benjy demands that everything be "in its ordered place" and if it is not, he bellows in protest. According to the Appendix, he loved Caddy; but his love, if one can really call it that, is quite conditional, for she must conform to the patterns that have been established. So when Caddy smells of perfume, has been with another male, is dressed differently as she is for her wedding, Benjy cries. He protests any change whatsoever, and he, as much as Quentin, would keep Caddy from her natural growth into sexual maturity. Significantly, Benjy reacts as Quentin does to Caddy's symbolically muddy drawers: "Caddy was all wet and muddy behind, and I started to cry and she came and squatted in the water." Benjy's concept of order is, of course, extremely elemental and is based on physical appearances alone. His responses to Caddy are basically of the same nature as his response to driving to the left of the

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13 William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York, [1929] 1956), p. 38. All further references will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically within the text.
monument: his stasis is upset and therefore his security is threatened. In one important sense, Benjy is battling time as much as Quentin or Jason, because his demands for physical stasis are completely contrary to the natural order of growth and decay. He has stopped growing at one moment of time, "He been three years old thirty years" (p. 36), and his one desire is that everything else do likewise. Benjy is limited in his sphere of activity; he cannot really act to change things because he has no concept of the possibility of change. He cannot impose his personality on events, because he has no personality. He can only scream when his pattern is distorted, and of such screams there is an abundance.

Quentin's demand for order is based not on physical appearances but on a metaphysical concept of virtue or honour which he sees as a method of combatting the "saddest word," "temporary." His monologue, therefore, is to a large extent a remembered dialogue with his father, the incurable alcoholic and cynic. His monologue is a recounting of his attempt to do that which his father counselled him to avoid:

It was Grandfather's watch and when Father gave it to me, he said, Quentin, I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire;...I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. (p. 95).

Just as Caddy is one of the centers of Benjy's world, she also serves as the point around which Quentin would draw his fixed circle. More particularly, it is Caddy's virginity, the "thin membrane" which Quentin
has chosen to be the touchstone of his concept of Compson honour. But it is more than just honour, because this in turn becomes wrapped up in Quentin's battle to assert, against the continual stream of negation from his father, some ideal, some values which exist above the temporary world of constant motion and change. Quentin desires "...something among dusty shelves of ordered certitude long divorced from reality" (p. 144).

The first hint of Quentin's obsession with morality actually occurs in Benjy's section. The scene occurs at the branch, and Caddy and Quentin, who were then quite young, get wet and taunt one another with the threat of impending parental admonition. To solve her problem, Caddy announces that she will take her dress off, and Quentin's tone quickly changes from childish teasing to extreme seriousness:

'It's not wet,' Caddy said. She stood up in the water and looked at her dress. 'I'll take it off,' she said. 'Then it'll dry.'
'I bet you won't,' Quentin said.
'I bet I will,' Caddy said.
'I bet you better not,' Quentin said.
Caddy came to Versh and me and turned her back.
'Unbutton it, Versh,' she said.
'Don't you do it, Versh,' Quentin said...
'You just take your dress off,' Quentin said.
Caddy took her dress off and threw it on the bank. Then she didn't have anything on but her bodice and drawers, and Quentin slapped her and she slipped and fell down in the water. When she got up she began to splash water on Quentin, and Quentin splashed water on Caddy... 'Now I guess you're satisfied,' Quentin said. 'We'll both get whipped now.' (pp. 37-38; emphasis mine.)

This scene is actually representative of Quentin's desires as he expresses them later. His wish is to keep Caddy virginal. Since she will not com-
ply with that, as she refuses to keep her dress on in the above scene, he then wishes for a recognition of the violation of the moral code: he demands the punishment. The childish words, "We'll both get whipped now," are repeated a number of times in Quentin's own section in his expressed desire to remove himself and Caddy from the changing world into static purgatorial flames: "If it could just be a hell beyond that; the clean flame the two of us more than dead. Then you will have only me then the two of us amid the pointing and the horror beyond the clean flame" (p. 135; see also pp. 136 and 167).

Quentin's desire to battle against the cynical nihilism of his father's philosophy is complicated by his psychological problems which border on a neurosis concerning sex. His metaphysics are perverted by his emotional maladjustment. He cannot cope with sexual maturity, and he would, if possible, completely deny his own sexuality:

It's not not having them [genitals]. It's never to have had them then I could say 0 That That's Chinese I don't know Chinese.

(p. 135).

Of course, Quentin does have "them" but he is unable to assimilate his sexual role into his view of himself. Thus sex becomes an obsession with him, and he becomes psychologically impotent. He is so repulsed by his first sexual encounter with Natalie that he wallows in mud and then washes

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14 Another prime example of Quentin's personal battle is found in his confrontation with Caddy's fiancé, Herbert Head, whom Quentin rejects because Herbert has violated the code of honour by cheating at Harvard. Herbert, sounding rather like Quentin's father, says, "...a young fellow like you would consider a thing of that sort a lot more serious than you will in five years." Quentin responds to this in his assertive and inflexible manner: "I don't know but one way to consider cheating I don't think I'm likely to learn different at Harvard" (p. 127).
the mud off in an attempt to cleanse himself of the foul experience. As Melvin Backman points out, Quentin is incapable of smoking the cigar or of using the gun on Dalton Ames or the knife on Caddy or himself, all of which are phallic symbols, and of thereby asserting his masculinity. 'Quentin's very withdrawal from life roots not from tragic suffering but from pitiful weakness, a debilitating passivity and a morbid self-centeredness.' In the last analysis, Quentin, unable to cope with external reality, whether the transience of time or man's sexuality, attempts, through an assertion of his will to define his own reality. If Quentin is to succeed in denying his father's viewpoint in this way, he must first succeed in imposing his will on others. Therefore, since he failed to keep Caddy pure, he attempts to translate her sin of fornication into the heinous crime of incest and thereby invoke a nemesis. He thinks that confessing the yet uncommitted sin will make it true just as the boys at the bridge begin to speak of the prize for landing the fish as if they had already earned it: "They all talked at once, their voices insistent and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will when their desires become words" (p. 136). Quentin uses much the same kind of logic for his and Caddy's "crime":

I'll tell Father then it'll have to be because you love Father then we'll have to go away amid the pointing and the horror the clean flame I'll make you say we did I'm stronger than you I'll make you know we did...(p. 167; emphasis mine).

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Quentin's efforts are doomed to failure simply because iteration, however vehement, does not transform desire into fact and because motion and change are inextricably bound up with the process of living. One of the nicest ironies of Quentin's section results from the compartmentalization his mind has undergone. He is able to speak of his Harvard education as a "fine dead sound" (p. 193) and thus voice the same cynicism as his father. He is, however, unable to transfer that same outlook to the sphere of morality; here, he must insist on the validity of universal values. Since Quentin's assertion of will does fail, he can only defeat his foe, time, and affirm his code of virtue by dying, because in death he escapes time and his suicide, like Benjy's bellow, is his protest against Caddy's violation of his pattern of order.

Jason's monologue, too, is an account of his attempt to force others to conform to his will. As Benjy is concerned with the physical order of his world and Quentin with the metaphysical, Jason is concerned with social order, with the appearances of rectitude. Though he continues to operate in the fluctuating world of business and the stock market, time has virtually stopped for him at that moment eighteen years ago when Caddy left Herbert and lost him his promised job in a bank. Caddy's loss of virtue marks a turning point in Jason's life. He, like the others, has no consideration of Caddy's own anguish and turmoil, but only of his loss. Therefore, Jason is obsessed with revenge, and, as Olga Vickery indicates, Caddy's daughter, Quentin, becomes the substitute on whom Jason can spend his bitterness and wrath, and from whom he can
obtain retribution.\textsuperscript{16}

Jason, too, is just as vociferous as Benjy and Quentin, and his egocentricity is evident throughout his section of the novel in his continual repetition of "like I say," which is invariably followed by an inflexible statement of his own definition of order. His section of the novel opens with such a statement: "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say" (p. 198); there follows a continual stream of absolute statements.\textsuperscript{17}

One of Jason's main concerns is with his social status which is based on maintaining appearances, and as Quentin is engaged in negating his father's viewpoint, Jason is affirming his mother's. At the beginning of his monologue, Jason repeats his mother's words and thereby sets the tone for much that is to follow:

'But something must be done,' she says. 'To let people think I permit her to stay out of school and run about the streets, or that I can't prevent her doing it.' (p. 200).

During his monologue, Jason restates this basic attitude at least eight times.\textsuperscript{18} The position that he takes is based on hypocrisy, because it is not the facts themselves which matter, but rather what people think the facts are. As Jason himself remarks when speaking to his niece, "I don't care what you do, myself,' I says, 'But I've got a position in this town, and I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench..." (p. 207). Jason is never concerned with people as human beings,

\textsuperscript{16} Olga Vickery, op. cit., p. 31.
\textsuperscript{17} See, for example, pp. 212, 215, 244, 250, 256, 265, 267, 280.
\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, pp. 207, 249, 250, 251, 257, 258, 259, 260.
but as objects which inevitably reflect upon him and, of course, Miss Quentin is the center of his concern because she threatens to throw his social order into chaos through her indiscreet actions. As Jason rather revealingly states to Miss Quentin, "You've got to learn one thing, and that is that when I tell you to do something, you've got to do it" (p. 232).

However, again like Quentin, a psychological malady affects Jason's weltanschauung and his behavior becomes compulsive. Thoroughly intermixed with his strivings to keep his family socially acceptable is Jason's real obsession with money. As with so many of Jason's statements, his aphorism on monetary values is belied by his actions. In his ruminations about his paramour, he says, "After all, like I say, money has no value; its just the way you spend it. It don't belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it" (p. 212). But of course, Jason is hoarding the money which Caddy sends for Miss Quentin's support and which Mrs. Compson believes she burns in her monthly ritual. He keeps it in a locked box inside his locked closet in his room which he also keeps locked. Further, on the day on which his monologue takes place, he actually counts the money twice, once before he pursues Quentin and the man with the red tie and once before he goes to bed. When we understand where Jason's money comes from, we also begin to see the complexities in Jason's relationship with Miss Quentin. He treats her so cruelly not just because she flouts family honour but because she is a constant reminder of his lost opportunity. In a sense, much of Jason's harshness and vicious teasing is purely vindictive; he is attempting to get back at Caddy through her
daughter. His section is liberally sprinkled with passages which show his enduring bitterness and his strong association of Quentin with the lost job: "Then when she sent Quentin home for me to feed too I says I guess that's right too, instead of me having to go way up north for a job they sent the job down here to me..." (p. 214). In the passage describing Jason's treachery to Caddy when she wanted to see her child his revenge motive is emphasized:

I says I reckon that'll show you. I reckon you'll know now that you can't beat me out of a job and get away with it...After she was gone I felt better. I says I reckon you'll think twice before you deprive me of a job that was promised me (p. 223-224).

Miss Quentin, then, is the focal point of Jason's obsessions--his desire for revenge, his lust for money and his rage for social order. These three elements impinge upon one another effectively paralyzing Jason and rendering him almost totally incompetent. Because of his secret activities and his necessarily divided attentions, Jason is successful at little that he attempts. He cannot do his job at the hardware store because he is chasing after Quentin, making the preparations for extorting her money, and playing the cotton market. He can neither successfully manipulate the stocks nor keep up with Quentin because of the other activities. He cannot even drive his own car, which he also obtained through deception, because of his psychosomatic allergy to gasoline. Jason's attempt to assert his concept of order fails just as Benjy's and Quentin's do. Unlike the other two, however, Jason actually defeats himself; Quentin and Benjy
make unreasonable demands based on an inadequate perception of reality, but Jason's demands, though perhaps superficially rational, are finally negated because he has an inadequate perception of himself. He views himself as totally self-reliant, as the bread-winner for the remnant of the Compson family. In actuality, his success, such as it is, stems from Earl's sympathy for his mother in keeping him on at the hardware store, and on Caddy's monthly cheques. Jason is being more truthful than he realizes when he says in his imagined conversation with Quentin, "...I haven't got any money; I've been too busy to make any" (p. 261). His completely compartmentalized thinking and his programmed responses permit him to be unaware of his own blatant inconsistencies. He can chide Job for being lazy, slow and incompetent while he himself spends all but a few minutes of the day running madly around Jefferson. He schemes and cheats both his mother and Quentin, and yet he can say, "If there's one thing gets under my skin it's a damn hypocrite" (p. 246). He harrangues Quentin for besmerching the family name and yet is impervious to the fact that he himself commands little respect from his fellow townspeople. Jason lives in a world of self-delusion and the statement in the Appendix that he was "...the first sane Compson since before Culloden" (p. 16) surely must be one of the most ironic statements in the novel.

As I stated earlier, the references to the Christian myth in each of these sections directly reflect the main area of concern in the section as outlined above. Benjy's section contains several apparent allusions to Christ and to Christmas. Each of the references, however, concern only
physical aspects. We are told several times that Holy Saturday is Ben- 
jy's thirty-third birthday. In fact, it is one of the first things 
that we learn. In the third paragraph of the novel, Luster says to Ben, 
"Ain't you something, thirty-three years old, going on that way" (p. 23). 
Thus, the reader is cued to look at Benjy as somehow associated with 
Christ. However, his age alone, a physical characteristic, is all that 
qualifies him to be a type of Christ. He has not the necessary aware­ 
ess to fulfill the role completely. Other allusions in this section 
also tend to undermine that association. The references to Christmas 
emphasize the coldness of the day: "Keep your hands in your pockets, 
Caddy said. Or they'll get froze. You don't want your hands froze on 
Christmas, do you" (p. 24; see also p. 32 on which this sentence is 
repeated). The physical nature of these references are in keeping with 
Benjy's pesonality, because he can respond only to physical sensations. 
Similarly, it is only in his physical presence that Benjy can serve any 
of the functions of Christ; that is, the characters in the novel are 
judged according to their response to Benjy just as in the Christian re­ 
ligion people are judged according to their response to Christ. But this 
is, at best, a negative function.

Quentin's section is more complex in its use of Christian allusions, 
and necessarily so since Quentin, despite the similar rigidity, is a far 
more complex personality than Benjy. The allusions nicely mirror Quentin's 

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19 See pages 23, 24, 36 and 68.
own concerns, for they refer only to that portion of the myth concerned with sin or impurity and retribution. There are actually three types of references which reflect this one overriding interest. The first is the set of allusions to Christ and St. Francis which involves a transference of associated ideas. Quentin is, as stated earlier, obsessed with the impurity of his little sister, Caddy, and because of her impurity and the lack of real retribution for it, he is committing suicide. So, Caddy becomes Quentin's figurative parallel to St. Francis' "little sister death." But, paradoxically, both Jesus and St. Francis are perfect examples of the purity which Quentin considers himself incapable of attaining simply because he is a sexual being. The first such indication appears immediately after Quentin's opening thoughts about his watch: "Like father said down the long and lonely light rays you might see Jesus walking, like. And the good Saint Francis that said Little Sister Death, that never had a sister" (p. 96). Or again, only two pages later, Quentin hears the bell chime the hour and thinks, "It stayed in the air, more felt than heard, for a long time. Like all the bells that ever rang still ringing in the long dying light-rays and Jesus and Saint Francis talking about his sister" (p. 98). So the references to Christ and St. Francis are linked with the phrase "who had no sister" (p. 190), as if Quentin were in this way rationalizing the failure of his world and his suicide. For Quentin, these allusions serve as examples of the unattainable purity associated with the now lost tradition of virtue and honour within a strict moral code. Since Quentin cannot force such immutable standards
upon the world around him, these allusions represent a paradise lost and are also, therefore linked with the ticking of timepieces:

Father said that. That Christ was not crucified; he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels. (p. 96)

The watch ticked on. I turned the face up, the blank dials with little wheels clicking and clicking behind it, not knowing any better. Jesus walking on Galilee and Washington not telling lies. (p. 99)

These allusions, filtered through Quentin's mind, are indicative of the unbearable temporality and uncertainty which he is fighting.

A second group of allusions contains the three instances in which Quentin associates Benjy with the Biblical story of Benjamin, Jacob's youngest son. In one sense, the allusions are directly related to the selling of Benjy's pasture to obtain the money to send Quentin to Harvard. Or, as Quentin states, apparently repeating his father's words,

Let us sell Benjy's pasture so that Quentin may go to Harvard and I may knock my bones together...I have sold Benjy's pasture and I can be dead in Harvard...because Harvard is such a fine sound forty acres is no high price for a fine sound. A fine dead sound we will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound. (p. 193).

In the Biblical story, Benjamin's freedom was exchanged for wheat; he was held hostage by his eldest brother, Joseph. However, the Biblical story is also applicable to the novel in a much more profound sense. Benjamin's father, who is called Israel, is representative of the Hebrew nation. He was presiding over a sterile, famine-stricken land, and to ameliorate the

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20 We have been prepared for this by Caddy's remark in the first section that Maury's new name, Benjamin, is from the Bible (p. 77).
situation, Jacob, or Israel, sent his sons to Egypt to obtain food. They did so only at the price of Benjamin's freedom, and ultimately, of course, the price is much greater: the freedom of all the Israelites, because they eventually moved to Egypt to escape the waste land which the promised land had become. Jacob's cry of anguish upon learning of Benjamin's fate is the cry which Quentin's words echo:

Benjamin the child of mine old age bellowing...
Benjamin the child of. How he used to sit before that mirror. Refuge unfailing in which conflict tempered silenced reconciled. Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt, 0 benjamin...Benjamin, Benjamin the child of my sorrowful...(pp. 107, 188, 190).

Quentin connects Benjy with each of the losses which he most deeply feels. In the first of the above quotations, Benjy is bellowing for Caddy at her wedding. The second occurs as Quentin looks at the river and it appears as "pieces of broken mirror." He associates this with the mirror which was Benjy's refuge. That mirror was apparently sold to help provide money for the wedding.

Quentin's mirror, the river, is now his only refuge. The last part of the quotation immediately precedes Quentin's thought, "...if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother..." (p. 190). Through its associations in Quentin's mind, this allusion becomes a symbol of Quentin's bondage, his inability to act to gain his sister or the reconciliation through retribution or his mother's love: "...the dungeon was Mother herself she and Father upward into weak light holding hands and us lost somewhere below even them without even a ray of light" (p. 191). Quentin, unlike the Hebrews, has no Moses to lead

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21 On p. 272 Jason speaks of the Benjy feeling the place on the wall where the mirror used to be.
him out of his Egypt. Further, it is significant that in one reference to Moses, who is a type of Christ, Quentin effectively denies any concept of salvation connected with Moses, and Moses' rod becomes almost perversely phallic:

...hands can see cooling fingers invisible swan-throat where less than Moses rod the glass touch tentative not to drumming lean cool throat drumming cooling the metal the glass full overfull cooling the glass the fingers flushing sleep leaving the taste of dampened sleep in the long silence of the throat. (p. 192).

Although the associations in the passage are quite complex, one can easily see that they all refer to Caddy. The whole passage refers to Quentin's memory of awaking in the night, feeling suffocated by the odor of honeysuckle, which is linked with thoughts of Caddy's defilement and "came to symbolize night and unrest" (p. 188). So he gets up and goes to the bathroom to get a glass of water. The "swan-throat" and "drumming" refer to the incident in which Quentin asks Caddy if she loves Dalton Ames. She tells him to put his hand on her throat and say Dalton's name:

put your hand against my throat
she took my hand and held it flat against her throat
now say his name
Dalton Ames
I felt the surge of blood where it surged in strong accelerating beats...
say it again
Dalton Ames
her blood surged steadily beating and beating against my hand (p. 182).

The swan image is there as a result of Gerald Bland's rather uncompli-
mentary reference to the lust in the coupling of Leda with Zeus in the form of a swan, "Leda lurking in the bushes, whimpering and moaning for the swan" (p. 185), which Quentin then associates with Caddy's lust. The passage as a whole is symbolic of Quentin's desire to "cool" Caddy's lust, just as the water which he is getting will remove his feeling of suffocation and as Moses' rod, with which he struck the rock in the wilderness, quenched the thirst of the wandering Hebrews. Thus, the "rod" and the "drumming" and the water "full overfull" are suggestive of an orgasmic experience. Simultaneously, the water, as in the river and the branch, is linked with Quentin's wish for purification for himself and Caddy. This purification can be attained, it would seem, through Quentin's use of Moses' rod either as phallus to consummate the incest he so strongly wishes for and thus bring about the "horror beyond the clean flames," or as a symbol of moral authority to force Caddy to refrain from indulging her lustful desires. In either case, Quentin fails.

The third group of allusions, which refer more directly to the punishment of sin, centers on the beginning and end of the Christian world, Eden and Christ's second coming. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Quentin repeats his wish that he and Caddy be punished and cleansed in purgatorial flames. Connected with this is his image of Caddy in "Eden clothes":

...and fast clutching her dress onto her shoulder with the other hand running out of the mirror the smells roses roses the voice that breathed o'er Eden...(p. 100)

See pages 135, 136 and 167.
...the curtains leaning in on the twilight
her arms behind her head kimono-winged the
voice that breathed o'er eden clothes upon
the bed by the nose seen above the apple...
(p. 124).

The chair-arm flat cool smooth under my fore­
head shaping the chair the apple tree leaning
on my hair above the eden clothes by the
nose seen...(p. 132).

It is obvious from the context of the first quotation that the "eden
clothes" are Caddy's wedding garments, which are, like Adam's and Eve's
clothing, a covering for sin, and the voice is that of God demanding to
know why Adam and Eve hid themselves. It is the voice of moral authority
which Quentin so strongly desires to hear but which is certainly not forth­
coming from his own world. For Quentin, the magnitude of Caddy's illicit
love affair is equal to that of the sin in the Garden of Eden, for which
Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden with "the pointing and the
horror beyond the clean flame" of the flaming swords placed at the en­
trance to the garden. Quentin has, if only mentally, tasted the forbidden
fruit and wants no less a retribution than that accorded the first sinners.

In combining allusions to Christ with those to the Garden of Eden
and to purgatory, Quentin shows how much his perception has been dis­
torted. He completely ignores the mercy and love which Christ proclaimed,
and he chooses rather to revert to a Hebraic view of God as the wrathful
God of the law who exacts judgment. Quentin has no concept of forgiveness;
he neither asks for it nor offers it. Unable to assert his code of ethics
and unable to detect any stability in life, Quentin, through his suicide,
rejects the flow of time, which includes the movement toward the apocalypse:
And I will look down and see my murmuring bones and the deep water like wind, like a roof of wind, and after a long time they cannot distinguish even bones upon the lonely and inviolate sand. Until the Day when He says Rise only the flatiron would come floating up. (p. 99; see also pp. 131, 135).

This same denial of Christ's function in the myth relates several other references to Christ scattered throughout the section. In Quentin's rather enigmatic repetitions of the phrases "Three days. Three times" (pp. 112, 192), the "three days" seems to refer, first, to the date of Caddy's wedding and, then, because of the numerous references to Christ in his section and the Easter week structure of the novel, are also associated with Christ's resurrection which occurred on the third day after his death. The "three times," then, refers to the folk belief that a drowning man rises to the surface three times before he drowns. So, Quentin denies any sort of redemption for himself; he is not going to rise on the third time but sink into the river, from which only "the flatirons will come floating up." Then, after Quentin returns to his room to clean the blood off his clothes, he speaks cynically of both Negroes and Christ in one sentence: "The tie was spoiled too, but then niggers. Maybe a pattern of blood he could call that the one Christ was wearing" (p. 190). From the total futility of Quentin's suicide, we surely cannot interpret this as a remark which the narrator intended for us to take seriously. From Quentin's own remark only four pages later, we cannot believe that he even intended it seriously:
[Mother] couldn't see that Father was teaching us that all men are just accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from the trash heaps where all previous dolls had been thrown away the sawdust flowing from what wound in the side that not for me died not. (p. 194).

Quentin's final reference to Christ is but a repetition of his father's extremely cynical remark, "Watching pennies healed more scars than jesus" (p. 196). The section ends, then, with a negation of the efficacy of both Christ's death and Quentin's own.

Structurally speaking, Quentin's section is remarkably like Soldier's Pay. In both instances there is a steady, relentless movement toward death juxtaposed to the annual renewal of life in spring. Human sterility, both psychological and physical, is ironically contrasted to nature's fertility. More important, however, is the juxtaposition of Christian and other mythological references to reinforce the picture of the waste land. As I pointed out earlier, in Soldier's Pay, Faulkner uses references to fertility myths to point up the sterility in the human landscape; none of the living characters, Januarius Jones, Joe Gilligan or George Farr, can successfully fulfill the role that Donald Mahon played in his youth. No one is able to re-assemble the dead god and restore the land. Only at the end of that novel, in the Negro church service, are we given a picture of the kind of reintegration which can bring salvation. Similarly, in Quentin's section, Faulkner has several scattered references to rejuvenation myths to point up Quentin's inability, figuratively speaking, to restore the land. The difference in the effectiveness of the two simi-
lar plans, however, is striking. In *Soldier's Pay* there are copious references to fauns, satyrs, goats and Venus, but they are not worked into the texture of the story. They are loosely and mechanically dropped into the narrative. In Quentin's section, Faulkner uses far fewer such allusions, only four altogether, but the effect of these carefully placed allusions is much greater and much more subtle than those in *Soldier's Pay*.

The first of these is to a ballad hero, Lochinvar, who rescues his fair Ellen, about to be married to a "laggard in love and a dastard in war." The ballad is included in Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion*. In a conversation with Quentin concerning Caddy's wedding, Shreve says, "Young Lochinvar rode out of the west a little too soon, didn't he?" (p. 112). Once again, Quentin's role as saviour is denied him.

Then, in a later passage, Herbert Head responds to Quentin's threat to inform Mr. and Mrs. Compson of his cheating at Harvard by saying, "Tell and be damned, then see what it gets you if you were not a damned fool you'd have seen that I've got them too tight for any half-baked Galahad of a brother..." (p. 129). In Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, of course, Galahad is the knight who is able to successfully complete the quest for the Holy Grail, restore health to the maimed king and order to the land because he has remained pure and because of his ability to detect sin and act accordingly. Herbert Head's epithet is most appropriate because Quentin is blinded by his own moral rigidity. The fact that he cannot see that Herbert has Mr. and Mrs. Compson "too tight" is quite minor in comparison to his other errors in perception. Quentin's inabilities leave us in the moral
waste land of his father's nihilistic views.

Finally, Quentin's section contains two references to the story of Demeter and Persephone, which is, like the myths used in Soldier's Pay, a myth concerning a dying and reviving god of fertility. In Mrs. Bland's car on the way to the picnic, Quentin thinks, "...the swine of Euboleus running coupled within how many Caddy?" (p. 167). Then, when Quentin is back in his room and cleaning his clothes, the same image goes through his mind: "...the swine untethered in pairs rushing coupled into the sea" (p. 195). Euboleus (more frequently spelled Eubuleus) is the swineherd who appears in some versions of the Persephone myth. He was supposedly tending his herd near the place where Pluto captured Persephone, and his herd fell into the gulf into which Pluto carried Persephone. Since Pluto's kidnapping of Persephone results in the sterility of the land because Demeter then refuses to fulfill her role as fertility goddess, Quentin's use of the myth helps the reader to see that for Quentin, Caddy's acts are the cause of the dissolution of his world. Further, it is an act which Quentin, unlike Demeter, is unable to overcome. No cyclic rejuvenation occurs, and for Quentin, decay withers into irredeemable death.


This allusion also seems to have overtones of the Biblical account of Jesus casting out the Gadarenian's "unclean spirits" (see Mark 5. 1-14). In all accounts of the story, Jesus, at the behest of the spirits, casts them into a herd of nearby swine who then rush into the sea and are drowned. The parallel is obvious: Quentin has no such power over Caddy, but must suffer because of his knowledge of her "unclean spirit." By transposing her sin into incest, he takes her uncleanliness upon himself and drowns in the river.
Like the references to Lochinvar and Galahad, and like the allusions in Soldier's Pay, this mythical reference emphasizes human failure and a character's inability to move out of himself to engage in any redemptive activity. Quentin's section by itself presents no positive element to relieve the dark vision of death.

On any level, the transition from Quentin's section to Jason's is abrupt because we leave the quiet fluidity of Quentin's thoughts and hear the opening, brash, explosive phrase, "Once a bitch always a bitch," which captures the tone of the entire section. Equally remarkable is the change from Quentin's allusion-filled narrative to Jason's starkly conversational monologue. References to either the Christian or any other myth are practically non-existent in Jason's section. They are replaced by a stream of the expletives God, hell, and damn used as authoritative confirmation of Jason's own rigid views. We have moved from the poignancy of Benjy's howls through the grandiose verbiage of Quentin and his father and now descend to the mundane pattern of Jason's common swearing. Even on this seemingly superficial level of colloquial usage, however, these references are significant because they are indicative of Jason's fundamental attitudes and reflect his obsession with his own financial and social position and his desire for revenge on Caddy. Jason has established himself as the ultimate authority on his family's behavior and as the instrument of retribution on Caddy. He does this without questioning either his right or his motive because he is convinced of his superiority, an idea carefully fostered and nourished by his mother whose utterances are a variation on that motif.

See pp. 218 and 243 which repeat her words, "Thank God you are not a Compson."
Just as Quentin constantly ruminates upon his father's words, Jason has absorbed his mother's statements, and he repeats them: "Like she says, thank God it was you left me" (p. 224). From this inflated sense of his own worth and position, Jason attempts to retain absolute control over the remains of the Compson heritage and family.

In this light, then, Faulkner's choice from the range of possible expletives nicely mirrors Jason's personality. The juxtaposition in Jason's speech of "God" and "hell" reflects Jason's own absolutely polarized perception in which there is no gray area of doubt. Each event and person is either good or bad according to how well it fits into his pre-determined pattern. The pattern becomes even clearer when one realizes that Jason reserves each expletive for particular uses. The expletive "God" or "Lord" is used when Jason is speaking his own opinions:

- God knows they'd hold Old Home week when that happened... (p. 205).
- I says God knows there's little enough room for pride in this family... (p. 239).
- Only if I'm crazy God knows what I'll do about it... (p. 250).
- God looks after Ben's kind, God knows He ought to do something for him... (p. 253).

These statements, in turn, echo his mother's words, "God sees that I am doing right!" (p. 236). Also, Jason describes part of his plot to ensure that Caddy does not see Miss Quentin again without his knowledge as putting "the fear of God into Dilsey" (p. 225). On the other hand, Jason uses "hell" or "Damn" in describing contrary opinions or disruptive events, particularly Benjy, the "New York Jews," and Miss Quentin's actions:

- What the hell makes you want to keep [Benjy?] around here where people can see him? (p. 204)
What the hell kind of man would wear a red tie? (p. 249).

...I'll be damned if it hasn't come to a pretty pass when any damn foreigner that can't make a living in the country where God put him, can come to this one and take money right out of an American's pockets. (p. 210).

Well, I can stand a lot; if I couldn't, damn if I wouldn't be in a hell of a fix. (p. 250).

I'll make him think that damn red tie is the latch string to hell, if he thinks he can run the woods with my niece. (p. 259; see also pp. 249, 251, 255, 256).

In his own mind, then, Jason has established himself as a figure equivalent to the God of the Old Testament who dictates arbitrary laws and enforces them without love or mercy, dooming the sinners to his own hypothetical hell. This picture is reinforced by the climax of Jason's activities which occurs in the novel's final section. Jason, acting out his own peculiar *Quem Queritis* pageant in searching for Quentin and his money, see himself "...dragging Omnipotence down from His throne, if necessary; the embattled legions of both hell and heaven through which he tore his way and put his hands at last on his fleeing niece" (p. 322). But, of course, that which he seeks is not to be found, and Jason's Easter morning quest is unsuccessful. That Jason has no concept of the forces of Christ-like self-denial and acceptance of others as they are is obvious. When he learns from his mother that the Negroes are going to Easter services which may mean some inconvenience to him, he first replies, "Go where?...Hasn't that damn show left yet?" (p. 295). Then, in response to Mrs. Compson's usual patient, whining acceptance of guilt, he says "Blame you For what?...You never resurrected Christ did you?" (p. 295).
As a result of his totally unrealistic and insensitive perceptions of both himself and others, Jason is doomed to failure. Rather than being the controlling authority, Jason stands as a puny, ineffectual man, suffering from self-induced head-aches, who has accomplished none of his goals, and who cannot even manage to drive his own car back to Jefferson. Our last view of Jason sees him madly attempting to quell Benjy's howl by correcting the course of the weekly trip to the cemetery. He is not controlling, but in a supreme touch of irony, is yielding to an idiot's demands for a physical pattern of order. In fact, this is the only remaining order in the Compson family; all else has lapsed into chaos. Faulkner has emphasized the similarity of Quentin's and Jason's failures, failures stemming from a rigid preconception of the order in life, by emphasizing the Old Testament's ideological polarity as characteristic of their thought patterns. Neither can accept for himself or allow others to accept the freedom and responsibility introduced with the New Testament.

Besides the allusions described above, there is a series of references running through each section like a contrapuntal motif which rises to the foreground and comes to a climax in the final scene in the Negro church. These references are associated with the Negroes in the Compson family, primarily Dilsey. In each of the first three sections, these references are found in statements of sincere belief in the efficacy of orthodox religion or of sincere concern for others. So, their immediate effect is to provide a stark contrast to the Compson narrators who are imprisoned within their exclusive perceptual frameworks.

In Benjy's section, there are three examples of such references. The
first occurs in scenes of Damuddy's funeral. Twice, Dilsey tells the curious, questioning Caddy that, concerning such things, "You'll know in the Lawd's own time" (pp. 44 and 45). Also, when Roskus is rambling on about his superstitions and ominous "signs" of the ill-fated Compson family, Dilsey replies, "Show me the man what ain't going to die, bless Jesus" (p. 49). Then, when Caddy and Dilsey are discussing the changing of Benjy's name, Dilsey indicates that for her, names have only one important use: "It'll be in the Book, honey, Dilsey said. Writ out. Can you read it, Caddy said. Won't have to, Dilsey said. They'll read it for me. All I got to do is say Ise here" (p. 77). These indications of Dilsey's abiding faith in the Christ of the New Testament are particularly prominent in a section in which chronology has little meaning to the narrator who is concerned only with the pattern of sensations. They illustrate a faith in an order which negates the importance of temporal events which are in the direct control of the God of mercy. The death and change which cause so much anguish because of the chaos they seem to bring are actually welcome signs of one drawing nearer to that instant when he can say, "Ise here."

In Quentin's section, there are two passages which produce an equally effective ideological contrast. The first, though it contains no reference to the Christian myth, is part of this pattern in that it illustrates the same kind of serenity. It occurs when Quentin is returning home from Harvard at the Christmas break:

...there was a nigger on a mule in the middle of the stiff ruts, waiting for the train to move. How long he had been there I didn't know, but he sat straddle of the mule,
his head wrapped in a blanket, as if they had been built there with the fence and the road, or with the hill, carved out of the hill itself, like a sign put there saying You are home again....they passed smoothly from sight that way, with that quality of shabby and timeless patience, of static serenity...(pp. 105-106).

This Negro, in appearing to be "carved out of the hill" exudes exactly that which Quentin is searching for: a sense of immutability or stasis within flux. Even though time has elapsed and changes have occurred, represented by the train itself, the Negro retains his identity with the land, retains that quality of "timeless patience, of static serenity." He has none of the unbearable temporality which Quentin longs to deny.

Similarly, other Negroes are able to reconcile the physical desires, which Quentin wishes to negate, with their spiritual experiences:

A brothel full of Negroes in Memphis went into a religious trance ran naked into the street. It took three policemen to subdue one of them. Yes Jesus O good man Jesus O that good man.

(p. 189).

Even at the moment of physical fulfillment, or from Quentin's point of view, of revelling in the sins of the flesh, they can respond to the incarnation of spiritual purity without feeling any sense of conflict. This totally baffles Quentin who has built for himself an either-or world in which no such reconciliation, or perhaps simple acceptance of opposites can occur.

In the novel's final two sections, both of which portray Jason in chaotic motion, the references centre on that which is absent from Jason's make-up, which can best be described by the Biblical term, lovingkindness. When Jason upbraids Dilsey for allowing Caddy to see her baby and forbids her to do it again, Dilsey says, "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" (p. 225). This one simple sentence both pinpoints Jason's psychology and contrasts Jason's off-hand use of God and Lord as expletives with Dilsey's sincere prayer of thanksgiving for her natural and sensitive human responses. There are several other such direct contrasts in this section. Dilsey, harried by the demands from Mrs. Compson on Easter Sunday morning, mutters what seems to be a prayer for patience to endure, "Oh, Lawd" (pp. 286 and 291). Also, Dilsey hopes for a strong preacher who can "...put de fear of God into dese here triflin' young niggers" (p. 306). Dilsey's meaning here is quite different from Jason's when he used the same phrase in describing his lie to Dilsey when he told her Caddy had leprosy. In contrast to Jason's remark, "God looks after Ben's kind," which is full of Jason's brand of rancour and sense of injustice, Dilsey tells Benjy, simply and faithfully, "You de Lawd's chile, anyway. En I be His'n too, fo-long, praise Jesus" (p. 333).

Finally, the scene at the Negro church clearly encapsulates the difference in the forces seen in the Compson family and those epitomized by the series of references just described. Since it is of such importance, I will quote from it at length.

When the visitor rose to speak he sounded like a white man. His voice was level and cold. It sounded too big to have come from him and they listened at first through curiosity, as they would have to a monkey talking. They began to watch him as they would a man on a tight rope. They even forgot his insignificant appearance in the virtuosity with which he ran and poised and swooped upon the cold inflectionless wire of his voice, so that at last, when with a sort
of swooping glide he came to rest again beside the reading desk...the congregation sighed as if it waked from a collective dream and moved a little in its seats... Then a voice said, "Brethren." The preacher had not moved...and he still held that pose while the voice died. It was as different as day and dark from his former tone, with a sad, timbrous quality like an alto horn, sinking into their hearts and speaking there again when it had ceased in fading and cumulate echoes..."I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb."...And the congregation seemed to watch with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words, so that when he came to rest against the reading desk, his monkey face lifted and his whole attitude that of a serene tortured crucifix that transcended its shabbiness and insignificance and made it of no moment...Dilsey sat bolt upright...Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time...."I got de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb!" They did not mark just when his intonation, his pronunciation became negroid, they just say swaying a little in their seats as the voice took them into itself. (pp. 309-311).

This scene strongly reinforces those contrasts described above. It points up exactly those human qualities lacking in the Compson family: a sense of communion and a faith in a reassuring order in which the unifying force is love. Michael Millgate has stated that in contrast to the first three sections, "The Easter Sunday service in the Negro church is immensely moving, an apotheosis of simplicity, innocence and love with Dilsey and Benjy as the central figures."26 Olga Vickery's analysis brings her to a similar

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conclusion: "There is no doubt that Dilsey is meant to represent the ethical norm, the realizing and acting out of one's humanity; it is from this that the Compson's have deviated." However, what yet remains to be pointed out is that the difference between the Compson's lives and Dilsey's experience in the Negro church is far more than an ethical dissimilarity and is indicative of more than just the Compson's lack of love. This service embodies a completely different epistemology than that practised by the Compsons who, as I have indicated, all operate from the same premise: they demand that their perceptions of people and events coincide with their rigid conception of order. If this is not the case, then they attempt to re-mold the person or event, as Quentin and Jason do, or they protest until the appropriate return to stasis is accomplished, as Benjy does. They cannot simply accept what they experience.

In the Negro church, the congregation is able to first accept what is a disappointingly physically unimpressive preacher and then they fully experience the dinglichkeit of the sermon, which as R. P. Adams has noted, "...is a poetically rhetorical development of the emotional pattern of the resurrection of Christ." Reverend Shegog presents a series of images and the congregation collectively experiences those images and imaginatively recreates the essence of the experience described. Reverend Shegog's conscious control of his rhetoric is in direct opposition to the kind of control that Benjy, Quentin and Jason desire. His sermon, though at first it draws attention to the man and his words, is designed to lead the congre-

27 Olga Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 47.  
gation to something far more important than the clergyman's power to shape words. The sermon and the clergyman become only a medium, a method of making an experience palpable, and all other sensations are forgotten: "...he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words." It is at this point that Brylowski should have seen that what he calls "mythic perception" is taking place. Brylowski, using Cassirer, distinguishes "mythic consciousness," the kind of thinking in which myths are operable forces, as a merging of the perceiver into his perceptions:

"It lies in the essence of mythical thinking," says Cassirer, "that wherever it posits a relation it causes the members of this relation to flow together and merge...The stages of time--past, present, future--do not remain distinct: over and over again the mythical consciousness succumbs to the tendency and temptation to level the differences and ultimately transform them into pure identity." 29

This same idea has been described in more immediately comprehensible terms by Owen Barfield, who terms this kind of perception "participation," by which he means "an extra-sensory link between the percipient and the representation [perceived objects] so that self and not-self are identified in the same moment of experience." 30 It is a recognition of mana or life principle in every perceived object. The important point here is that

29 Brylowski, op. cit., p. 72.
30 Owen Barfield, Saving the Appearances (London, 1955), p. 180. Barfield emphasizes that this is always an imaginative act, and he sees it as the redemption of man who has detached his perceptions from himself and idolized his particular, culturally inherited gestalt.
Dilsey and the rest of the congregation are able to accept without reservation and without re-molding it, an experience initially external to them. Through this kind of acceptance, they are able to communicate, in the most profound sense of that word, with one another, and each individual is subsumed into a larger context, that of humanity. This is true unity of spirit and this is what is absent from the Compsons' lives, not because of ethical differences, but because of their mental rigidity and lack of the creative imagination which allows true perception. Since they cannot understand their own humanity, they cannot identify with the humanity of Christ's passion or of Caddy's actions.

The profundity of this kind of perception is shown by Dilsey's words, "I've seed the first en de last...I seed de beginnin' en now I sees de endin" (p. 313). On one level Dilsey is making a profound theological statement. In St. John's apocalyptic vision in Revelations, both of these phrases are used. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord...I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last..." Dilsey is claiming, then, to have communed with the godhead. Indeed, how else could one describe the intense feeling of utter unity portrayed in that scene? Equally important, Dilsey can also mean, as has been generally accepted, that she has seen the beginning and end of the Compson family. Still, the essence is the same: she has had a

31 Revelations 1. 8, 10, 11. The applicability of these verses here is quite striking, for Dilsey, too, could preface her statement with the words, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."
vision of wholeness which none of the Compsons has allowed himself to perceive.

Orthodox Christianity is, as Faulkner has remarked, a useful tool and little more, and while he is not being anti-Christian, he is condemning the mechanical, inflexible application of its dogma. In *The Sound and the Fury*, the Negro church service portrays the achievement of almost perfect unity on a human level. This unity and communion based on the ability to lose one's will in complete acceptance of an experience is the solution to such destructive fragmentation of the human psyche as seen in Quentin and Jason. Each of the Compson narrators has isolated himself in his own created world, and before any problems can be met, he must be willing to come out of his isolation by freeing himself from his preconceptions. It is quite clear that salvation can come only at the individual level. Dilsey's vision can save no one but Dilsey. Thus, at the end of the novel, we are back in the world of frustrated quests and harried, meaningless action as Jason forces the horse and carriage to perform Benjy's ritual for him.

Clearly, the scene in the Negro church is but a more artistically matured and rhetorically articulated presentation of the climactic scenes in the three earlier novels. This is practically the same Negro service seen at the end of *Soldier's Pay*, the same enactment of the Passion Week of the heart as described in *Mosquitoes*, the same kind of serenity and communion sensed in the McCallum home in *Sartoris*. Like Fairchild's "epiphany,"

Faulkner in the University, pp. 17, 68, 86.
Dilsey's religious experience is an arrested moment of time which is capable, as is the runner's belief in *A Fable*, "...of containing all of time, all of man." It is the viable alternative to the oppressive rigidity of Benjy's, Quentin's and Jason's worlds, an alternative in which the individual is allowed to seek his own mode of self-expression. The Christian allusions associated with the Compsons are indicative of an Old Testament orthodoxy which establishes limits and forces the individual to define himself in terms of those limitations. Dilsey's religion provides not definitions, but the essence of the man in Christ. The congregation collectively, but in their distinct individualities, respond to that humanity and see in it their own wholeness. In that wholeness is man's divinity.

With *Light in August*, it is as if Faulkner realized the question raised by the resolution of *The Sound and the Fury* and so addressed himself to a portrayal of the role of institutional Christianity in the community. Though *Light in August* presents an entirely different set of characters with ostensibly different concerns, and though Faulkner's artistic techniques differ markedly, the novel is closely related to *The Sound and the Fury* both thematically and structurally.

33 *A Fable*, p. 189.
Whereas *The Sound and the Fury* deals with characters who, by virtue of inflexible perceptual frameworks divorced from reality, had isolated themselves from the natural fluidity of life, *Light in August* shows the other side of the coin. Three of the book's major characters, Joe Christmas, Gail Hightower, and Joanna Burden are isolated by a community which accepts as its members only those who can meet rigidly defined criteria. Like Quentin, their behavioral code, in its major aspects, allows no gray area of indecision, but either accepts or damns to total alienation, derision and sometimes actual physical torture, the individual who presents himself before it. Michael Millgate has already noted this trait, and has remarked that one of the novel's major themes is "...the demand of organised society and organised religion that the human individual act in strict accordance with prescribed abstract patterns." Olga Vickery has provided an analysis of those patterns:

Collectively, Jefferson is Southern, White, and Elect, qualities which have meaning only within a context which recognizes something or someone as Northern or Black or Damned. This antithesis is periodically affirmed through the sacrifice of a scapegoat who represents, in fact or popular conviction, those qualities which must be rejected if Jefferson is to maintain its self-defined character....The basis of this pattern is Jefferson's conviction that the individual can only become a member of society by permitting himself to be classified according to race, color, geographic origin, and so on; Created by man, these categories become creators of man insofar as they establish social identification as the necessary prerequisite to human existence. The sheer weight of generations, each in its turn conforming to and

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therefore affirming this process of public labelling, establishes the labels not only as a matter of tradition but as a kind of revealed truth. What starts as a verbal pattern of classification thus becomes a social order not to be challenged or changed.\textsuperscript{35}

Just as Quentin's identity depends upon a code of honour, Jefferson's identity depends upon patterns of behavior. Quentin was powerless to force Caddy to accept his code, but society has great power, indeed, and can either destroy an individual or force him to re-create his life-style; the choice, such as it is, is his. It is the meeting of these two forces, society's will to maintain its pattern, the man's will to individuality and the inevitable victory of the former which provides the strong sense of fate that pervades the novel. These are but players in a ritual as old as society itself. The individual in pitting himself against the collective will is doomed to certain death and his struggle will have wrought no change, produced no tangible fruit.

Against this spiritual and physical sterility, Faulkner counterposes, as he does in \textit{Soldier's Pay}, \textit{Sartoris}, and \textit{The Sound and the Fury}, a dynamic natural fecundity. The fertility in the earlier novels is in the spring landscape; in \textit{Light in August} it is embodied in Lena Grove and therefore has a more forceful presentation.\textsuperscript{36} While it is obvious that Lena, if not representative of an Earth-mother, is at least a kind of incarnation of life's generative forces, Faulkner does not find it necessary to clutter

\textsuperscript{35} Olga Vickery, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 68-69.

\textsuperscript{36} While one might object here that Caddy provides such embodiment in \textit{The Sound and the Fury}, I disagree. What kind of fertility principle allows the mother to bear a child but denies her the nursing, moulding and shaping of the child? It must be remembered that Caddy is not forced but willingly surrenders her child and in conversation with Jason, she admits that she is incapable of raising it. (see p. 227).
his pages with references to various fertility myths as he did so copiously in *Soldier's Pay*. Even R. P. Adams, who examines in detail the Demeter-Persephone myth in each novel, is forced to admit the paucity of such mythical overtones here:

Faulkner seems, however, to have deliberately avoided giving too firm a structure to Lena's story. She serves as a representative of pure motion, tranquilly natural, comfortable, and inevitable, completely in harmony with the motion of life in the earth.37

Once again, then, we see the now familiar counterpart structure in which the stasis of a closed, exclusive mode of perception leading only to stultification and eventual suffocation of life is set against the simple but profound motion, ever extending its limits of acceptability, leading toward the fulfillment of the promise of life itself. In *Light in August*, the imagery associated with those characters suffering from the exclusive principles of the society is the circle. Joe Christmas travels in a circle, beginning at Jefferson, travelling around the countryside and returning to Jefferson and certain death. Gail Hightower is trapped inside the circle--the turning wheels of the vision of that late afternoon a half-century earlier. Though he escapes momentarily, he is too bound to that vision to free himself:

The wheel turns on. It spins now, fading, without progress, as though turned by that final flood which had washed out of him, leaving his body empty...so that it can be now Now...38

37 Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 86.
38 William Faulkner, *Light in August* (New York, [1932] 1959), p. 466. All further references are to this edition and will appear parenthetically within the text.
Joanna Burden, too, is inside a circle, for her house is like the hub of a wheel, the conjunction of "...paths which had been years in the wearing and which radiated from the house like wheel spokes" (p. 243). Such circles define the limits of acceptance and, like the circle created by a spotlight, serve as visual symbols of alienation. In contrast, Lena's life is a line, perhaps erratic, stretching from Alabama to Mississippi to Tennessee and is infinitely extendable. In Light in August, one of the major forces which draws such circles of exclusion is institutional religion.

Light in August further resembles The Sound and the Fury in that its center of gravity is found in the promiscuous act of a young girl. In fact, Faulkner's descriptions of the inceptions of these two novels are amazingly similar:

Well, impression is the wrong word. It's more an image, a very moving image to me was of the children....one was a girl and the girl was the only one that was brave enough to climb that tree to look in the forbidden window....and it took the rest of the four hundred pages to explain why she was brave enough to climb the tree...It was an image, a picture to me, a very moving one, which was symbolized by the muddy bottom of her drawers...And the symbolism of the muddy bottom of the drawers became the lost Caddy...39

That story began with Lena Grove, the idea of the young girl with nothing, pregnant, determined to find her sweetheart....As I told the story I had to get more and more into it, but that was mainly the story of Lena Grove.40

Light in August is Lena's Story in the same way that The Sound and the Fury is Caddy's: the novel portrays the manner in which her life impinges

39 Faulkner in the University, p. 31. 40 Ibid., p. 74.
upon and effects the lives of others. Unlike Caddy, however, the changes which Lena brings cause not death, destruction and loss but life and rejuvenation. By her own patient, simple acceptance of all things, she can bring others out of their shells created to forestall the flux and inevitable change at the heart of life. One event in Caddy's life is used to draw the narrators of The Sound and the Fury together to focus their stories on one point so that they brilliantly outline each other. One event in Lena Grove's life is used as a kind of circumstantial string which ties all of the thematically related characters together, bringing them into proximity for comparison. However, in Light in August there is no sectional separation of the voices as there is in The Sound and the Fury. Rather, the movement from one character's thoughts to another's, each reported by an omniscient or limited omniscient narrator, occurs sometimes within a single chapter. These two devices, the single authorial voice and the lack of technical separation, help promote a kind of structural unity which points toward the more profound thematic unity of the more diverse units of the novel.

Concomitant with this extension of his study of man isolated through perceptual rigidity and this experimentation in narrative technique, Faulkner intensifies his use of the Christian myth, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This is readily explicable because one of the major subjects, as stated above, is the force of institutional Christianity.

There are primarily two kinds of references to Christianity in Light in August. The first consists of all the verbal references to God, Christ,
and the Church, made for the most part by those characters whose lives are totally dominated by institutional religion, at least as they interpret it. The second kind is on a different level, that of mythos, and consists of the events in Joe Christmas' life which are suggestive of the pattern of Christ's life. Finally, there is a sense in which the Joe Christmas and Lena Grove elements in the novel merge in a crucifixion-nativity motif, and together they, like the experience in the Negro church in The Sound and the Fury, provide a fully developed picture of the Christian as an alternative to the repressive, sterile forces of institutional religion.

The first group of references stems from the family backgrounds of the three major characters and as a result, intrude into these characters' lives. Thus, Joanna Burden, Hightower, and Joe Christmas all have one thing in common: they come from a background of religious fanaticism which, because of its one directional emphasis has led to psychological aberrations.

For Hightower, two factors are important in his background. The first is that he was the only child of elderly parents: "When he was born his father was fifty years old, and his mother had been an invalid for almost twenty years" (p. 442). The second is his father's complete devotion to his religion. The agedness of his parents actually means that Hightower had no parents; his mother he remembers: "...as being only that thin face and the two eyes which daily seemed to grow bigger" (p. 449). Since the present could provide nothing to match his energies, "He grew up among
phantoms" (p. 449), he turned to the past which could--the swashbuckling adventures of his grandfather in the Civil War, romanticized and exaggerated by the Negro cook. His grandfather, as rendered by the Negro, grows far more real, more full of the dynamism that is life than his parents to whom "...he was more than a stranger: he was an enemy" (p. 450). So Hightower manages to merge the two factors, the heroic, appealing figure of the grandfather is relived in the serenity of the Church that he saw in his father. In settling on this combination, Hightower makes the past his religion and a moment in a hen house the meditative center of his worship, and the two "...get all mixed up with absolution and choirs of martial seraphim" (p. 57).

It becomes increasingly clear that Hightower chose the church as his metier simply because it would afford him the peace and the time to pursue his obsession with the past. Within the cloistered walls, Hightower could secede from the present, from life which he had never really experienced, "...using religion as though it were a dream" (p. 56). Hightower repeats that he "asked so little," only "that peace which is the promise and end of the church" (p. 340). He sees the church not as an active participant in life but as a sanctuary from it: "He believed...that if ever there was shelter it would be the Church" (p. 453). Thus he totally isolates himself and allows himself to perceive only the past. As a result, he cannot act in the present to fulfill any role whatsoever because he is intent on serving only his own needs. When he walks out of the church on that fateful Sunday after his wife's suicide, "...his face looked like
the face of Satan in the old prints" (p. 63), simply because he had been using everything, his wife, the church, the congregation, the town, to gain his own ends.

After he stirs from his cell to act in the present, to bring forth life and to attempt, however vainly, to save it, Hightower can remove himself far enough to realize his guilt, to recognize his motivation, and to accept responsibility for failing God and his wife:

> And I know that for fifty years I have not even been clay: I have been a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed. And if I am my dead Grandfather on the instant of his death, then my wife, his grandson's wife...the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife, since I could neither let my grandson live or die...
> (p. 465; ellipses are Faulkner's)

But Hightower is too entrenched to escape from his stasis, his living death, back into life. After such a vision, such insight, he fails again and relapses into his reveries: "It is as though they had merely waited until he could find something to pant with, to be reaffirmed in triumph and desire with, with this last left of honor and pride and life. He hears above his heart the thunder increase, myriad and drumming..." (p. 466).

The novel's final words concerning Hightower show him grasping for that sound of the past, "...it seems to him that he still hears them: the wild bugles and the clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves" (p. 467).

Yet as blameworthy as he is, the fault rests not with Hightower alone. The townspeople too are guilty of not being able to see beyond their own definition of "minister." Hightower outrages their sense of acceptable
behavior and is therefore utterly rejected. They do not try to understand nor to offer assistance. When the minister does not fulfill the expected role, they stop coming to church. They can only classify it as sacrilege and proceed to purge it. As Hightower succinctly states, "they played by the rules..." (p. 461). They cannot offer the charity which is the foundation of the true church. Instead, they react, as did the Jews to Christ, by crucifying the one who breaks those rules because they cannot pity, "...since to pity him would be to admit self-doubt and to hope for and need pity themselves" (p. 347). Thus, Hightower's image of the dead church is more accurate than he realizes. The church is dead because the people have removed the bell which tolled for all to hear. What remains is an empty shell built of definitive, inflexible rules which do not allow deviation, human error, human individuality.

He seems to see them, endless, without order, empty, symbolical, bleak, skypointed not with ecstasy or passion but in adjuration, threat and doom. He seems to see the churches of the world like a rampart, like one of those barricades of the middle ages planted with dead and sharpened stakes against truth and against that peace in which to sin and be forgiven which is the life of man. (p. 461).

The same "adjuration, threat, and doom" are the watchwords and legacy of three other fathers in this novel who have distorted Christ's message.

Joanna Burden's grandfather, Calvin, was a man, though not a minister, who preached to his family, "...composed half of the bleak and bloodless

41 These "dead and sharpened stakes" are obviously related to the "falling spire" in Soldier's Pay which are also symbolic of a distorted. The image in Light in August is just more precise and well developed.
logic which he remembered from his father on interminable New England
Sundays, and half of immediate hellfire and tangible brimstone..." (p. 229).
Also intermixed with this punitive, Calvinistic doctrine is an aboli­
tionist sentiment based on an interpretation of the Negro as the white
man's curse for his sins. So, Burden taught his son, Joanna's father,
"...to hate two things...hell and slaveholders" (p. 229). Then they moved
to the South where, because of their abolitionist doctrine, they were re­
jected and Joanna's grandfather and half-brother were killed. Joanna was
then raised, imbued with the puritanical doctrine of the wrathful God and
mesmerized by the "...black shadow in the shape of a cross" (p. 239). She
felt strangled by the latter and longed for escape, but her father would
not permit it:

"You cannot," he said. "You must struggle, rise.
But in order to rise, you must raise the shadow
with you. But you can never lift it to your
level...escape it you cannot. The curse of the
black race is God's curse. But the curse of the
white race is the black man. (p. 240).

The Calvinistic doctrine of proving one's divine election is hereby linked
with one's aiding the Negro. Joanna has so thoroughly absorbed both doc­
trines that even though she escapes momentarily, like Hightower, she can­
not free herself totally. She must right herself with God in the manner
that she has been taught; that is, she must finally insist that Joe accept
the classification dictated by her inherited framework. He must be a Negro
and he must repent for his sins. Like Hightower, Joanna is trapped by a
set of rules which she accepts. Her death is the inevitable result, be­
cause such rigidity excludes the motion of life and is exactly what Joe
has been fighting all of his life.
Earlier in Joe's life, two other people had attempted to force him to accept the two rigid classifications of "Negro" and "saved." The first was his grandfather, Doc Hines, who had forged his own insane religion of "womansinning, womanfilth" and the inferiority of the Negro race. Thus, it is, after a fashion, logical that he would see Joe as a representative of the ultimate in sin and the prime instrument of divine retribution since, in his mind, Joe's birth combined the two sins of fornication and miscegenation. So, Hines, believing himself chosen of God to watch the divine workings in this product of utter sin subtly casts hints that Joe is a "nigger" thus setting in motion Joe's crisis in identity.

Though his perversion of Christianity is not as painfully obvious as Hines', McEachern, too, insists on rigidly defined, absolute rules of conduct; one is either saved or damned and it is easy to discover which:

"...there is you home...You will find food and shelter and the care of Christian people...and the work within your strength that will keep you out of mischief. For I will have you learn soon that the two abominations are sloth and idle thinking, the two virtues are work and the fear of God" (p. 135).

Indeed, McEachern attempts to force these lessons by main strength upon the child and literally whips him until he loses consciousness in "teaching" him the Presbyterian catechism. McEachern, like Hines, insists that others, particularly Joe, accept his fanatical brand of religion. It becomes apparent through word choice how essentially alike the two men are. They both use the Old Testament word "abomination" in describing what they see as sin, they both use the epithet "Jezebel," the first for Bobbie and the

See pp. 135 and 360.
other for the dietitian, and they both, at one point, see themselves as divine instruments whose mission it is to destroy sin. Hines states that God told him, "...I have set you there to watch and guard my will. It will be yours to tend to it and oversee" (p. 351). As McEachern, following Joe, walks into the dance hall, the narrator remarks, "Perhaps, if he were thinking at all, he believed that he had been guided and were now propelled by some militant Michael Himself as he entered the room" (p. 190). At least, McEachern never doubts his authority and ability not only to determine what is sin, but also to judge and condemn others for sinning. Each conceives himself to be "...the actual representative of the wrathful and retributive Throne" (p. 191).

It is in Joe's struggle to escape the kinds of categorical judgment represented by Hines and McEachern that the second kind of allusion to Christianity occurs. Walter Brylowski has stated that *Light in August* can be viewed as "...a quest on the part of Joe Christmas for identity in a society that denies identity..." It seems to me, however, that his emphasis is misplaced; society does not deny identity, it demands identity. It demands that an individual accept the identity imposed by society itself. What Joe Christmas is seeking is self-definition in a society which will not allow him to escape its definition of him. Joe's quest can be said to begin when he first refuses to accept an external definition. When McEachern arrives at the orphanage to take Joe home, he tells the director that Joe will take his surname. The narrator then states...

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43 See pp. 123 and 191.  
that Joe "...didn't even bother to say to himself My name ain't McEachern. My name is Christmas" (p. 136). The next two chapters of the book record Joe's continuing rejection of McEachern's primary method of definition, the Presbyterian Church. Joe works it so that while he is immersed in what McEachern considers the greatest sin, lechery, at night, he gains McEachern's praise during the day. When Joe first begins this nighttime activity, the above words of rejection are repeated to Bobbie: "'Where do you live?' she said. 'In the country? Well, say. What's you name?' 'It's not McEachern,' he said. 'It's Christmas!" (p. 172-173). Joe also struggles against accepting either the "white" or "Negro" label. From his stay at the orphanage and the vigilance and secretive action of Hines there, as well as the dietitian's scornful remark, Joe absorbs the implication that he is a "nigger." While living with the McEacherns, he savors the idea of confronting Mrs. McEachern that her husband "...has nursed a nigger beneath his own roof, with his own food at his own table" (p. 159). Then, of course, he tells his suspicion of his Negro blood to Bobbie, and when she is angered by McEachern's outburst, she lashes back at Joe: "He told me himself he was a nigger... Me f---ing for nothing a nigger son of a bitch that would get me in a jam" (p. 204). Joe spends the next fifteen years moving back and forth between the black and white worlds, refusing to accept complete identification with either.45

45 See Vickery, op. cit., pp. 68-75 for an exhaustive treatment of this aspect of the novel.
This is the background that Joe brings to Jefferson and to Joanna Burden. These forces operating within him result in the homespun analysis that "He never acted like either a nigger or a white man... That was what made the folks so mad" (p. 331), and in Gavin Stevens' more elaborate analysis, which also centers on Joe's ambivalence. More importantly, it is Joanna Burden's insistence that Joe accept the role of Negro and work for his race and that he kneel and pray to God for atonement for his wasted life--her insistence that he accept the two definitions he has been battling--that results in Joe's final, violent, destructive act.

During his chronicling of Joe's struggle, Faulkner includes events and facts which present overtones of the life of Christ. This is by no means, of course, a critical discovery; this aspect of Joe's character has been treated in detail by several critics. Beekman Cottrell has presented the most complete treatment of such similarities and has, in fact, pushed the similarity to its ludicrous extreme. Cottrell first enumerates "certain facts... which are, indeed, inescapable: Joe's name is reminiscent of Christ's and the initials are the same; Joe's uncertain paternity and his appearance at the orphanage on Christmas; and... Joe is approximately thirty-three years of age at his lynching." Then Cottrell states that "... the central story of Joe Christmas does follow the life of Jesus... [both were] fifteen years in formation, then fifteen years in the world..."

Beekman Cottrell, "Christian Symbols in Light in August, Modern Fiction Studies, II (1956), 207.
was hunted, imprisoned and lynched...Joe's foster mother symbolically washes his feet". Cottrell also finds that Joanna Burden, whose name is the feminine equivalent of John, is the "John the Baptist of the story." Byron, Lena and child are Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Lucas Burch is Judas, Hightower is Pilate, and Percy Grimm is "...the Roman soldier who pierced Jesus' side."

It seems obvious that Cottrell's analysis does more disservice to the novel than it does service to the reader. It violently wrenches the novel from one literary form to another, because it virtually makes *Light in August* into an allegory, which it most obviously is not. One must also reject Cottrell's analysis because it is based on far-fetched, insubstantiated reasoning which takes the events and characters of the novel and commits the critical error of re-shaping them to fit an external scheme.

One must remember what Cottrell quickly loses sight of: not one event in *Light in August* reproduces an event in Christ's life. Joe is not born on Christmas eve; he is not thirty-three years old when he is killed; he is not killed on Friday or even on Sunday; he does not cleanse a church; he does not have a disciple; and his death brings salvation to no one. Rather, the similarities which exist always remain on the level of suggestion and it is because they do so remain that the novel has such power. When one raises these suggestions to the level of fact and proceeds to interpret the novel in terms of this fact, the result is that the original context is lost.

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47 Cottrell, op. cit., p. 208.  
48 Ibid., p. 209.  
49 Incidentally, Cottrell could also have mentioned that Joe's eating of the raw corn while running from the sheriff's posse is roughly parallel to Christ picking and eating the corn on the Sabbath while he was attempting to keep away from the angry Jewish leaders. (See Mark, chapter 2).
Therefore, I once again examine this aspect of Joe's life because even at this date, I must reassert Robert Slabey's opening statement in his 1960 article on *Light in August*: "In no one of the numerous treatments of Joe as a "Christ-figure" is there a truly adequate or satisfactory discussion of the artistic function of Joe..."\(^{50}\). That is to say, no one has pointed out the very real consistency and pattern of the references to the Christian myth of which Joe's parallel to Christ is an integral part. Cottrell, for example, concludes that "...the theme of both *Light in August* and the Christian story is that the mingling of good and evil can bring hope...his story...argues strongly for an inevitably tragic view of life."\(^{51}\) This statement, besides being contradictory, wrongs both the Christian story and *Light in August*. The lesson of the Bible has little to do with the mingling of good and evil; rather, it states that hope rests in the existence of a benevolent, omnipotent and merciful God. But granting that such mingling is the theme, if it brings hope, how can it also result in a tragic view of life? In dealing with the same subject, Robert Slabey sees Joe's Christ-like overtones representative of the Christian myth but of "the archetypal story of the dying god and his resurrection, which symbolized the seasonal death and reappearance of vegetation."\(^{52}\) This, too, seems to wrench the novel's context; with such a strongly Christian background in the major characters and with the overtones that are present being specifically related to Christ, how can one

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\(^{51}\) Cottrell, *op. cit.*, 212.

\(^{52}\) Slabey, *op. cit.*, 329.
deny the importance of that particular parallel? Slabey, then, using much of the evidence that Cottrell used, points out the parallels between Adonis and Joe, and I find as much difficulty in accepting his conclusion that the novel represents "...a solitary descent...into the regions of the unconscious followed by a rebirth into a new attitude or way of life, a new spiritual unity," because at the same time Slabey insists that "there may be a Nativity and a Good Friday but there is no Easter Sunday...the atmosphere is similar to that of Holy Saturday." Once again, the problem of relating an imposed structure back to the novel's context arises. Slabey, in order to provide an adequate explanation, must have it both ways--there is a re-birth, yet Christ has not risen.

Walter Brylowski has also treated the subject similarly in that he relates the Christian myth to a more universal pattern: "The primary myth held here in counterpoint is that of Christ the crucified scapegoat....the myth as used by Faulkner holds Christ, the god, to have achieved his ultimate identification with humanity only through the suffering of his death." Brylowski, however, never becomes more explicit than this and, in fact, seems to lose sight of this proposition until the end of the chapter at which time he merely restates it.

R. P. Adams, who sees Christmas not as the novel's protagonist but as Lena's foil, comes closest to assimilating the mythic overtones into the novel's immediate context:

53 Slabey, op. cit., p. 334.
54 Ibid., p. 344.
55 Brylowski, op. cit., p. 103.
This function [of Christmas] as a foil defines his role as a Christ figure in a rather special way. He does not represent the Christ of the New Testament, but rather the rigid repressiveness which Faulkner had associated with Southern Protestant morality... Christmas is more the helpless victim of a pharisaical society than Christ was. He is not only persecuted and killed; he is also corrupted by being made to pattern himself on the models of repression... He is a mirror image of the sterility that kills him.56

This analysis, however, relegates Christmas to a passivity that is not his. He actively rebels against that repression and, in fact, refuses to accept the patterns others create for him. Also, part of the difficulty, as has been the case all along, is Adams' use of the word "represent." It seems to me that of all of Faulkner's characters, Joe is among the least representative. Faulkner uses over one half of the book providing a thorough examination of the prime factors in Joe's psychological make up. Joe is first and foremost a fully realized character in his own right and does not represent "rigid repressiveness" any more than he represents Christ or Adonis.

Once again, then, the problem before us is one of accounting for the artistic function of the overtones of the Christian myth within the context presented by the novel. I have outlined the context as I see it earlier in my discussion. Joe is caught in a society which demands that he conform to certain prescribed roles and will not allow him to fuse those roles, to be both Negro and white, to be both good and evil, to be, in fact, himself. Finally, he arrives at Joanna Burden's home and for a time, finds the acceptance he needs. They each have their lives during the day, but at night,

56 Adams, op. cit., p. 87.
they come together in their nakedness. In fact, when Joanna writes her last note to him, Joe thinks she has forgotten "all this damn foolishness" about "niggers and babies" and that they can once more have their separate world in which "She is still she and I am still I" (p. 257). This tautology which allows maximum freedom is exactly the kind of definition that society will not allow.

Christ spent his life teaching the doctrine of acceptance of people as they are, the doctrine of "whosoever will to the Lord may come," and in the sense that Christ fought against the old order of rigid, arbitrary laws which carefully categorized people, Joe is like Christ.

However, Joe discovers that he cannot have such acceptance. What he thought was his sanctuary was only a woman's temporary suspension of her rules to gratify her physical desires. She must yield to the religion she has been taught and save herself and Joe. Joe reacts to this, as he always did, violently. He murders Joanna, and the first days of his trek through the back-country avoiding the law is part of his old pattern of savage rebellion and attempted escape from externally imposed definitions. His performance at the Negro church is his cry of desperation at the religion and the label "black" which the people in that church have accepted and given credence to, and therefore nourished. Joe climbs into the pulpit and begins to curse God, and surely the God he is cursing is the one represented by the fanaticism of Doc Hines, McEachern and Joanna Burden, a god who denies the wholeness of life by insisting that everyone be shaped by the same prescriptions for behavior, thought and belief. As Joe stands in the pul-
pit decrying this kind of religion, he is crying out for the kind of acceptance of the integrity of life seen in the Negro church services in *Soldier's Pay* and *The Sound and the Fury*. Joe is cursing the society that accepts only the guilt of the knowledge of sin and therefore cannot have any conception of the ecstasy in the statement, "I am still I."

However, in the midst of this reaction, in the midst of his thus far eminently successful attempt to avoid being captured, Joe changes and begins his walk toward certain death. The donning of the Negro's shoes is the symbol of this change:

> It seemed to him that he could see himself being hunted by white men at last into the black abyss which had been waiting, trying for thirty years to drown him and into which now and at last he had actually entered, bearing now upon his ankles the definite and ineradicable gauge of its upward moving... He breathes deep and slow, feeling with each breath himself diffuse in the neutral grayness, becoming one with loneliness and quiet that has never knows fury or despair. "That was all I wanted," he thinks, in a quiet and slow amazement. "That was all, for thirty years. That didn't seem to be a whole lot to ask in thirty years." (p. 313).

Joe realizes that he cannot escape the demands of society, so he yields to them. Paradoxically, by making this decision to be bound by society, to accept the role it has been thrusting upon him, he is able to exist, for a time, outside these bounds, because with that decision, he no longer need struggle but can enjoy the remaining days of his freedom. He has achieved freedom from the vicious cycle of rebellion that has been his life. This newly attained freedom is indicated by his loss of that ultimate sym-
bol of man's limits, time. "When he thinks about time, it seems to him now that for thirty years he has lived inside an orderly parade of named and numbered days like fence pickets, and that one night he went to sleep and when he waked up he was outside of them...Time, the spaces of light and dark, had long since lost orderliness" (pp. 314-315). The implication here is that Joe realizes, perhaps subconsciously, that this orderliness represented by the hours and days of measured time is the foundation, the essential need of society, and that the social definitions which he has rejected, like the differentiation of Wednesday from Thursday, are equally arbitrary but necessary for the order which a society must have if it is to function. Simultaneously, he realizes that he can only escape these arbitrary rules if he exists, as he does during this week, outside the bounds of organized society. Since it is impossible for him to exist in this way for any extended length of time, his only alternative method of escape is death. Therefore, his acceptance of the Negro shoes, and thus the Negro role, become linked with death: "...that mark on his ankles the gauge definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upward as death moves" (p. 321). So Joe accepts the labels "nigger" and "murderer" and goes willingly to his death. In order to escape society's limitations, he becomes what it demands that he be. In the sense that the community is wreaking its justice not on the individual Joe Christmas but on the Joe Christmas it has defined, Joe becomes a martyr to the community's failure to respond to his humanity and "an image of the sterility that kills him." In this sense, Joe is Christlike. Christ was crucified not because of his true identity, but because
of the Jews' perceptions of him. They defined him as a blasphemer, a vain pretender and a threat to their entire religious system. He let himself be crucified as these things; he spoke nothing in his own defense and he refused to prove himself God. It was essential that people accept him as he was in faith in the divinity of his humanity. Joe Christmas essentially does the same thing and what society, through its representative Percy Grimm, is crucifying is the result of its powerful will to impose its categories on the individual. It does not accept the individual simply by faith in their common humanity.

Lena Grove, who is as much a fertility principle as she is a character, has already attained this peace simply because she is not concerned with the way she is perceived. She has an absolute faith in the benevolence of the forces around her: "I reckon a family ought to all be together when a chap comes....I reckon the Lord will see to that" (p. 18). With this kind of confidence, Lena can move with life and be a dynamic part of it. She has enough of this life force to be able to save Byron Bunch whose life, with his job at the mill and his weekend trips to the country church, was on the verge of repeating the sterile of Gail Hightower's father.

The two narrative threads come together when Joe is killed on the day that Lena gives birth to her child. With the child being born in the cabin in which Joe lived, and with Mrs. Hines, in her strange psychological state, erasing thirty years and confusing the baby with Joe, one can see a definite re-birth motif. Although, as I have stated, Beekman Cottrell's
analysis insists too rigidly on the parallel and therefore lapses into absurdity, his recognition of Lena and Byron's symbolic relationship to Mary and Joseph is significant but in a much subtler manner than he suggests. The birth of Lena's baby is indeed a figurative re-birth of the Christ in Joe Christmas. Thus, there is a uniting of the two prime elements of the Christian myth, nativity and crucifixion. Lena, in her association with the nativity, is symbolic of the creative, life-giving force in the myth. She participates in the incarnation because, in living her life, she has the power to impart the profound joy and simplicity and innocence that is at the very core of life. Joe partakes of the agony of crucifixion, the acceptance of guilt. By emphasizing the coincidence of Lena's giving birth and Joe's death, Faulkner is indicating that the two elements are equally necessary, and these two elements are "de ricklickshun en de blood of de Lamb," the first of which makes man aware of his weakness, his guilt, and the second allows him to accept that and rejoice in his own life-giving blood, his own drive for a self-expressed creativity in discovering his true self.

When Joe accepts and transcends the bonds of societal repression through his death, he is symbolically re-born into the kind of peace and fulfillment that Lena's life represents. The strangle-hold of society's overpowering will for order and control is broken, self-definition is achieved, and life can be re-affirmed in its wholeness. One must remember that Lena, in her continuing travels, lives at the bounds of society; she uses it as a vehicle, literally and figuratively. She can therefore

57 See page 105 above.
participate in the creativity of life and fulfill her own individuality.

In the final analysis, the Christian myth plays two roles in *Light in August*. As organized, institutional religion, it has become a dogmatic, rigid application of inflexible rules which do not accept the individual but attempts to re-shape him in its own image. As such, it is a force which operates against the vitality of life since it inhibits individual expression. But in its pure form as found in the symbolic union of Joe and Lena, it represents that force which asserts the worth of the individual as he is, the common humanity of man, and the active destruction of arbitrary rules of order which would control man too stringently. It is the force of Christ's extraordinarily significant yet simple statement that "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."57

In terms of the development in the use of the myth from *The Sound and the Fury* to *Light in August*, the incorporation of certain events in Joe Christmas' life which are suggestive of the pattern of Christ's life is a further and expected extension of Faulkner's handling of this "tool." This seems the next logical step after the allusions in the first novels, and the bare outline of Christ's passion in the days of the Easter celebration used as a structural device in *The Sound and the Fury*. Now that structural device becomes an integrated part of the novel's plot. The symbolic associations with the myth, however, have remained essentially the same, even to the extent of the opposition of the Old and New Testaments, the first being related to a force for massing all of man into one mold and the latter a force for harmony achieved between men whose lives are the
expression of their individuality achieved in the totality of their humanity. Thus, one can easily see that it is but a short step from the Christ parallels suggested in *Light in August* to the allegory in *A Fable*, and the military system is but a more rigid and concentrated, secular form of the church in *Light in August*.
CONCLUSION

On the basis of the preceding analysis, one can, I think, readily discern both a consistent thematic use of and a steady artistic development in the Christian myth as it appears in Faulkner's novels. *A Fable*, with its explicit allegorical use of the myth provides a clear indication of the direction in which Faulkner steadily moves in the earlier stages of his artistry. Thematically, *A Fable* presents, though not nearly as subtly as *The Sound and the Fury* or *Light in August*, the fundamental conflict between the large abstraction "Authority," which attempts to shape all men in its own image, and the simplicity of the corporal's belief in the primacy of the whole self unconstrained by ideology. The belief which the corporal stands for and the British runner grasps "is capable of containing all of time and all of man" in one unutterable vision.

This same rejection of institutions and ideologies which deny a portion of man's self is present in each of the novels studied and is accompanied by a movement toward a "timeless moment" in which a vision of the essential wholeness of life is experienced. In *Soldier's Pay* that moment occurs amidst the sterility and fragmentation and death which society has instilled into the mutilated soldier, Donald Mahon. At the end of the novel the Negro church service overwhelms Joe Gilligan and Rector Mahon with its conjunction of life's elements, "tomorrow and sweat...sex and death and damnation." They are then enabled to experience their own profound humanity, "feeling dust in their shoes." *Mosquitoes* presents, in juxtaposition to the
superficiality of Mrs. Maurier and the impotence of Talliaferro, Fairchild's comprehension of the same primary unity of "the hackneyed accidents which make up this world." The major character in Sartoris cannot fuse the fragments of his life, his "heroic" family tradition and his own war experiences, and thus rejects life in favor of death. Then, in a foreshadowing of the rebirth motif in Light in August, Bayard's son is born on the day he dies and Narcissa, in a gesture of renunciation of the tradition positing a limited pattern of order, does not name the child Bayard or John, but Benbow Sartoris, thus uniting the placidity of her own life as a Benbow with the energy of the Sartorises. She prepares the way for her son to avoid Bayard's destructive struggle.

In the novels of Faulkner's middle period, this pattern is much more highly developed and both poles of the conflict are expressed in terms of the Christian myth. Benjy, Quentin, and Jason all have rigid perceptual frameworks which become associated with a view of Christianity as an exclusive ideology accepting only those whose lives fit a preconceived pattern. For each of these Compsons, Caddy's expression of her physical desires would destroy their pattern, so she is either rejected or condemned. Dilsey's belief, however, is large enough to include Caddy as she is. The Easter service in which Dilsey participates becomes a symbolic expression of the acceptance of the whole man without restrictions, and her experience is that of direct, participatory perception in which "...their hearts were speaking to one another." This kind of vision is able to see all of life at once in its fundamental integrity and is the
center of religious experience. Such a moment is indeed timeless, because it subsumes all of time, "de beginnin' en de endin," into an instant of perception.

*Light in August* deals with the same opposition between the oppressive forces which bring only stasis and death and that force which is the dynamic, unbounded motion of life. Society defines Joe and then crucifies him in the role it has ascribed to him. The allusions to Christ indicate that Joe, like Christ, is martyred by a society which perceives his unorthodox life style as a threat to its rigid, mechanical form. Then, in the crucifixion-nativity motif established by the conjunction of Joe's death and the birth of Lena's baby, one can see, as Sutterfield remarked in *A Fable*, that "they're both the same to Him," that both the suffering because of "evil" and the ecstasy of creation are essential parts of man. As both of these poles are part of the Christian myth, both are part of life itself and when conjoined, bring the religious experience of the wholeness of life in which man expresses his divinity. This is what the people of Jefferson and Quentin and Jason need to learn. Thus, one can, I think, see that in Faulkner's works, the Christian myth rapidly becomes, to return to Schorer's definition, "a large controlling image...which gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life...[and] organizing value for human life." The thematic consistency with which it is used in the novels underscores that value.

Although the novels studied here present Faulkner's most complete and

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1 Mark Schorer, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
significant uses of the Christian myth, one can find in the other novels specific passages which also fit into the pattern I have described, though the pattern is by no means as complete. In *As I Lay Dying*, for example, when the reader sees the scene in the river through Darl's eyes, and a log "...surged up out of the water for an instant upright upon that surging and heaving desolation like Christ," the image seems to juxta­pose all of the desolation in the Bundren family, the hardships of the trip, the psychological struggles of Darl and Vardaman, Dewey Dell's unwanted pregnancy, to this picture of Christ. He was able to assimilate all the desolation of life and stand upright upon it, perhaps even because of it. The image posits a resolution which Anse in his own way achieves by simply moving forward with his new false teeth and his new wife.

A similar image occurs in *Absalom, Absalom!* which, through Sutpen's actions, recreates the construction of the rigid, oppressive social structure of the antebellum South. In this system, as in *Light in August*, individuals are forced to assume the roles defined for them, and as a result, this society partakes of the same agony found in Jefferson's purgation of Joe Christmas. Charles Bon, who was slain because in proposing marriage to Judith Sutpen he proposed both incest and miscegeny in blatant violation of the fundamental code of that society, died, "Aged 33 years and 5 months." His grandson, Charles Etienne St. Valery Bon, is light-skinned and could avoid this conflict if he would only move to a

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different section of the country. He chooses, however, to take a proto-
totypically negroid wife and thus compel society to confront its own rigidity. In his conference with Judith, she asks him to annul his marriage and to call her Aunt Judith. Charles replies, "No, Miss Sutpen," and on his return to his cabin, he is "...treading the thorny and flint-
paved path toward the Gethsemane which he had decreed and created for himself, where he had crucified himself and come down from his cross for a moment and now returned to it." (p. 209). It seems to me that this overwhelming inflexibility which forbids the individual to experience the joy of creating his own self is the reason that Quentin, though he does not verbalize it, cannot fuse the pieces into a unit because such rigidity demands the separation of absolute categories.

In its conjunction of the pre-lenten Mardi Gras festivities with the Thursday through Sunday progression of Holy Week, Pylon points to a union of the agony of the destructive, fragmenting forces with the joy and creative energy of the resurrection that was so subtly produced in Light in August. In Pylon, however, such a union is posited only by the allusions since no character experiences any kind of "oneness" and the novel presents only the rigid and sterile society, as the allusions to Eliot's "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" indicate, in which the use of machines has become a form of worship. This society can experience only the destruction and violence associated with Christ's death and none of the joy of rebirth:
And here also the cryptic shield caught:
(i n r i) loops of bunting giving an appearance temporary and tentlike to in-
terminable long corridor of machine plush and gilded synthetic plaster running be-
tween anonymous and rentable spaces or al-
coves from sunrise to sunset across America. 4

Although Pylon is a far less successful novel than Light in August, one can, I think, discern the similarities of Faulkner's use of the Christian myth in them.

Requiem for a Nun, however, does provide an internal reconciliation. This dramatic-novel is essentially Temple Drake's use of the Governor's office as a confessional5 by means of which she learns that she cannot separate her "sinful" past from the present. She must accept both. Nancy Mannigoe, who knows this because she has accomplished such a re-
conciliation and she can respond to her death sentence with "Yes, Lord,"6 tells Temple:

You ain't got to sin. You can't help it.
And He knows that too. He don't tell you not to sin, he just asks you not to. And He don't tell you to suffer. But he gives you the chance. (p. 287).

Nancy dies for her sin, but she does not need the governor's pardon be-
cause she has already accepted her life in its wholeness. The "historical" sections of the novel indicate that Temple, in drawing the line between past and present is supported by the social institutions, the Jefferson

5 See James Giermanski, "William Faulkner's Use of the Confessional," Renascence, XXI (1970), 119-123, 166, for a complete treatment of this.
jail and courthouse, the capitol dome in Jackson, which stand for a
blind justice bent on an absolute separation of good and evil. Thus,
the title of Act II is "The Golden Dome (Beginning was the word),"
and that word is the law of the Old Testament God who also defined good
and evil and eschewed the latter. But the "Word" is also Jesus Christ who put away that rigidity and accepted sinful man. As Gavin Stevens
states: "He said 'Suffer little children to come unto Me.' He meant
exactly that: He meant suffer; that the adults, the fathers, the old
in and capable of sin, must be ready and willing--nay, eager--to suffer
at any time, that the little children shall come unto him unanguished..."
(p. 163). Thus, Nancy's final word to Temple, "Believe" asks her to
believe in the primary wholeness of one's experiences. Only in accepting
suffering and joy can one's children receive the heritage that Gavin
demands.

The above is, I think, strongly indicative of Faulkner's continuing
and consistent use of the Christian myth even in the novels in which it is
not expressed in its complete form. However, a very intriguing aspect of
Faulkner's career is that after A Fable, that is, in his last three novels,
The Town (1957), The Mansion (1959), and The Reivers (1962), the myth is
practically non-existent. This would seem to indicate that, for whatever

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8 The exception here, besides various expletives, is the ex-marine and his
church in The Mansion. This scene is problematic, and I think Brylowski
describes it as well as anyone: "What Faulkner intended with this scene is un-
certain. Christ appeared to the marine as another soldier ordering him to
"Fall in"...Faulkner does not tell us of any impact the narration of this 'vision had on Mink. In fact, it only seems to stress his alienation...The
story is not developed adequately in relation to any character's conscious-
ness for it to have sufficient meaning. Mink does, in fact, leave the
group, go to Memphis, get his gun, make his way to Jefferson, and kill
Flem' (Brylowski, op. cit., pp. 209-210).
reason, Faulkner felt he had moved as far as he could with the myth; that is, his consistent use of the myth in his earlier works is a sufficiently complete expression of his artistic conception of it.
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