

RULES AND CIRCUMSTANCES: THE YOUNG PROTAGONIST
AND THE SOCIAL CODES IN FAULKNER'S FICTION

by

BEVERLY ANN MELTABARGER

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Department of English
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada
Date May 5, 1967

ABSTRACT

It is an interesting and seldom noted fact that the young protagonist--the boy or girl between the ages of ten and twenty-one--appears again and again in the novels and short stories of William Faulkner. Since Faulkner wrote for an adult audience which might well lose interest in a non-adult hero, and since his themes involve violent and even sensational aspects such as suicide, rape, lynching and castration, which are part of an adult world, he must have had some definite purpose in using a young protagonist.

A closer look at the works in which young people play major roles will reveal that, with few exceptions, the young protagonist is involved in a conflict with one of society's many unwritten codes of behavior, which is exerting pressure on him to conform to its dictates. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that Faulkner is using the young protagonist for two main purposes: to show, in microcosm, the various relationships between individuals of any age and the social codes, and to remind the reader of the constant opportunity to use free will, to free oneself from destructive or immoral situations and demands, which all individuals possess but which the child particularly utilizes. In showing how the young

protagonist resolves his conflict, then, Faulkner seems to be making a very significant statement on both individualism and conformity, man and the social codes.

In this thesis I have discussed several of Faulkner's young people in terms of the particular codes which they encounter. These I have called The Familial Code, The Religious Code, The Racial Code and The Chivalric Code. The order in which these codes are presented is determined firstly by the order in which they might be encountered by a child as he grows up. They represent, in other words, a constant movement outward from almost instinctive emotional responses to highly sophisticated and idealistic concepts. At the same time, I move towards codes of major importance in Faulkner's writing--The Racial and Chivalric Codes--placing the most emphasis on them by examining in greater depth those works in which they occur.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In William Faulkner's novel Intruder in the Dust, a statement is made--first by an old Negro, then in slight variation by an old white woman--which bears consideration in connection with Faulkner's work as a whole:

If you got something outside the common run that's got to be done and cant wait, dont waste your time on the menfolks; they works on...the rules and cases. Get the womens and children at it; they works on the circumstances.¹ (Italics Faulkner's)

This statement is shown to be true in the novel, for it is two young boys and an old woman who go to the trouble of finding out whether or not an accused Negro--Lucas Beauchamp--is actually guilty of murdering a white man. They go ahead with their rather bizarre endeavor--the digging up of the dead man in order to check what kind of gun he was killed with--even though most of the men of the community have already judged the Negro to be guilty and are prepared to lynch him.

The community's response is based on more than just the anger, grief, and shock which a murder generally elicits: the fact that the accused man is a Negro, and a Negro who has a reputation for refusing to behave as a Negro should, brings the murder into the realm of racial codes, rather than legal ones. As lawyer Gavin Stevens says,

¹(New York: Random House, 1948), p. 112. All subsequent references to this book are from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after each quotation.

"....now the white people will take him out and burn him, all regular and in order and themselves acting exactly as they are convinced Lucas would wish them to act: like white folks; both of them observing explicitly the rules: the nigger acting like a nigger and the white folks acting like white folks and no real hard feelings on either side...once the fury is over....Which proves again how no man can cause more grief than that one clinging blindly to the vices of his ancestors" (pp 48-49).

It is against these "rules", these inherited vices which are part of the racial code of his society, that young Chick Mallison acts. Unlike Aleck Sander he has no racial ties to Lucas Beauchamp. Nor does he feel the kind of emotional involvement Miss Habersham feels because of her childhood relationship with Lucas' wife. He owes Lucas nothing; he does not particularly like him; he even believes that Lucas is probably guilty of the murder. However, he does what Lucas asks because he feels that "he alone of all the white people Lucas will have a chance to speak to between now and the moment when Lucas might be dragged out of the cell and down the stairs at the end of a rope, will hear the mute unhoping urgency of the eyes" (pp 68-69). For Chick, apart from the excitement and the sheer momentum which sweeps him along in the endeavor once he has started it, the whole matter is one of coming to grips with a strange feeling he has had for years about his relationship to Lucas. He is one of the few who can help Lucas now, because despite his upbringing as a Southern white child, his attitudes toward Negroes--in this case Lucas--are still uncertain

because he is still involved in questioning and testing the rules, codes and actions of his elders; in other words, because he is a child.

Cleanth Brooks, in his study of Faulkner's works, remarks that, like Wordsworth, "Faulkner makes much of the special qualities to be found in children and peasants, both black and white, and in idiots".² Mr. Brooks sees this as part of Faulkner's "primitivism", in the sense that these individuals, whom Faulkner seems to admire, "are simple in mind and spirit and have managed to maintain the kind of wholeness and integrity that we associate with childlike sincerity and lack of duplicity".³ However, a close examination of the novels in which children play a major role will reveal that Faulkner's use of the child goes beyond merely his recognition of these particular qualities and is not a simple matter of equating the child character with Innocence. The child serves a more definite, complex purpose.

Unlike most of Faulkner's idiots and peasants, the child seldom appears as a character "at rest" within his environment, accepting, enduring, ignoring, or remaining unaware of its conflicts. As is generally true, the child's very nature as a developing individual means that he is in a state of flux and change and consequently stands in a

²Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, (Yale University Press: 1963), p. 36.

³Brooks, Yoknapatawpha, p. 37.

unique relationship to the society around him. His reactions are not as predictable as those of an adult because he has not yet learned and settled into the regular patterns of behavior. His position in society, as a novice or apprentice, rather than a full and responsible member, places him slightly outside the society, yet under its influence in a way which a visitor, a real outsider, would not experience. Such a position, combined with the naivete which children generally show because they lack a full experience of life, gives the child a special point of view of his society.

Of course, Faulkner is not by any means the first writer to realize the advantages of presenting a society through the eyes of a child. Mark Twain did this in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and (to present a more contemporary example), J.D. Salinger did it in Catcher in the Rye. However, both these writers, like many others who have used the "innocent eye" technique, seem to have had as their main aim a criticism of some aspect of society, with the naivete and honesty of the child or young person serving to emphasize the evil, dishonesty or hypocrisy of the adults who make up that society.

Faulkner occasionally does use the figure of the child as means of contrasting innocence with experience. His last novel, The Reivers, projects a naif into the world of Memphis brothels and race-tracks, and makes some interesting

comments on both naivete and the lack of naivete. In "That Evening Sun", the central irony comes from the fact that the Compson children are unaware of the frightening situation in which their Negro servant, Nancy, finds herself. Nevertheless, in neither of these cases does the role of the child imply a criticism of adult society so much as provide a means of exploring human nature in child and adult.

Faulkner's purpose appears to be something other than social criticism, although readers often interpret it as such because of his exposure of some of the less favorable aspects of human nature and Southern society. Certainly he is very much aware of the evils in society and the evil impulses within human beings. To him, however, understanding the evils and their origins, rather than merely pointing them out or deploring them, seems to be of primary importance. And he is not attempting to understand only the evil aspects of society: he is equally interested in exploring and attempting to explain the more positive aspects.

For this purpose, the child is a valuable protagonist in a novel or short story, for the child is already very much involved in the process of trying to understand his society and can quite naturally take on the role of explorer or questioner. The child's learning about the world around him becomes a vehicle for presenting what Faulkner himself has discovered. Moreover, the reader, led by the child's process of discovery, is brought to re-examine, or even see for the first time, the forces and laws which govern man's life in society.

The society which the child confronts is made up of diverse elements and the child's experience within that society may take many forms. Where his experience involves merely a day by day, spontaneous acting upon circumstances as they present themselves, the problems encountered are minimal. It is when he comes up against aspects of his society which demand conformity to a prescribed and somewhat rigid pattern of behavior or belief--often at the expense of his own desires or beliefs--that conflict occurs. Usually these patterns are so well established and widely accepted that they are inescapable: the child cannot avoid having to deal with them in one way or another if he is to be a member of society. Yet, unlike the actual laws of court and country, which can be found in statutes and books, the rules of social conduct are seldom written out. They are more likely to be found in prevalent attitudes whose sources are lost somewhere in the past. Unlike most written laws, they are seldom kept up to date with the changing times. Nor are they always based on logic or fact. Part of their force, indeed, comes from their strong appeal to the emotions or imaginations of the society's members. They may, in all probability, have sprung from just those sources. For these reasons, the child, as a curious questioner of the world about him and an apprentice to a full role in that world, must struggle with problems for which there are really no ready explanations and against

concepts which appear to be amorphous and yet have, paradoxically, all the effects and demands of a strict code.

What are these unwritten codes which the child confronts? There are, of course, many of them. Some, such as the familial code, the spiritual code, or the sexual code, are to be found in almost any society. Others, like the racial code and the chivalric code, are more relevant to the society of the southern United States. However, in focussing his intention on the south and in particular on that mythical area of Mississippi he has called Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner shows that even such codes as the familial, spiritual and sexual are subject to the peculiar forces--geographical, historical, sociological--of the South.

The child's situation may, of course, contain within it elements of more than one of these codes. For example, in The Sound and The Fury, Quentin is most certainly involved with a conflict caused by his family: the fact that Caddy is his sister creates in him a stronger emotional reaction to her promiscuity than if she were merely an acquaintance. His insistence to his father that he and Caddy have committed incest would suggest that the sexual code also is involved. Faulkner's mention of Quentin's "presbyterian concept" of eternal punishment because of this imaginary incestuous union would bring in the religious or spiritual code Quentin has been brought up under. However, Faulkner makes quite clear in his appendix to the

novel that Quentin's main obsession is "not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead"⁴ and since I see this concept of honor to be a part of what I call the "Southern chivalric code", Quentin will be considered under the section of this paper dealing with that code. Such a process of isolating codes is not meant to imply that the situations which Faulkner's children are in can be oversimplified. It is merely a means of attempting to clarify what each of the major codes is, in order to better understand the complexity of the conflict when several of these codes are involved. Moreover, this paper is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of each work mentioned: such a treatment would demand more space than is available here.

Although Faulkner does write about the spontaneous individual reaction and occasionally shows the child as an individual oblivious to the social codes of his society, it is in these cases where the child confronts one of the codes that he appears to be most interested. Most of his stories and novels dealing with children present such a situation.

How the child reacts under these circumstances depends on both the nature of the circumstances and the personality of the child. He may accept the social codes completely

⁴The Sound and the Fury. (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 9.

or in part. He may totally reject them, or reject those aspects which he cannot accept. He may be caught in the conflict between the code and his own feelings and not be able to do anything decisive about the matter. He may even be the victim of the destructive forces of the code.

It is in those instances where the child becomes a victim that Faulkner's difference from the naturalists is most clearly seen, for seldom is victimization unavoidable or deterministic. The character himself may feel that he is doomed by forces greater than himself, but the reader can usually discover not only that the situation is an individual one and not necessarily true of society in general, but also that the individual himself is responsible (to one degree or another) for it--or for not escaping it. What is more important, the possibility nearly always exists for salvation, escape, or rescue.

There are, of course, some truly hopeless cases. Surely Benjy Compson had no responsibility for his being born an idiot and can do nothing about escaping his state. And in other cases the influences working on the individual seem to stem from a time before his birth or originate in his racial or psychological makeup. Faulkner would not be a realist if he did not suggest that there are often inexplicable, unfortunate, and irrevocable situations in life. But to conclude, as some critics have done, that Faulkner's treatment of his characters shows a strong Calvinistic sense

of predestination or fatalism, with the individual caught in a web of helplessness or moved like a chess-piece by some whimsical hand of Fate, is to see Faulkner's view of man as more negative than it is. As he himself has said, most individuals are a little bit better than their circumstances would suggest they be. It is, in fact, in these novels and stories which use children as central characters that the reader is most often made aware of Faulkner's affirmation of the individual's ability to determine his own destiny. To say that men are what they think they are is far less grim a philosophy than to say that they are what they cannot help but be, and Faulkner's philosophy, when summed up by the reader after an examination of the whole of his writing and not just of isolated works, seems to be strongly in favor of the former view. Faulkner appears to be saying that whatever the conflicts and evils are in society, the means of at least dealing with them with free will and hope of a satisfactory result is available for the individual. Such a means often involves a struggle or a personal sacrifice, but there is a triumph in both.

If, as Wordsworth believed, the child is father of the man, then what the child protagonist learns in his struggle with the social codes is of extreme relevance to the adult as well. Nor does the fact that Faulkner is dealing, in the first instance, with the codes of the South limit the conclusions to be drawn from his writing. Yoknapatawpha

County is the world in microcosm. Although what Faulkner shows the reader is of immediate value in understanding the Southern situation, it is not difficult to enlarge this vision to aid in one's understanding of the human situation in general. The relationship of man to the society he lives in, the conflict between individualism and conformity, the dangers involved in both conservatism and liberalism: these themes are illustrated in Faulkner's stories of children and their confrontation with social codes.

The following chapters will attempt to determine, in more detail (and yet, hopefully, in a more comprehensive fashion), what these codes are, what alternatives are open to the child in dealing with these codes, and what the reader can assume that the child's choice of alternatives shows about Faulkner's view of man in society.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FAMILIAL CODE

Certainly one of the most basic human allegiances is to the family unit, perhaps because the family is the first "society" which the individual experiences. Whatever the nature of the family, it exerts a powerful influence over the child, and in most cases determines his responses to the rest of society. It is here that many of society's social and moral codes are learned, either through instruction, or example. Moreover, the family itself, with its demands of loyalty and love, and its complex patterns of interrelationships between members, presents a code of behavior to the child.

Every normal child must, as a part of his maturation, learn to cope with this code and reach a compromise with it. He must develop as an individual within a unit and eventually separate himself from that unit to pursue an individual form of existence. Such a separation can occur quite naturally, but when the family hold is particularly strong, or its demands unreasonable, or the individual himself weak, the process of separation may involve a painful struggle.

Nearly all of the children in Faulkner's work, because of their being members of a family unit, experience the familial code to one degree or another.¹ Like most of the

¹One exception who comes to mind is young Otis, the nephew of the prostitute in The Reivers. If anything, he exhibits the results of a lack of family background which would have given him contact with the moral codes of society.

codes to be considered in this paper, it is only one of the inherited situations which the child must face. However, for some children the familial code provides the main source of conflict. This is true, for example, in the short story "Barn Burning", where the reader is told in the opening paragraph that ten year old Sarty Snopes is filled with "The sense and smell just a little of fear because mostly of despair and grief, the old fierce pull of blood".² The repetition throughout the story of the words "despair" and "grief" emphasizes Sarty's feelings towards his situation. He is torn between loyalty to his family--particularly his father, Ab Snopes--and his own half-formed sense of what is right: between the "pull of blood" which represents to him the only order and meaning his young life has known, and the pull of his own growing perception of another type of order and meaning in the universe, one which fills him with the emotions of "peace" and "joy" rather than those of fear and unhappiness. As he himself sees it, he is being "pulled two ways like between two teams of horses" (p. 18). As Marvin Fisher points out, even Sarty's full name--Colonel Sartoris Snopes--indicates the conflict of motives within him.³ The conflict is accentuated by Ab Snopes' fierce pride and unlawful actions,

²William Faulkner, "Barn Burning", Selected Short Stories of William Faulkner (New York: Random House Modern Library Edition, 1962), p. 3. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

³"World of Faulkner's Children", (University of Kansas City Review: Autumn, 1960), p. 15.

which force the family to stand apart from and against normal society. All those who injure Snopes' pride become his enemies and, because of the intense loyalty he demands of his family, their enemies too. "Our enemy", Sarty thinks, as he watches the judge who is hearing a case against Ab Snopes for barn burning, "ourn! Mine and hisn both! He's my father!" (p. 3.).

For Ab Snopes' family, the most powerful aspect of the familial code is this sense of loyalty. Faced with having to testify at his father's trial, Sarty knows that he must act in accordance with such a code. His father does not even have to look at him: the boy's duty should be a matter of automatic action. "He aims for me to lie,

Sarty thinks , again with that frantic grief and despair. And I will have to do hit!" (p. 5). Later, Ab Snopes shows his awareness of the boy's conflict regarding the code, and reiterates it for him forcefully:

"You were fixing to tell them. You would have told him." He didn't answer. His father struck him with the flat of his hand on the side of the head, hard but without heat, exactly as he had struck the two mules at the store...his voice still without heat or anger: "You're getting to be a man. You got to learn. You got to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you. Do you think either of them, any man there this morning, would? Don't you know all they wanted was a chance to get at me because they knew I had them beat? Eh? (p. 9)

And Sarty tries to appear loyal. In fact, he throws himself passionately into demonstrations and statements of loyalty, as if in doing so he will be able to not only convince his father, but convince himself, that he stands unquestioningly on the side of the family and against the rest of society. When a town boy calls Snopes a barn burner, Sarty fights him in a kind of blind frenzy; when Major deSpain accuses Snopes of deliberately ruining an expensive rug and says he will charge him twenty bushels of corn for it as retribution, Sarty tries desperately to see his father as victim rather than culprit, and show his allegiance to him:

Suddenly the boy went toward him, fast, stopping as suddenly. "You done the best you could!" he cried. "If he wanted hit done different why didn't he wait and tell you how? He won't git no twenty bushels! He won't git none! We'll get hit and hide it! I kin watch..."(p. 17).

In order to reinforce what he feels is a slackening of Sarty's adherence to the family code, Ab Snopes attempts to involve his son more directly in his fierce defiance of society. Both times he goes to the deSpain house he takes Sarty with him rather than his elder son, and both times he exhibits before the boy his contempt and lack of respect for all that deSpain and his class represent. It is as if he wishes to impress on the boy their shared involvement and guilt--as "blood kin"--in the whole incident of the ruined rug.

Unwittingly, however, in taking Sarty with him Snopes exposes him to an alternate way of life, as symbolized by deSpain's enormous white manor-house. In contrast to the terror, grief and despair felt in connection with his father's way of life, Sarty feels a "surge of peace and joy" when he views the house. "Hit's big as a courthouse", he thinks, and the simile is significant: the way of life which deSpain represents is for Sarty a part of the dignity, justice, order and law which a courthouse represents.

At this moment the imagery which Faulkner uses in regard to Ab Snopes (apparently as part of Sarty's unconscious associations), coalesces, showing Sarty's sudden awareness of the contrast between his father and deSpain. Ab Snopes has been described repeatedly in terms of tin, "without face or depth--a shape black, flat and bloddless as though cut from tin...the voice harsh like tin and without heat like tin" (pp. 8-9). In contrast now, Sarty sees his father, against "the serene columned backdrop", as having "more than ever that impervious quality of something cut ruthlessly from tin, depthless, as though, side-wise, to the sun, it would cast no shadow" (p. 11). It is as if at this moment Sarty realizes that the way of life his father represents is also as valueless and depthless as tin. He also sees his father now as a wasp, an insect, rather than an object of fear. In comparison to

people like deSpain--"people whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity" which the house represents--his father appears as "no more...than a buzzing wasp: capable of stinging for a moment but that's all" (p. 11). Such an image is continued a few lines later when the boy notices that his father's coat has "that friction-glazed greenish cast of the bodies of old house flies" (p. 12). It is after this moment of awareness that Sarty allows himself his first conscious thoughts concerning his father's nature: "May be he will feel it too. Maybe it will even change him now from what maybe he couldn't help but be" (p.12). In this unspoken statement, Sarty shows not only that he feels his father's actions are undesirable, but that he is beginning to take a more objective view of him.

Major deSpain's house in itself, apart from its symbolic air of peace and dignity, forms a contrast, with its "suave turn of carpeted stair" and "pendant glitter of chandeliers" and "mute gleam of gold frames", to the "paintless two-room house" in which the Snopes family must live. Mrs. deSpain is a lady "in a gray, smooth gown with lace at the throat", quite different from Sarty's "big, bovine" sisters in their "flutter of cheap ribbons". DeSpain himself is dressed in linen with a collar and a cravat, and rides a sorrel mare; Ab Snopes wears a stiff, old coat of broadcloth and rides a mule. Such contrasts cannot be unnoticed by Sarty. Most poignant, however is

the contrast in Sarty's mind between the permanence and security involved even in the building of livestock pens or plowing the rich land which his father rents from deSpain, and the inevitable moving from one place to another, with little chance to feel at home anywhere, which the Snopes family has been forced to do.

Despite his growing awareness of these contrasts, Sarty's conflict does not become any less. The "old blood which he has not been permitted to choose for himself, which has been bequeathed him willy nilly" (p. 23), forms a bond which is hard to break. In a sense Sarty never does make the choice between the code of his family and his own sense of justice: his final action is a breaking of the inertia in which grief and despair have placed him, but is more an attempt at compromise than a choice-making. When he learns that his father is intending to burn deSpain's barn, Sarty tries to satisfy both of the demands within his conscience: he rushes to warn de Spain, and then heads for the barn to warn his father of deSpain's approach. However, he cannot reach his father in time. Even as he is running down the drive toward the barn he sees the flames against the sky, "a long swirling roar incredible and soundless, blotting the stars"; he is passed by deSpain; he hears the sound of shots. It is at this moment that his grief and despair reach their peak, for he realizes that the familial code of loyalty has been broken despite his efforts to uphold it and satisfy his own sense of what is right.

The reader may applaud Sarty's action in warning deSpain, but for the boy this action is not immediately apparent as a positive one. It has cut him adrift from his familial heritage--such as it is--and for the time being he is without any other form of security and order. However, subconsciously the whole incident has brought him to a higher level of maturity. It is significant that as he is running down the road he changes his way of addressing his father, beginning with "Pap! Pap!" and concluding, when he realizes that it is too late for him to reach Snopes, with "Father! Father!", as if the running itself is a kind of symbolic flight from childhood into maturity. Faulkner is, of course, too aware of the truths of human nature to have the change in Sarty occur instantaneously. Sitting on a hill above the deSpain land, Sarty makes one last effort at adhering to the code of family loyalty, feeling "no longer terror and fear but just grief and despair":

Father. My father, he thought. "He was brave!" he cried suddenly, aloud but not loud, no more than a whisper. "He was! He was in the war! He was in Colonel Sartoris' cav'ry!" (pp. 26-27).

The last paragraph of the story clearly indicates however, that Sarty will not return to his family. He sits with his back toward "what he had called home for four days anyhow"; he faces the "dark woods", symbolic of the unknown and even frightening world which lies ahead of him now that he is on

his own. The cold and the stiffness which he feels--both reminiscent for the reader of the qualities which have been repeatedly attributed to Snopes, and therefore suggesting symbolically those aspects of Sarty's personality or memory which still bear the mark of his father--will be "cured" by the walk ahead of him. And as he starts down the hill towards the dark woods, "within which the liquid silver voices of the birds call unceasingly" (p. 27), as if calling him to some new way of life more beautiful and valuable than the one he has left, he does not look back.

For Sarty the break with the familial code has had a positive effect, even though he is not fully aware of this fact at the end of the story. However, Faulkner has shown that such a break is not an easy one, and does not totally erase the grief and despair which the family situation itself may have caused the individual. Within the family unit, the grief and despair arise partly from the sense of helplessness which the child feels because of his youth and his subjection to his parents' desires, and partly from his growing awareness of the fact that his parents are not as infallible, invulnerable and "absolute", as he once thought. After the break with the family, the child's grief and despair are a part of his sense of "not belonging" any more, and of his unconscious realization that the world outside the realms of any social code--familial or otherwise--is a lonely no-man's-land. Faulkner seems to be clearly saying that the breaking of such a code, therefore, should not be considered lightly nor underestimated in its difficulty.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELIGIOUS CODE

The family may form a kind of society in microcosm, but it is nevertheless a limited one from which the individual must emerge, at some point in his maturation, in order to join the larger society outside the family circle. His sense of identity and belonging within the small family group must expand to become a sense of identity and belonging within the community, the country, the world. Religious training of some sort can help to bridge the two states of existence, primarily because the moral dictates accompanying religious beliefs are intended to control and direct the individual's performance in his relationship to other human beings as well as in his relationship to nature or his gods.

The religious code can be said to be much like the family code writ large, in that both codes demand certain loyalties, and preserve certain hierarchical patterns. The individual's already-instilled emotional responses towards his family are, in a sense, expanded, conceptualized, universalized, and made mystical. He begins to see himself as a member of the family of man, sharing a common origin and fate with other human beings because of their shared relationship to some constant Being in the outside world which, father-like, controls or teaches or judges or destroys or creates.

This is, of course, a very general description of both religion and the religious code. Generally speaking, when one refers to twentieth century North American religion he is speaking of Christianity in one or another of its various sects. In this case, one can see that the religious code is partially a formal set of Church dogmas, and partially the popular application of this dogma in everyday life.

As one might expect, Faulkner generally deals with the sects of Christianity found in the South, particularly in Mississippi. For the most part, the institutionalized aspect of religion does not concern him: it remains somewhere in the background, understood to be part of the lives of many of his characters but not often directly discussed. What he seems to be more concerned with is the popular application of the moral views set by the Church, and the influence these views have on the individual. In The Sound and The Fury, Dilsey obviously gains some of her strength and ability to endure from her religious beliefs; in The Unvanquished, Rosa Millard tries to reconcile her "stealing" of Union army mules with the moral dictates of the Church. In neither of these cases does the reader get the sense that Faulkner is criticizing the Church in any way. It remains a constant and a relatively positive force in society.

In Light in August,¹ however, Faulkner presents a less attractive view of religion, the fanatical or rigid side, which, rather than giving the individual strength, training him to reach his greatest potential as a human being, giving him peace of mind, or making him feel a necessary part of a universal pattern, works toward the destruction of his spirit and the submission or distortion of his spontaneous desires in order to suit the dictates of a stern and relentless discipline.

To stress this negative aspect of Christianity, he focuses upon what is, in the South, a small sect: the Presbyterian Church, with its Calvinist doctrine. William Van O'Conner notes that "The U.S. Census figures show that the Baptists are by far the largest group in Mississippi, the Methodists the second largest, and the Presbyterians a small minority". He goes on to try to explain why Faulkner would "make the community of Jefferson Presbyterian or Calvinistic", saying that in doing so Faulkner was able to introduce the doctrines of predestination and man's total depravity.²

This reason may be valid in a limited sense, in that Faulkner is showing in Light in August the effects of such a belief in predestination on the individuals who hold it

¹(New York: Random House, 1932). All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

²William Faulkner. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1959), p. 22.

or try to live in a society which holds it. However, the major purpose in focusing on a small sect of Christianity would seem to be rather to make a distinction between Christianity as a whole, and the various sects of Christianity which represent and stress only part of the whole doctrine. In other words, he is not condemning all of Christianity, but only those destructive aspects of it, and Calvinism becomes a vehicle for showing the embodiment of these aspects in an orthodoxy. When he seems to show, in the Reverend Hightower's thoughts, a view of all the Southern churches as having this destructive impulse, he seems to be implying that it is not only Calvinism which is guilty of this: he works back again, therefore, to make a comment on aspects of the whole of Christianity itself, having sufficiently shown that this negative quality is not the main part of Christianity.

Joe Christmas, the protagonist, has the initial misfortune of being born to the daughter of Eupheus Hines, a half-mad man who obsessively believes himself the instrument of a "God of wrathful hosts" whose "vengeful will" and purpose must be carried out in a corrupt world. From the beginning the reader can see the destructiveness of such a religious view. Acting on it, Hines first kills his daughter's lover, who is reportedly part Negro, and then allows his daughter to die in childbed because she is, in his mind, a symbol of sin and corruption, of "God's abomination of womanflesh" (p. 327). Later in the novel

he tries to stir up the people of Jefferson to lynch his grandson, whom he also feels to be marked with sin. Whether Joe Christmas' eventual mutilation and death at the hands of a lynch mob is a result of this attempt or not, Hines can be held partially responsible; if he has not actually destroyed Joe physically, he has certainly helped in destroying him psychologically.

As Faulkner says, "Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders" (p.104). Hines' influence on Joe takes place in the first five years of the boy's life and can certainly not be seen as a formal pattern of learning. Hardly "a hundred words" passes between the older man and the child during this time. Yet Joe senses not only Hines' feelings about him, but the deterministic religious belief behind those feelings. Moreover, Joe's racial conflict seems to stem from Hines' view of the Negro race as inferior, cursed. Through a process of subtle, almost unconscious apprehension, the boy is instilled with feelings of alienation, guilt and predestination which will be expanded and intensified in his later life and will lead to his death.

In taking Joe to an orphanage and getting a job there himself, Hines begins the carrying out of God's fore-ordained Will. By separating Joe from any kind of family life or love he is, in effect, punishing the boy and purposely isolating him; by watching him from the boiler room of the orphanage

he hopes to be on hand to do, as an agent of God, whatever must be done to lead the boy to his fate. His continual watching of the boy also has a direct effect on Joe's relationship to the other children at the orphanage. They feel that there is something different about Joe and, with the cruelty of youth, taunt him by calling him "nigger", as if intuitively knowing that this epithet is the most damaging one they can apply to him in their society. Hines sees their reaction as part of God's plan. In fact, as he later relates, he imagined that God Himself told him that this taunting was intended to make Joe aware of the curse on him. It is Hines himself, however, who makes articulate the link between Joe's rejection by his playmates and his predetermine fate:

"And old Doc Hines said to him, 'Why dont you play with them other children like you used to?' and he didnt say nothing and old Doc Hines said, 'Is it because they call you nigger?' and he didnt say nothing and old Doc Hines said, 'Do you think you are a nigger because God has marked your face?' and he said, 'Is God a nigger too?' and old Doc Hines said, 'He is the Lord God of wrathful hosts, His Will be done. Not yours and mine because you and me are both a part of His purpose and His vengenance'. And he went away and old Doc Hines watched him hearing and listening to the vengeful will of the Lord...." (pp.335-336).

Joe himself is aware of Hines' watching him. As Faulkner says:

Even at three years of age the child knew there was something between them that did not need to be spoken. He knew that he was never on the playground for an instant that the man was not watching him from the chair

in the furnace room door, and that the man was watching him with a profound and unflagging attention. If the child had been older he would perhaps have thought He hates me and fears me. So much so that he cannot let me out of his sight With more vocabulary but no more age he might have thought That is why I am different from the others: because he is watching me all the time (pp. 120-121).

This awareness not only increases Joe's own sense of his "differences" but makes him somehow feel guilt for being different. And this differentiation is inextricably bound to his belief that he is a Negro, even though he apparently does not look like a Negro. Years later, with no other proof of his racial origin, he will tell a woman that he thinks he has "some nigger blood" in him. Believing this and yet never quite sure of it, he will never feel quite at home with either race, will never really know who or what he is.

The next stage of his psychological destruction by the destructive forces of religion occurs when he is adopted by Simon McEachern, an uncompromising Calvinistic farmer who tells him, as they leave the orphanage:

"....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. 126).

And, in truth, it is "the fear of God" and of himself, rather than any kind of divine or human love, that he impresses upon the boy.

McEachern's appearance seem to show those aspects of his religious belief which are dominant. His hair and beard have a "hard, vigorous quality"; his eyes are "cold", with

a stare "cold and intent and yet not deliberately harsh" (p. 124); his suit is of "hard, decent black"; his overall appearance is "rocklike, indomitable, not so much ungentle as ruthless" (p. 126). When he first looks at the boy it is with an impersonal air, as if he has been "convinced beforehand that he would see flaws" (p. 124); in a sense this attitude is carried out in his relationship with Joe, as he continually attempts to correct these flaws and even anticipate their manifestation. Believing in man's innate and original sinfulness, he can hardly be expected to give Joe a feeling of his own positive qualities and potential. He may mean well in his attempts to discipline and direct the boy's behavior, but his is a sterile approach to life rather than a vitalizing one. The very fact that his marriage has produced no children seems to emphasize this sterility. He tells Joe that "Christmas" is a "heathenish name", a "sacrilege", and that he will change it to "McEachern". Perhaps for him "Christmas" connotes the birth of a child and suggests the gentle, human qualities of Christ which are not a part of his concept of a god as a stern and demanding taskmaster. In any case, by attempting to take Joe's name away from him he is denying the boy individuality, and, since Joe thinks to himself, "My name aint McEachern. My name is Christmas", he is causing the boy to take a position of defensive separateness within the family which might have provided him with a sense of belonging.

McEachern makes more intense the feelings of guilt which Joe has acquired at the orphanage. When Joe was not punished there for stealing the dietitian's toothpaste, and was in fact given money as if in reward for what he considered a punishable act, he was left with a sense of unexpiated sin. Under normal circumstances he might have grown into an awareness of how very slight this sin really was; with proper and reasonable guidance he might have learned, as Lucius Priest learns in The Reivers, that one must live with his sins and bear the burden of their consequences. Instead, under the constant whippings which McEachern gives him for sins he has committed and sins he is only suspected of committing, Joe grows to see pain as the only way of relieving his sense of guilt and unworthiness. In fact, through pain he is able to transcend his immediate situation and feel some measure of peace. As he is being beaten his face bears a "rapt, calm expression like a monk in a picture" (p. 131); he resembles "a post or tower upon which the sentient part of him muses like a hermit, contemplative and remote with ecstasy and selfcrucifixion" (p. 140). As an adult he will appear to deliberately cause himself pain in his telling people that he is a Negro: when they subsequently reject him he will feel contented. It is as if he is only happy when he is being rejected by others or is receiving pain from them. Perhaps his unconscious belief that he is marked for God's vengeance makes him feel that

this kind of treatment is his fate. It is also, of course, the only form of human relationship he has ever known, and therefore the only one in which he feels comfortable.

What Joe cannot accept is human kindness. Coldness, rejection, punishment, he expects and can deal with; they cause him to withdraw into himself in a kind of defiant, proud, stubborn inviolability, while at the same time defining him as the kind of individual he has come to feel that he is. The kindness which Mrs. McEachern shows him pierces the shield of defiance and self-isolation which he has set up between himself and the outside world. It appeals to his hungry need for love and therefore makes him feel more vulnerable than pain does. Not knowing how to love except when that feeling is connected with sexual desire, he regards Mrs. McEachern's clumsy but well-meant attempts to love him as some new way to break him down. "She is trying to make me cry", he thinks when she has been kind to him and has ever risked her husband's anger in taking the blame for something Joe has done wrong.³ "She was trying to make me cry. Then she thinks they would have had me" (p. 147). It is significant that later he will be able to accept Joanna Burden's contemptuous treatment of him, but will rebel under her attempts to mother him.

³One might even see Mrs. McEachern as operating under the same desire to bring down punishment upon herself at the hands of her husband. If so, this would stress the distortion of human relationships under the Calvinistic religious views, for in a sense, she seems to have little place in her husband's life apart from his scolding of her.

Even the possibility of Joe's gaining some measure of happiness or peace of mind through a purely sexual relationship with a woman is destroyed by the influence of McEachern's puritanical attitudes towards sex. McEachern is described as a man who has "never committed leachery himself and...had not once failed to refuse to listen to anyone who talked about it" (p. 175), so he is singularly unsympathetic to the idea of Joe's relationship with a woman. Moreover, his calling the waitress, Bobby, a "Jezebel" and "harlot" simply because she is dancing with Joe would suggest that he upholds the fundamentalist Christian view of woman as the corruptor, the cause of man's original fall from God's grace. In fact, it does not appear to occur to him that Joe's relationship with Bobby could be anything other than, or more than, "leachery". Although McEachern is not presented as actually preaching to Joe about the evils of sex and women, Joe's responses to these things show that he has been influenced by McEachern's attitudes to them.

When he is fourteen, Joe kicks and strikes a young Negro girl instead of having sexual relations with her. His reaction is an instinctive one, part of a feeling of "driven" haste which he himself does not understand. He does not consciously think of sex as a sin while he is waiting to have his turn with the girl, "since to fourteen the paramount sin would be to be publicly convicted of virginity" (pp. 136-137), but the irrational uncontrollable violence he directs at the girl suggests his strong sense

of guilt and horror at the sexual desire he feels within himself, and the unconscious anger he feels towards her "womansmell". It is as if he hopes to destroy the forbidden desires of lust by destroying her.⁴

When he learns from another boy about menstruation, he seems to see McEachern's (and Hines') views about the innate sinfulness and "uncleanness" of women as an actual fact. With no more positive context in which to fit this piece of information, he is horrified and tries to purge himself of the ugly and unclean idea by dipping his hands in the fresh blood of a slaughtered sheep. In effect what he is doing at this point is carrying out a ritual cleansing, a sacrifice to purge himself of uncleanness. Although he thinks he has accepted this aspect of womanhood as true, he has really tried to isolate himself from it, saying, "All right. It is so, then. But not to me. Not in my life and my love" (p. 162).. He cannot escape the fact, however. It intrudes into his life in the form of Bobby, the waitress, who tells him on their first date that she is "sick". In the disgust and outrage he feels when he realizes what she means, he has a vision of

a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched. And not one was perfect. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, deathcolored, and foul. He touched a tree, leaning his propped arms against it, seeing the ranked and moon-lit urns. He vomited (p. 165).

⁴Significantly, Joe feels that "there was something in him trying to get out, like when he used to think of toothpaste" (p. 137). He is, in this reaction to the girl, still trying to expiate his guilt from that situation, punishing himself in effect.

Although he continues to see Bobby and eventually forms a sexual alliance with her, his views of women have been damaged and disillusioned by this rather crude introduction to the biological aspects of women. McEachern is not directly responsible for this type of introduction: it was inevitable that Joe would learn about women and quite likely that he would learn from the rather clumsy words of another boy. But if McEachern had provided him with another, more positive concept of women to counter-balance this rather unpleasant piece of information, the effect on Joe might not have been so damaging, and what is actually an aspect of fertility in women might not have appeared as much an aspect of death and decay.⁵

When Joe discovers that Bobby is a prostitute, he not only accepts this discovery as the final confirmation of McEachern's view of the usefulness of woman, but sees himself as damned for having indulged in fornication with such a creature. He reacts by doing all those things which he knows McEachern would regard as sinful. He drinks and smokes; he imitates the idle men who loiter around the restaurant; he speaks of Bobby "even in her presence, in

⁵Lucius Priest, in The Reivers, is upset when he hears about sexual depravity from another boy, and learns that one of the ladies he has met is actually a prostitute. However, as I shall explain more fully in the chapter dealing with the Chivalric Code, he is able to fit this new knowledge into the context of the idealized view of woman as an object of respect--a view which he has no doubt learned from his father and grandfather and has seen embodied in his mother. Joe has apparently had no such instruction and Mrs. McEachern, humble and ignored, would hardly present an image of woman as a creature of respect.

his loud, drunken, despairing young voice, calling her his whore" (p. 174). Caught in a religious view which does not allow for slight deviations from virtue, but regards all such deviations as sign of a greater corruption and sinfulness, he must go all the way into what he feels is corruption life is to stand in defiance of McEachern and McEachern's way of life.⁶

When McEachern discovers that Joe has been creeping out at night to meet Bobby, McEachern reacts with a self-righteous anger not unlike that of Hines and, like Hines, sees himself as an agent of a "wrathful and retributive Throne" (p. 178), guided by "some militant Michael Himself" (p. 177). As he walks towards Joe on the dancefloor of the school house, shouting out curses of damnation on Joe and Bobby, he has "the furious and dreamlike exaltation of a martyr who has already been absolved" (p. 178). His obsessive religious views, which are rigid and at times almost inhuman in their practical application, do not leave him any room for rational thought at this point. He does not even really consider Joe as a human being, but sees him as an embodiment of Satan. If he could see the

⁶Joanna Burden shows this same attitude. When she takes part in sexual relations with Joe, she manifests all her sense of sex as evil, cursing Joe, uttering all manner of obscenities, exhibiting a kind of nymphomania. As Faulkner says, she shows "the imperious and fierce urgency that concealed an actual despair of frustrate and irrevocable years, which she tries to attempt to compensate each night as if she believed that it would be the last night on earth by damning herself forever to the hell of her forefathers, by living not alone in sin but in filth" (pp. 225-226).

human element in the situation before him, he would certainly realize the embarrassment and dismay which his actions cause Joe and would expect the boy--who is now almost a man--to finally take some form of defensive action. As for Joe, the moment is the cumulative point of all the hostility and desperation he has felt throughout his childhood. He strikes McEachern with a chair, hardly conscious of what he is doing, but when he realizes it, he is not sorry. His face is "quite calm" beneath the up-lifted chair as he tells the surrounding crowd, "I said I would kill him some day! I told him so!" (p. 179).

In other words, the destructive, life-denying qualities of a rigid religious environment have bred in Joe Christmas a basically destructive personality: destructive in terms of his relationship to others and, more important, in terms of himself. As Ilse Dusoier Lind says,

Over and over Joe enacts a pattern of defiance and flight, carrying with him his "Calvinistic burden", the heritage of those who have reared him, bearing the psychic weight of multiple rejections--rejections before God, rejections as a Negro, rejection as a human being. Rigid, solitary, cold, with a latent compulsion toward a joyless violence, he finds "peace" nowhere.⁷

It is interesting to contrast Joe's experiences with those of Isaac McCaslin in "The Old People" and "The Bear". Ike's training in the woods is of a religious nature, in

⁷"The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August". (New England Quarterly Review), XXX: Sept. 1957), p. 317.

that it instills him with moral patterns and an awareness of mystical forces relating him to the outside world, yet its effect is positive and life-giving. That it has such an effect is not because it is any less a discipline than the Calvinism Joe Christmas has been subjected to: in fact, it is just as much part of a code which demands certain actions and qualities of its adherents. Where it differs from the Calvinistic code is in the attitudes to life which it holds. Paradoxically, a training which is basically directed toward the act of killing carries with it an unspoken doctrine of respect for all living things.

Ike's training comes from Sam Fathers, who is part Chickasaw, part Negro, part white. As Ike's cousin McCaslin says,

"When he was born, all his blood on both sides, except the little white part, knew things that had been tamed out of our blood so long ago that we have not only forgotten them, we have to live together in herds to protect ourselves from our own source".⁸

He lives sometimes with the Negroes, but is slave to no man; he does not belong to the world of the white man, either. When he moves into the hut in the woods, "five miles from the plantation and about that far from any other habitation" (p. 172), it is because he feels more at home in the wilderness than in civilization. Through the blood

⁸"The Old People", Go Down, Moses. (New York: Random House, 1942), p. 167. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

of his Indian ancestors he has a bond with Nature, and it is this that he tries to pass on to Ike, as a priest might pass on a secret rite or doctrine to a young novitiate.

Even before Ike goes to the Big Woods, he is being trained by Sam Fathers in the ways of hunting. Sam teaches him "the woods, to hunt, when to shoot and when not to shoot, when to kill and when not to kill, and better, what to do with it afterward" (p. 170). It is under Sam's guidance that Ike first learns to shoot rabbits, and it is with Sam that he enters his "true novitiate" at the age of ten when he goes with Major de Spain, General Compson and the other hunters into the wilderness to shoot deer and bear. Again like a priest, Sam Fathers marks Ike's face with the blood of the first deer the boy kills, indicating that he has now become a man and a hunter.

Yet this is not enough in itself. Later, Sam does not even attempt to shoot the buck which appears; nor does he instruct Ike to shoot it, although Ike has his gun "still aimed and one of the hammers still cocked" (p. 184). Instead he faces the buck with "his right arm raised at full length, palm outward", speaking in the "old tongue" of the Chickasaw, and addressing the buck as "Chief.... Grandfather" (p. 184). His gesture shows his respect for the natural creature. In hailing the buck, he stands as one living creature facing another, both products of Nature, both united in their relationship to Nature. At the same

time, his recognition of the buck implies a view of life as a continuing force which even death does not end. Ike's cousin McCaslin, who has also witnessed this action in his boyhood, articulates this concept when he tells Ike:

"Think of all that has happened here, on this earth. All the blood hot and strong for living, pleasuring, that has soaked back into it....And all that must be somewhere; all that could not have been invented and created just to be thrown away. And the earth is shallow; there is not a great deal of it before you come to the rock. And the earth dont want to just keep things, hoard them; it wants to use them again. Look at the seed, the acorns, at what happens even to carrion when you try to bury it: it refuses too, seethes too and struggles too until it reaches light and air again, hunting the sun still. And they.... dont want it, need it. Besides, what would it want, itself, knocking around out there, when it never had enough time about the earth as it was, when there is plenty of room about the earth, plenty of places still unchanged from what they were when the blood used and pleased in them while it was still blood?" (pp. 186-187).

Such a concept does not make man an usurper in Nature, but a part of a chain of life which can never be broken. In killing animals man is not committing a sin, but taking part in a sacred, natural rite--but only if his attitude contains the proper qualities of humility, endurance, courage and pride.

Ike's real spiritual development in the woods is involved in the acquiring of these qualities. In "The Bear", his training continues. He must learn endurance, the patience to wait day after day at a stand in the woods,

ready in case the dogs should drive a deer or bear in his direction. He must accept the fact that until the right time comes, until he is worthy of it, he will not even catch a glimpse of Old Ben, the ancient, indomitable bear whom the hunters pursue each year without success. The humility he already has in part. He feels "an eagerness, passive; an abjectness, a sense of his own fragility and impotence against the timeless woods..."⁹, and realizes his own unworthiness as a hunter. He has more to learn of humility, however. He must face the bear alone, without a gun: submit himself in courage and humility to the wilderness without the taint of civilization upon him. He learns, once he is in the woods, that that is not enough, either.

He had already relinquished, of his will, because of his need, in humility and peace and without regret, yet apparently that had not been enough, the leaving of the gun was not enough. He stood for a moment--a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. Then he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaved the stick beside them and entered it (p. 208)..

Through such a relinquishment of self to something greater than himself, he is able to see into the heart of life: he meets the bear face to face. He has been proven worthy: he is at this time the true heir of Sam Fathers.

⁹"The Bear", Go Down, Moses, p. 200. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

Out of this lesson in courage and humility comes his own sense of pride. It is a pride in being worthy, of being a competent hunter. By the age of thirteen he has killed his first bear and is "a better woodsman than most men". Moreover, it is a pride in being part of Nature, of knowing his way in the environment which man belongs to in his natural state. When he becomes aware that Old Ben is doomed to die and senses that the age of the true wilderness will come to an end with that death, he does not feel grief, but rather humility and pride that "he had been found worthy to be part of it too or even just see it too" (p. 226); that he would be on hand to witness the final aspect of the ritual he has been initiated into.

The moral qualities which Ike learns in the woods are in direct contrast to those which Joe Christmas learns in Christian society. For Joe, humility must be linked with despair, rejection and pain. According to his training under McEachern's teachings, man must be filled with fear of God; later in life, when Joe hurls defiance to God from the pulpit of a church he has temporarily invaded, he shows that out of his fear has come only hatred; that for all his religious training he has not become one with God. It is significant that when Ike faces the wilderness he feels neither doubt nor fear, only awe and anticipation. He is dwarfed by the size and mystery of the woods, but the humility he feels is one which is yoked with his own awareness

of someday becoming worthy of taking his place in the pattern of Nature. The pride which he feels has no parallel in Joe's feelings, for Joe can never know who or what he is, can never feel pride in himself or his accomplishments.

While Joe is running and hiding after his murder of Joanna Burden, he is suddenly aware of both his own alienation from Nature and the eternal qualities of the earth. This awareness occurs, significantly, as he "enters the woods again" from the paved highway:

It is as though he desires to see his native earth in all its phases for the first or the last time. He had grown to manhood in the country where, like the unswimming sailor, his physical shape and his thought had been molded by its compulsions without his learning anything about its actual shape and feel. For a week now he has lurked and crept among its secret places, yet he has remained a foreigner to the very immutable laws which earth must obey. For some time as he walks steadily on, he thinks that this is what it is--the looking and seeing--which gives him peace and unhaste and quiet, until suddenly the true answer comes to him. He feels dry and light. 'I dont have to bother about having to eat anymore,' he thinks. 'That's what it is' (p. 295).

The momentary peace he feels is part of the restorative effect of Nature on him and of its spiritual feeding of his soul. However, eventually the woods give way to a road and then to paved street again, bringing him back to society. He thinks to himself then that he has been inside a circle all his life, unable to break out into the vast

natural world beyond. There can not be for him the permanent restorative effect of Nature: he himself is driven by his own sense of destiny to leave the natural setting and return to the center of the social circle once more, where he will meet his fate.

Nor can there be for Joe the easy comradeship of other men which Ike experiences in the woods. Joe's religious training has isolated him, not only from nature and the natural world, but from human companionship as well. The drinking of whisky and the eating of wild meat gives the hunters in "The Bear" a sense of communion and physical restoration which Joe Christmas can never experience. McEachern prays over his food not only to give thanks for it, but to offer a kind of apology for having to eat at all; Joe continually refuses food as an offering of kindness from Mrs. McEachern and will accept it only in the impersonal, alienating way in which Joanna Burden offers it: left on the table in her kitchen to be eaten in solitude, as if "set out for a nigger" (p. 208). For Joe, liquor is a symbol of a sinful state: he drowns himself in it as a form of rebellion against McEachern and an embracing of his own sin. For the men in the forest, however, the liquor is a symbol of those qualities which they re-new within themselves each time they return to the woods: it is part of the ritual of the hunt. It seems to Ike

that those fine fierce instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild, immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring thereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them (p. 192).

It is significant that liquor takes on a negative connotation in this story only when it is consumed in town by Boon Hogganbeck, mainly because directly after this drinking bout Boon returns to the hunting party and kills Old Ben. It is as if he has, in his trip to town, renewed his contact with the corruptive and destructive forces of society, and brought them back with him to the woods. In killing Old Ben he appears to be an agent of these forces working against Nature.

In Light in August, the minister, Hightower, equates this destructive force with the rigid, ruthless nature of Southern Christianity. Even the music of the churches seem to him to have

a quality stern and implacable, deliberate and without passion so much as immolation, pleading, asking, for not love, not life, forbidding it to others, demanding in sonorous tones death as though death were the boon, like all Protestant music (pp. 321-322).

Listening to it, Hightower can see how such a religion might drive its adherents to "crucifixion of themselves and one another" (p. 322). He links this religious force not only with Joe Christmas, but with the destruction of

Christmas at the hands of the self-righteous mob. It is not only the obvious victims, like Joe Christmas, who suffer under the influence of this type of religious code: the agents of destruction are themselves suffering and victimized.

Ike's form of religious training would seem to suggest that he would therefore come to a better end than that shown in "Delta Autumn" where he, too, seems to be a victim of society's rigid attitude to human life. In section four of "The Bear", he himself feels, as he struggles to reach a conclusion about the family guilt he has inherited and the land which is part of that inheritance, that he is acting on the lesson he learned in the woods. Relinquishment of the inheritance is his attempt to copy the relinquishment of watch and compass which was necessary for him as a boy, before he could see truth. Again and again he tells his cousin McCaslin that Sam Fathers set him free. He apparently hopes, in giving up the land, to free future generations of McCaslins in the same way from the guilt of land ownership. Yet this action only shows how he has misunderstood the lesson acquired from Sam Fathers. Sam did not relinquish the land, in the sense of giving it up: he immersed himself in it, living alone in the midst of it. Ike's reaction shows only the humility he learned in the woods, without the concomitant qualities of courage and pride and endurance. Or, if it shows these qualities they are distorted: courage has become sacrifice, pride a kind of self-righteousness, and endurance the helpless

hope that some day, "maybe in two thousand years", man will be able to live with his fellow man in a better kind of relationship than at present.

Perhaps this distortion is the result of Ike's reaching maturity in society. He may have become a man at the age of twelve, in the woods, when he shot his first deer and Sam Fathers marked his face with its blood, but society recognizes a chronological, rather than symbolic or ritualistic entrance into manhood. And that point of maturity occurs within the context of society, with Ike "juxtaposed not against the wilderness but against the land...the land which old Carothers McCaslin his grandfather had bought with white man's money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it...." (p. 194).

In the fourth section of "The Bear", where Ike explains and attempts to justify his decision about the land to his cousin, the terminology and logic is steeped in biblical, and even Miltonic references. God, who has not been mentioned in the earlier sections dealing with the woods, suddenly comes into prominence in Ike's conversation as a Being who views the progress of man on earth with anger and impatience, demanding that man change his pattern of relationship to other living things. It is quite obviously a stern, Old Testament God whom Ike sees at this point. And when Ike in effect sacrifices his ownership of the land, his wife, and his chance of having a son, and takes up the trade of a carpenter, these Christian elements bring in

the New Testament. It is as if reaching maturity within society has meant that Ike has also come under the influence of society's version of religion: the Christianity which stresses the individual's submission to the will of a stern God who demands sacrifice rather than giving strength and spiritual renewal.¹⁰

In showing the effects of both Christianity and a kind of pantheistic paganism, Faulkner does not seem to be implying that man should return to a primitive state apart from society. In Light in August, Lena Grove is not shown against any other backdrop than that of the towns and farms which make up society. Yet she exhibits a natural, almost pagan quality, and stands in direct contrast to Joe Christmas in that she gives life rather than takes it, and endures rather than dies. Nor does contact with Nature in itself bring an attitude toward life which is vivifying and positive, as the example of Ike McCaslin shows.

¹⁰Ike also illustrates here the conceptualizing which is so much a part of Christianity. As we shall see in the chapter dealing with The Racial Code, Ike is able to idealize the Negro in concept, but cannot act on this principle. The training which Ike has learned in the wood--even the qualities themselves--are principles directly linked to practice and action. Sam Fathers does not philosophize on the code of the woods or on man's mystical relationship to nature; he presents practical advice, and allows the boy to intuitively grasp the underlying concepts. Throughout Faulkner's works, an over-concern with concepts is seen as dangerous: Quentin Compson is a good example of such an over-concern. The danger in this, apparently, is that the individual comes into a self-conscious, cerebral relationship to the outside world at the expense of spontaneity and a practical approach to reality.

What Faulkner seems to be suggesting is that man cannot return to Nature; that he must, instead, try to learn from Nature those qualities within himself which he can apply in the context of society against the destructive forces which threaten to isolate himself from others and from the natural aspects of his own personality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RACIAL CODE

In "The Fire and The Hearth", Faulkner describes how a white Southern child comes to realize, as his heritage, the racial code of his society. Although the experience of Carothers Edmonds is an individual one, it suggests a pattern, if only symbolic, which might be true on a larger scale. As such, it merits quoting at some length.

Roth has grown up with a Negro boy, Henry Beauchamp, whose parents live on the Edmonds' land. Moreover, he has been nursed by Henry's mother, and has regarded her as "the only mother he can remember", his own having died at his birth. Because of this link with the Beauchamps in his infancy, Roth is particularly close to them in his early childhood:

Even before he was out of infancy, the two houses had become interchangeable: himself and his foster-brother Henry sleeping on the same pallet in the white man's house or in the same bed in the negro's and eating of the same food at the same table in either, actually preferring the negro house...to his own.¹

He gradually comes to realize that the black woman is not his real mother, but this realization changes little in his world:

There was still the black woman, constant, steadfast, and the black man of whom he

¹William Faulkner, "The Fire and The Hearth", Go Down, Moses, (New York: Random House Modern Library Edition, 1942), p. 110. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

saw as much and even more than of his own father, and the negro's house, the strong warm negro smell, the night-time hearth and the fire even in summer on it, which he still preferred to his own. And besides, he was no longer an infant. He and his foster-brother rode the plantation horses and mules, they had a pack of small hounds to hunt with and promise of a gun in another year or so; they were sufficient, complete, wanting, as all children do, not to be understood, leaping in mutual embattlement before any threat to privacy, but only to love, to question and examine unchallenged, and to be let alone (pp. 110-111).

The time comes, however, when Roth suddenly--almost instinctively, it seems--feels a certain distinction between himself and Henry, and pointedly chooses to sleep on his bed, alone, rather than with Henry on the pallet on the floor. He stops Henry's innocent attempt to join him in the bed, and then lies "in a rigid fury of the grief he can not explain, the same he will not admit" (p. 112), listening to Henry's peaceful breathing from the floor. Even the adjectives used by Faulkner in describing Roth's voice (harsh and violent) and position in bed (rigid) suggest attributes of the racial code as it takes possession of the boy.

After this incident, the relationship between the boys is not resumed: Roth feels too much shame to go to Henry's house again. Finally the grief he feels about the way he has acted forces him to admit that he is ashamed and he wants to apologize to his foster-family. He goes to their home to admit his shame, intending to "say it once and forever so that it will be gone forever"; he invites himself to dinner. For a while the Beauchamps treat him

"as if it had never happened at all", and he believes that things are all right, that he can resume his relationship with them as before. But, says Faulkner, it is too late to make amends, to change the pattern: "forever and forever too late". When he comes in to dinner Roth finds that the rest of the family have eaten and that his is the only place set at the table. By asserting his feelings of superiority over Henry, he has removed all possibility of being able to return to an equal basis with the Beauchamps, not because they feel inferior, but because their pride will cause them to treat him according to the rules of the code which he has introduced into their otherwise spontaneous relationship. And he realizes that "the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, has descended to him" (p. 111), and that he must eat its "bitter fruit".²

The reader is not told how Roth Edmonds has come to feel superior to his Negro playmate, but it is not hard to guess. The Beauchamps live in a house on the Edmonds' plantation and despite the fact that Roth has always felt that house to be comfortable, it is obviously not as grand

²For Joanna Burden, in Light in August, this inheritance is stressed by her father as being part of "the curse of every white child that was ever born and that ever will be born", a curse by God for the white race's sins. (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 221.

as his own. Perhaps he has also unconsciously overheard the conversation of white adults regarding Negroes in general, or has observed the treatment of Negroes by whites in town. In any case, by the age of seven he can act in accordance with the racial code which controls the social distinctions between Negro and white, and can feel his superiority with what seems to be the same kind of unthinking, instinctive impulse as once prompted him to unquestioningly accept Molly Beauchamp as his mother.³ The heritage is not always a consciously received one, then. It is more like some sort of virus which floats about in the Southern air, enters the individual's system without his awareness, and then suddenly shows itself as a disease, untraceable in its immediate origin but unmistakably there--and painfully difficult to cure.

Chick Mallison, the young boy in Intruder in the Dust, feels that he has been aware of the distinction between Negro and white all his life, and has accepted it unquestioningly, just as he has always accepted without question the fact that a particular smell is associated with "the places where people with any trace of Negro blood

³It is only after this sense of superiority has "suddenly" asserted itself that Roth's actions, as Olga Vickery points out, become calculated rather than spontaneous as he deliberately "paces his walking so that the Negro boy never quite catches up with him" and "times his undressing to allow Henry to lie down on the pallet so he can take solitary possession of the bed". Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, (Louisiana State University Press: revised ed. 1964), p. 129.

live".⁴ When the reader first sees Chick Mallison in a racial situation, the boy is already twelve. Perhaps any awareness of the distinction between Negro and white has occurred unconsciously, for Chick, sometime in the past. In any case, he takes for granted the smell of the Negroes,

that smell which...he would have gone to his grave never once pondering speculating if perhaps that smell were not really the odor of a race nor even actually of poverty but perhaps of a condition: an idea: a belief: an acceptance, a passive acceptance by them themselves of an idea that being Negroes they were not supposed to have facilities to wash properly or often or even to wash bathe often even without the facilities to do it with; that in fact it was a little to be preferred that they did not....He had smelled it forever, he would smell it always; it was a part of his inescapable past, it was a rich part of his heritage as a Southerner; he didn't even have to dismiss it, he just no longer smelled it at all...(pp.11-12)

In the same way, he has always accepted unquestioningly the food which the Negroes eat:

nigger food too, accepted and then dismissed also because it was exactly what he had expected, it was what Negroes ate, obviously because it was what they liked, what they chose; not (at twelve: he would be a man grown before he experienced his first amazed dubiety at this) that out of their long chronicle this was all they had had a chance to learn to like except the ones who ate out of white folks' kitchens, but that they had elected this out of all eating because this was their palates and their metabolism...(p.13).

⁴William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust. (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 9. All future page references are also from this edition, and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

Like Roth, Chick encounters a time when he suddenly faces the fact of his racial inheritance. Both instances are similar, in that they bring a feeling of shame to the white boy for having treated a Negro as a kind of lesser human being. Even the wording which Faulkner uses to describe Chick's encounter--in which Chick offers to pay for the meal he has eaten at a Negro's home--shows the similarity in the two cases:

He extended the coins: and in the same second in which he knew she would have taken them he knew that only by that irrevocable second was he forever now too late, forever beyond recall, standing with the slow hot blood as slow as minutes themselves up his neck and face, forever with his dumb hand open and on it the four shameful fragments of milled and minted dross...(p. 15; italics mine).

That this is the same Negro family--the Beauchamps--with which Roth was involved, is significant, particularly since for Chick it is not too late to change the pattern of his adherence to the racial code.

The incident causes him to question his views on the Negro nature. Faced with the calm pride and dignity of Lucas Beauchamp, Chick is first angry and ashamed, and asks himself what most of the whites in the area have already asked themselves: why can't Lucas act like a nigger? Why must he make me feel so uncomfortable by acting like a white man and therefore making me have to see him as a man like himself and not an inferior?

This feeling changes over the next few years. When Chick sees Lucas after the death of his wife, Molly, he suddenly is even more aware of the man under the black skin, and thinks:

He was grieving. You dont have to not
be a nigger in order to grieve (p. 25).

By the time that Lucas is involved in the murder case, four years have passed, and Chick has reached a point where his doubts about the white attitude to the Negro are such that, as Olga Vickery puts it, he "cannot take the risk" of not believing in Lucas' innocence. Out of these doubts and half-formed ideas of justice separate from those which his society's racial code contains, comes Chick's ability to act against that code and make up to Lucas for his earlier mistake, in a way that Roth never can. Intruder in the Dust, published six years after Go Down, Moses, seems to indicate either a development in Faulkner's own position in regards to the relationship between the individual and the racial code, or his feeling that the situation should not appear as irrevocable as "The Fire and the Hearth" might suggest.

Of course, Chick Mallison is not the only young person in Faulkner's works who actively opposes the racial code he has inherited. Isaac McCaslin in "The Bear" (which is also in Go Down, Moses) opposes it in a manner so formal, so dramatically articulated and painfully arrived at, that it makes Chick Mallison's action at first seem a mere gesture in the right direction or, worse, almost a kind of

Tom Sawyer adventure, carried out partially and initially because of Chick's feelings about Lucas Beauchamp but becoming an adventure for its own sake once it has been embarked upon. A closer look at both boys' encounters with the racial code will reveal, however, that this is not the case.

Ike's encounter is, for the most part, on an abstract, conceptual level: he is dealing with the idea, with the guilt, with the history, of the racial situation, but not with the individual Negro, face to face, as are Roth Edmonds and Chick Mallison. Being a Southerner he has of course been in contact with Negroes all his life, but the incident which causes him to be aware of the racial code controlling Negro-white relationships is an incident in the past, involving his grandfather, not himself.

At the age of sixteen while looking through the McCaslin family's ledgers, he stumbles across indications of an incestuous relationship between his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, and Carother's daughter by a Negro slave named Eunice. At first he cannot believe that what he suspects is true: he would like to believe that there was just the liaison between Carothers and the girl, Tomy, possibly based on love of some sort. But the fact that Eunice drowned herself six months before her daughter bore Carothers' child, when added to the fact that Eunice had originally been purchased at great difficulty by Carothers (ostensibly to be the wife of one of his slaves) seems to suggest that

Eunice was also Carothers' mistress. Horrified, Ike is forced to accept what the cryptic entries in the ledgers intimate and see both women as victims--not merely of lust and thoughtlessness, but of a code which permits and even condones a man's summoning "because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his... house and getting a child on her and then dismissing her because she was of an inferior race" (p. 294). Moreover, it is apparent that any feelings of guilt or responsibility which Carothers McCaslin might have felt about the matter only resulted in a financial move on his part: arranging for a thousand dollars to be given to Tomy's son when he reached twenty-one. To Ike this looks like an attempt, by his grandfather, to take the easy way out. It is a

flinging almost contemptuously, as he might a cast-off hat or a pair of shoes, the thousand dollars which could have had no more reality to him under those conditions than it would have the negro, the slave who would not even see it until he came of age, twenty-one years too late to begin to learn what money was. So I reckon that was cheaper than saving My son to a nigger, Ike thought Even if My son wasn't but just two words.⁵

Like Chick and Roth, Ike feels deep shame and guilt when he suddenly becomes aware of his racial heritage, but since the sin against the Negro is not a personal one on his part he has difficulty determining a way to atone for

⁵William Faulkner, "The Bear", Go Down, Moses, pp. 269-270. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

it in a personal way. Roth can at least attempt to apologize to the individual Negroes whom he has sinned against; Chick can actually do something for Lucas Beauchamp to make amends. But how does one rectify a wrong done two generations before?

Ironically, Ike begins by carrying out his grandfather's financial responsibility. He takes the legacy (increased to three thousand dollars by his father and uncle) and tries to deliver it personally to the three descendants of Tomy's son. He cannot locate one boy. The second boy is as yet too young to receive it. The girl, Fonsiba, he eventually finds in another part of the country, after a long, unpleasant journey which he undertakes with feelings of "determination and desperation", as if willing to accept any discomfort or inconvenience as a kind of necessary purgation. The experience does not give him the sense of atonement he seeks, however. Personal contact with the abused Negro does not give him personal salvation. He cannot buy his salvation from the Negroes, any more than his grandfather could. If anything, the sorry state in which Fonsiba and her husband live fills him with even greater despair and convinces him of the curse which the entire South seems to lie under as a result of the racial situation. He cannot understand the hope which sustains the Negroes, and no doubt Fonsiba's statement to him that she is now "free" seems a mockery of his own feeling of being trapped in guilt and chained down helplessly by the racial code.

His subsequent relinquishing of his own inheritance two years later, when he is twenty-one, seems to represent a second attempt to do something in the way of atonement. Having realized the futility of the small, personal act, he is prepared to make a gesture which, symbolically at least, will be of more universal significance. His heritage of McCaslin land has come to represent for him not only the heritage of McCaslin blood--the "doomed and fatal blood which in the male derivation seems to destroy all it touches" (p. 293)--but man's arrogant claim of ownership of those things in Nature which belong only to God. If he cannot erase the stain on the land which such a sin has created, he can at least not be the means of adding further stains by his very acquiescence of the ownership of that which was never any man's to bequeath.

In a long, tortured conversation with his cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, Ike tries to explain his decision to relinquish the inheritance. In doing so he reveals, to the reader at least, his almost Messianic self-vision. In biblical and Miltonic terms he speaks of God's choosing certain individuals in each age to be agents of atonement for man's sins against fellow men and Nature in general. He believes that his father and uncle were such chosen individuals, but what they did was not enough: God had to allow the Civil War to happen, as if saying, "Apparently they can learn nothing save through suffering,

remember nothing save when underlined in blood" (p. 286).

And since that did not make man realize his mistakes, Ike feels that now he has been chosen "out of all his time" to do something further: chosen long ago as a boy of twelve in the woods, when Sam Fathers initiated him into the mystical relationship of man and Nature; when he stood, "a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness" (p. 208) and realized the taint of man on him (in the form of his watch and compass), and had to relinquish them in order to pierce the very heart of Nature and become one with it. Now he believes that by another act of relinquishment he can symbolically link man to Nature again on a non-ownership basis, and thereby somehow mystically restore man's relationship to his fellow man as well.

The confused syntax and rather puzzling logic presented in this passage of "The Bear" emphasize Ike's own state of mind regarding the whole matter. Faced with such high rhetoric, readers may suspect that Ike is really trying to justify to himself what is basically a desire to escape from family guilt by getting rid of the land which has come to represent that guilt for him. What the problem amounts to is whether Ike's action is a selfish or selfless one. Is the reader supposed to admire Ike's nobility or deplore his evasion of responsibility? More important, does his action represent a genuine attempt to come to grips

with the racial code which is his heritage, or merely a severing of himself from the society which embodies that code, in order to not have to deal with the code?

Olga Vickery maintains that Ike is looking for personal salvation, and that his relinquishment is an evasion "both of the guilt of his forefathers and his own responsibilities".⁶ Certainly it is true that there are indications for such a motive. Ike's cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, suggests that Ike is seeking escape, and Ike impatiently accepts the word, as if not denying its implications. In his own thoughts the word appears several times. General Compson tells Ike that it looks as if he has "just quit". In "Delta Autumn", Roth Edmonds' rejected quadroon mistress accuses Ike of ruining Roth by giving the McCaslin land to his grandfather--a statement which not only seems to show the corrupting influence of land-ownership, but implies that the girl feels Ike has imposed his own responsibilities on another person rather than cope with them himself (p. 360). And Ike's own declaration to his cousin--"I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in" (p. 288)--could be interpreted as a desire to be rid of the anguish and guilt which ownership of the land gives him.

⁶Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, p. 133.

However, in that declaration perhaps lies the answer to the question of selfishness or selflessness. For what Ike appears to mean here--on a conscious level, at least--is that he must deal with the matter of atonement, must figure out some way in which he can show the repulsion he feels about the racial situation, or else he can never expect to have any peace of mind. He cannot be consciously trying to escape (in the sense of evading his responsibilities), for to do so would be to follow the example of his grandfather and would be inconsistent with the horror that he feels for Carothers' action. What is more, it is because Ike has such an extreme sense of moral responsibility that he is so concerned about the whole problem of his inheritance and his family's guilt and so determined to do something about it. It would be much easier for him to conclude, as Roth Edmonds apparently does, that it is too late to change the pattern which the racial code has imposed, and that all one can do is try to be a kind of benevolent landlord to his Negro tenant farmers in an attempt to at least ameliorate the unfortunate but irrevocable situation of ownership. When Ike speaks or thinks of escape he seems to mean freedom, not for himself--since he says several times that Sam Fathers has already set him free--but for the generations of McCaslins which will come after him. As an old man in "Delta Autumn" he reflects that what he was trying to do was "at least save and free his son" from the regret and

grief associated with the inheritance (p. 351). By not keeping the land, he has removed all possibility of passing on that land as a legacy to future individuals who, by their very ownership of the land would not only be assuming possession of something which cannot be owned by any man, but would be symbolically accepting the ownership of other human beings which Ike sees as somehow inherent in the role of the Southern landlord.

The selflessness of his intention is emphasized by the amount of sacrifice required in relinquishing the land. By doing so he reduces himself to a state of near-poverty, accepting only a small allowance each month from his cousin, and living in a rented room. Even the attempts of his wife to change his mind will have no effect on him, and he will lose her, too, becoming, in his old age, "uncle to half a country and father to no one", and never having the son for whom the sacrifice was intended.

As well as the sense of responsibility which Ike feels for his descendants, there is the more universal desire on his part to act for his race and for mankind in general; to make a gesture which will symbolize the white man's repudiation of the racial code and even, on a much higher level, symbolize man's repudiation of a destructive role in regards to all other living things, whether fellow men, animals or the land itself. Ike is only one man, and his gesture will not be large enough or significant enough to

accomplish much, if anything, alone, but society is made up of single individuals and each single gesture, when added to the next, can amount to a change of attitude for society as a whole. However, change cannot take place overnight, and Ike realizes this. "It will be long. I never said otherwise", he tells his cousin (p. 299). The racial code, after all, is embodied in each individual who makes up a society: it is upheld or established or defeated by individual reaction to it.

To say that Ike's intention is a selfless one is not, however, to suggest that his action must be seen as a good one. Intent and result are two quite separate things. Although Ike intends his action to have good results, if only in principle, what in effect happens is that by giving the ownership of land to someone else he has made that person susceptible to the evil effects of such a role. Moreover, in trying to dissociate himself from his society's code he has cut himself off from a normal membership in that society as husband, father, citizen. It is no wonder that, as an old man, he will live only for the yearly excursions into the wilderness: his life in society is hardly a life at all. Roth Edmonds is not far wrong when he bitterly suggests, in "Delta Autumn", that Ike has been dead a long time. And Roth's rejected quadroon mistress echoes this idea when she asks Ike if he has "lived so long and forgotten so much that he doesn't remember anything he ever knew or felt or even heard about love" (p. 363).

The most tragic aspect of Ike's action is that he does not realize just how much a part of him the racial code is. In identifying his land with the codal heritage of the past, he thinks that by giving up the land he can give up the code's hold on him. Social attitudes go deeper than that, unfortunately. Ike can speak very idealistically about the Negro race, and maintain that all their vices are those acquired from the white man and all their virtues their own and even superior to the white man's virtues, but when he is faced with an individual Negro in "Delta Autumn", he reacts to the idea of her wanting to marry a white man with spontaneous feelings of "amazement, pity and outrage"; he cries out "You're a nigger....Get out of here! I can do nothing for you! Cant nobody do nothing for you!", and thinks to himself, "Maybe in a thousand or two thousand years in America....But not now! Not now!" (p. 361). In other words, no matter what he may feel in principle about the equality or even superiority of the Negro to the white man, in practice he is not much different from Roth Edmonds, who at least acts according to his "code" in a conscious manner.

Certainly the Ike McCaslin whom the reader sees as a child in "The Bear" must be considered in the light of old Ike McCaslin he will have become in "Delta Autumn". However, the main significance of the latter story, in relationship to "The Bear", appears to be that it is not until much

later in Ike's life that he will meet the racial code on a personal basis rather than an idealistic, abstracted one. And, ironically, he will act the way his grandfather acted: following the code, offering money instead of personal commitment. Lying shaken after the negress has left him, old Ike McCaslin will realize that one cannot simply repudiate a code or attempt non-involvement with the society which is the embodiment of that code. When a youth, blinded with idealism, he cannot see this. As Cleanth Brooks points out, Faulkner is not asking the reader "to accept Ike's action as the ideal solution of the race problem or even to regard his motivation as obviously saintlike"⁷. He is showing one individual's confrontation with the racial codes, and the elements contained in and resulting from the choice that individual faces.

Comparatively speaking, Chick Mallison's action has a more immediate and positive result, even though it is less impressive, for it is the Chick Mallisons of the world who can, by actively dealing with the racial code within the framework of their society, affect a change in the racial code.

However, Chick's adherence to his society despite his rejection of its racial code, is not an automatic one.

⁷William Faulkner, The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 274.

In fact, it is not his initial impulse at all, but a decision which he arrives at as a result of a conversation with his uncle, Gavin Stevens. His first reaction is one of disappointment and disillusionment on discovering, after he and Aleck Sander and Miss Habersham have exposed the truth of the grave outside of town and shown that Lucas Beauchamp is not the murderer of a white man, that the reception of this news is far from rewarding. He has not wanted praise for himself: what he has done has to be "anonymous else it is valueless". Nor has he expected "Lucas to be swept out of his cell shoulder high on a tide of expiation and set for his moment of vindication and triumph on the base of the Confederate monument" (p. 193). However, he has not expected this:

not a life saved from death nor even a death saved from shame and indignity nor even the suspension of a sentence but merely the grudging pretermission of a date; not indignity shamed with its own shameful cancellation, not sublimation and humility with humility and pride remembered nor the pride of courage and passion nor of pity nor the pride and austerity and grief, but austerity itself debased by what it had gained, courage and passion befouled by what they had had to cope with (p. 194 Italics mine).

He suddenly sees his society in terms of a face--or, as Faulkner puts it--a Face: "The composite Face of his native kind, his native land, his people his blood his own... a Face monstrous unravering omniverous and not even unsatiate, not frustrated nor even thwarted, not bidding

nor waiting and not even needing to be patient since yesterday today and tomorrow are is: Indivisible: One" (p. 194). This is, for Chick, the face of the racial code (if one can say that a code has a "face"), for it is the mindless, heartless, "identity-less" embodiment of the status quo by men. It is the mask which the individual puts on, such as a member of the Ku Klux Klan might put on a hood, in order to merge himself into the mass of other men, making whatever action is done under this composite mask a matter of collective impulse, collective guilt: the individual, with his particular features, is lost in the group, and therefore does not feel personally responsible for whatever that group might do. And, when the circumstances which caused the racial code to come forward, to solidify into a Face, are no longer immediately present, the individual can slip away in anonymity, not needing to make the personal gesture. "They didn't even wait to send him a can of tobacco and say It's all right, old man, everybody makes mistakes and we wont hold this one against you", Chick says bitterly to his uncle, speaking of the lynch-mob and Lucas Beauchamp (p. 200).

His uncle, however, puts the matter of the mob into a different perspective. As he sees it, the men in the street outside the jail would not have lynched Lucas because there were too many of them, and

there is a simple numerical point at which a mob cancels and abolishes itself, maybe because it has finally got too big for darkness, the cave it was spawned in is no longer big enough to conceal it from light and so at last whether it will or no it has to look at itself, or maybe because the amount of blood in one human body is no longer enough, as one peanut might titillate one elephant but not two or ten. Or maybe it's because man having passed into mob passes then into mass which abolishes mob by absorption, metabolism, then having got too large even for mass becomes man again conceptible of pity and justice and conscience even if only in the recollection of his long painful aspiration toward them, toward that something anyway of one serene universal light" (p. 201; *italics mine*).

In other words, Stevens seems to be saying that, while the individual man can lose that individualism under the collective Face of the racial code, it is within that very context of other members of society that he can realize his own individualism the most strongly while also gaining the sense of universal humanity that the individual alone might lack.

Chick hardly listens. Angrily he condemns Jefferson, the county, the whole South, for running away from the matter of treating the Negro like a human being and not admitting that "they" had been wrong in "their" approach to him. "You're a lawyer", he accuses his uncle (p. 205), suggesting that he feels it is Gavin Stevens' nature and profession to "talk up a smoke screen" and to defend his own interests and that convincing talk does not make a situation right. Yet Gavin Stevens is more than just a

smooth-talking lawyer: he is a perceptive man who understands the boy's disillusionment in seeing the uglier side of human nature for the first time. And, unlike Isaac McCaslin's cousin, he does not strike at the boy's idealism (which is of course behind the disillusionment) with cynical comments which might force an even more stubbornly defensive position and lead to the kind of extreme gesture of idealism which Ike makes.

"Yes. he tells Chick Some things you must always be unable to bear. Some things you must never stop refusing to bear. Injustice and outrage and dishonor and shame. No matter how young you are or how old you have got. Not for kudos and not for cash: your picture in the paper nor money in the bank either. Just refuse to bear them..." (p. 206).

In matching the boy's fervency for a moment and bridging the gap which Chick sees between himself and the rest of his society, Gavin Stevens is able to cause Chick to revert to a more moderate and less bitter position. When Chick says (in answer to his uncle's statement), "I haven't been a Tenderfoot scout since I was twelve years old". (p. 206) he is already seeing his own idealism from an ironical, and therefore more detached, perspective.

And, shortly afterwards, in fact, Chick is able to see that part of the reason why the mob had dispersed was to enable those who could handle the matter of Lucas "rightly" to do so: people like himself, Aleck Sander, Miss Habersham, his uncle, the sheriff; that the mob's quick dispersal was not really a running away from guilt and admittance of a

mistake for they all share the same grief and shame as Southerners, whether in a lynch mob or not, and therefore it doesn't really matter which of them rectifies the situation so long as it is done in the best way possible. He realizes, in the next moment, that his anger at the way in which the townspeople acted stems from

that fierce desire that they should be perfect because they were his and he was theirs, that furious intolerance of any one single jot or tittle less than absolute perfection--that furious almost instinctive leap and spring to defend them from anyone anywhere so that he might excoriate them himself without mercy since they were his son and he wanted no more save to stand with them unalterable and impregnable: one shame if shame must be, one expiation since expiation must surely be but above all one unalterable durable impregnable one: one people one heart one land...(p. 209-210).

He also realizes how much a part of his society he is and says that he has been self righteous in criticizing it so objectively. Even this realization is intensified and put into better perspective by Gavin Stevens, who tells him that it is not wrong to be "righteous", so long as he doesn't "stop" in his refusal to accept certain things--even now that he can see and understand more of the nature of his society. He must continue to be an individual within that society; not repudiate it, or transcend it or become enslaved by its codes.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHIVALRIC CODE

One of the most sophisticated and imaginatively appealing of the codes which the Southern child encounters is that which--for want of a better name--one might call the chivalric code, since it involves many of those ideals and precepts generally associated with the medieval knightly system of conduct and attitude. Just how the South's chivalric code originated is not entirely clear, but one might guess that it grew out of the ante-bellum Southerner's belief--not necessarily based upon fact--that his society, with its plantation system and set economic levels, resembled the medieval feudal society in which chivalry flourished. Such a belief, when given the connotations which nineteenth century Romantic novels provided¹, could have led to a conscious or even unconscious emulation of the chivalric ideal and an attempt to practice it in everyday life, at least in the part of the upper classes.

That ante-bellum Southerners were not always noble, gallant, cultured aristocrats has been illustrated at great length by historians of this century. Even during

¹This is particularly true of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, such as Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward and perhaps even The Virginians. Of the latter book W.J. Cash says that, if it did not influence the Southerner's view of himself, it at least seems to have provided a metaphor for his society.

the age of the Cotton Kingdom, men such as Frederick Law Olmsted, who travelled through most regions of the Southern United States and tried to report objectively on what he saw, proclaimed that the percentage of actual manorial families was very small in comparison to the total population, that the Southerners' claims to culture and gentility were for the most part unfounded, and that their adherence to a chivalric ideal was mainly an illusion, a projection of their own romantic view of themselves.

However true this may be, it is not really important except to historians, amateur or professional, who must separate truth from illusion in order to determine factually the past. For a novelist such as Faulkner, fact is not of primary importance: illusion itself may reveal a kind of truth and, in any case, might be more fascinating as a topic for a fictional work. In any case, Faulkner is not so much concerned with whether or not the ante-bellum Southerner actually was what he believed himself to be. He is more concerned with what effect such a belief had on the individuals who held it at that time, and on the individuals who held it at that time, and on the individuals who inherited it, in code and legend, in later times.

Because he is a novelist and not a romancer, however, Faulkner must try to show both situations as honestly as possible. He must, in other words, suggest the validity of

the chivalric code and estimate its limitations, if only in the context of the individual's relationship to the code.

As an aid to understanding both Faulkner's divergence from the romantic vision of the Civil War South, and his modern character's problems in following the chivalric code, it might be of value to quote W.J. Cash's summary of what the romantic "myth" of the Old South is in the popular imagination:

It was a sort of stage piece out of the eighteenth century, wherein gesturing gentlemen move soft-spokenly against a background of rose gardens and dueling grounds, through always gallant deeds, and lovely ladies in farthingales never for a moment lost that exquisite remoteness which has been the dream of all men and the possession of none. Its social pattern was manorial, its civilization that of the Cavalier, its ruling class an aristocracy coextensive with the planter group--men often entitled to quarter the royal arms of St. George and St. Andrew on their shields and in every case descended from the old gentle folk who for many centuries had made up the ruling classes of Europe.

They dwelt in large and stately mansions, preferably white and with columns and Grecian entablature. Their estates were feudal baronies, their slaves quite too numerous to ever be counted, and their social life a thing of Old World splendor and delicacy....It was a world singularly polished and mellow and poised, wholly dominated by ideals of honor and chivalry and noblesse--all those sentiments and values and actions which used to be, especially in Walter Scott novels, invariably assigned to the gentleman born and the Cavalier.²

²The Mind of the South. (New York: Random House, 1941), p.ix.

The Unvanquished³ presents Faulkner's view of the Old South during the Civil War, when legends and myths were in the making, and young Southerners such as Bayard Sartoris would have, presumably, living examples of honor and courage to model themselves on. Bayard has, consequently, the advantage over many of Faulkner's other children in being able to see the Chivalric code in actual and vigorous practice. He gains insight into its validity at close range, even though the fact that he is Colonel John Sartoris' son and Rosa Millard's grandson does mean that the demands on his performance in regards to that code are greater than he might otherwise encounter. What he concludes about the validity and limits of the code is pertinent to any further examination of it in other works by Faulkner, for here, close to its origins, the code should be relatively uncorrupted, and adherence to it, on the part of young men like Bayard, an easy and unquestioned matter.

To some extent this is true. John Sartoris appears to be--for the first five chapters of the book at least--the ideal image of the Southern gentleman: brave, honorable, dashing, quick-witted, genteel, gallant and cultured. Rosa

³(New York: Random House, 1966). All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

Millard is the "matriarch of the mansion", facing the Yankee regiments alone with spirit and dignity and courage, keeping order amongst the family when the home is burned down, risking her own safety to provide for the families around her through her shrewdness and daring. If this is the typical romantic image of the Civil War and its Aristocratic Order built up by countless historical novels such as Gone With the Wind, then The Unvanquished seems, superficially, to do little to destroy or amend that image. In fact, various critics have found fault with the work for just this reason, claiming that it presents "slick magazine stereotypes" and "the unquestioned romanticizing of the Sartoris males."⁴

Young Bayard Sartoris would seem to fit such a romantic image very well. His attempt to defend his home from the approaching Yankee regiment, in "Ambuscade" is a naive but courageous gesture, the type of gesture around which legends are formed. And, in his obvious admiration, respect and love for his father and grandmother, he appears to be ascribing to the code of values and behavior which these two represent.

Both his courage and his adherence to a certain code of behavior are seen in his reaction to his grandmother's murder by a local band of renegade Southerners. Bayard's

⁴William Van O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1959), pp. 100-101.

first thought is to acquire a pistol and avenge her death, regardless of the fact that he is only a boy of fourteen. During his search for her killer, Grumby, he exhibits neither anger nor grief, only a determination which suggests that the grief and anger he must feel have been channelled into a strong sense of family loyalty and an awareness of his duty to defend family honor. Once Grumby has been killed, the way in which Bayard and his young Negro companion Ringo carry out a ritual of vengeance--nailing Grumby's body to the door of the compress, cutting off the right hand, and putting that hand on Rosa Millard's grave--is indicative of the depths of Bayard's sense of duty and of the demands it makes on him. That Bayard, even in recollecting the incident, cannot bring himself to mention these actions directly, and must refer to the severed hand as "it", with a kind of abhorrence, emphasizes that this murder is part of a ritual he feels is necessary and not a sign of ruthlessness or cruelty in his own nature. He is, one realizes, only a boy taking the role of avenger. As he and Ringo finish attaching Grumby's hand to Rosa Millard's grave-marker and realize that their vengeance is complete, they both begin to cry, becoming once again just young boys who are hungry, weary and overwhelmed by the train of events of which they have been a part; now they can indulge themselves in grief.

The rightness of their actions, according to the unspoken code of Southern or aristocratic behavior, is recognized when they return home. Bayard's father and cousin Drusilla may not say anything, but their reactions show that they not only have been concerned over Bayard's absence, but are moved by the magnitude of what he has accomplished. Uncle Buck, McCaslin, a garrulous old neighbor and one of Colonel Sartoris' greatest admirers, articulates the general feeling when he declares, triumphantly, "Ain't I told you he is John Sartoris' boy? Hey? Ain't I told you?" (p. 213)

However, The Unvanquished is not about the unquestioned acceptance of a perfect code. Although Bayard has, in this instance, carried out the dictates of the code and done so on his own, without suggestion or pressure from others, ten years later when he is urged to avenge his father's murder he will refuse to do so. The reason for the change in his attitude is a complex one, but at its heart lies Bayard's realization of the code's vulnerability and limits, despite its romantic allure, a realization reached slowly over the years which the book covers.

Part of this process of realization is the discovery that the code is not just an abstract ideal but something embodied in human beings, who, being imperfect creatures, tend to interpret it according to their own weaknesses

and desires. This tendency is perhaps first seen in Rosa Millard's compromising of honesty for what she stubbornly attempts to defend as a justifiable end. Her appeal to the Yankee colonel for the return of her two stolen mules and chest of family silverware has been an honest one: a dignified appeal for justice; it is not her fault, she feels, if a mistake has been made, giving her an official order for the return of one hundred and ten mules. Besides, the mules have been stolen by the Yankees in the first place. She even tries to see the mistake as "the hand of God" (p. 128). Almost immediately, however, she can see that she is subscribing to a pattern of action which is a matter of human will, and not God's. "Whose hand was that?" young Ringo asks rather smugly, after he has obtained forty-seven of the promised mules from a Yankee troop encountered on the way home (p. 130). Her silence after this statement, and her later hesitation when Ringo suggests using the same means to obtain some Yankee horses, shows that her moral repulsion is weakening, and that by simply not verbally condoning or ordering this transaction she hopes to escape responsibility for it:

Granny didn't answer, sitting there drawn back a little, with her hand at her breast again. "Well, what you want do?" Ringo said. "You got to 'cide quick, or they be gone." He looked at her; she didn't move. Ringo leaned out of the wagon. "Hey!" he hollered. They the cavalry soldiers looked back quick and saw us and whirled about. "Granny say come here!" Ringo hollered.

"You, Ringo," Granny whispered.

"All right," Ringo said. "You want me to tell um to never mind?" She didn't answer; she was looking past Ringo at the two Yankees who were riding toward us across the field, with that kind of drawn-back look on her face and her hand holding the front of her dress....And then all of a sudden she took her hand away from her chest; it had the paper in it; she held it out to the lieutenant without saying a word (pp. 131-132).

Her praying, at the end of "Raid", is a mixture of her usual pious form of contrition after an immoral action (such as followed her lying to the Yankee colonel in "Ambuscade"), and the rationalization which her compromise between honesty and a kind of self-righteous and well-meaning dishonesty necessitates:

Granny got out slow and turned to Ringo. "Get out," she said; then she looked at me. "You too", she said. "Because you said nothing at all". We got out of the wagon. She looked at us. "We have lied", she said.

"Hit was the paper that lied; it wasn't us", Ringo said.

"The paper said a hundred and ten. We have a hundred and twenty-two," Granny said. "Kneel down."

"But they stole them 'fore we did," Ringo said.

"But we lied," Granny said. "Kneel down." She knelt first. Then we all three knelt by the road while she prayed (p. 134).⁵

Nevertheless, her admitting of the lie does not mean an end to the lying. In "Riposte in Tertio" she is shown

⁵It is interesting that Bayard has not said much during the entire transaction. Unlike Ringo, he is not quick to reinterpret honesty for a pragmatic end. Perhaps he disapproves of the action--in a rather confused way--but says nothing because "Granny" is the adult present. In any case, there is no moral comment by him.

involved in a system of forging the original order for mules again and again, obtaining the mules from various Yankee regiments, and then selling the mules back to different regiments. To do so she has become involved with Ab Snopes, who sees her actions as indistinguishable from any other kind of theft. And, in absolute terms (which Rosa Millard herself accepts), he is quite right. Such a realization makes her sense of guilt even stronger. However, she must go through with her choice in the hope that her "sin" is a venial one because she is using the money from it to help her neighbors. In other words, she attempts to utilize the results of her lying even while praying for forgiveness for that lying--as if the latter will somehow balance out the weight of the former. She even admits her "sin" publicly in church, as if the humility of such an act will also be to her moral credit.

The minister, Brother Fortinbride, seems to feel that her action is justifiable: he certainly says nothing against it. Yet his lack of comment is perhaps in itself significant. Bayard thinks that Doctor Worsham, the previous minister, would have said that "all soldiers did not carry arms", and that "one child saved from hunger and cold is better in heaven's sight than a thousand slain enemies", and he assumes that Brother Fortinbride is thinking this, too:

But Brother Fortinbride didn't say it; I reckon he thought of that; he always had plenty of words when he wanted to. It was like he said to himself, "Words are fine in peacetime, when everybody is comfortable and easy. But now I think that we can be excused" (p. 156).

This is, of course, Bayard's interpretation of the silence. More than likely it is a silence not unlike Rosa Millard's earlier. He cannot deny the advantages of the sin, but he cannot verbally condone it. He even refuses to be any more of a recipient of the lie's results than he can help: each week he refuses the money which Rosa Millard offers him, telling her that he doesn't need it, that he is "making out fine".

What is even more significant is Bayard's idea--attributed to the minister, but obviously his own--that in time of war certain things can be "excused". This seems to be the boy's way of rationalizing his grandmother's actions. He cannot, however, be unaware that Rosa Millard does not see herself as "excused". He notes the quiet way she regards him after Ab Snopes has praised her for her ability to get the mules from the Yankees; he sees that she looks like "somebody that has quit sleeping at night". He is present when she is at last brought face to face with her lies, in the person of a Yankee lieutenant who comes to reclaim the stolen mules. Now she can no longer view her actions as being entirely honorable or without any harmful results. She can see herself, suddenly, through the eyes of the lieutenant and, so,

perhaps, can Bayard:

The lieutenant wrote on the pad and tore the sheet out and came back to Granny. He still talked quiet, like when somebody is sick in a room. "We are under orders to pay for all property damaged in the process of evacuation", he said. "This is a voucher on the quartermaster at Memphis for ten dollars. For the fence". He didn't give the paper to her at once; he just stood there, looking at her.. "Confound it, I don't mean promise. If I just knew what you believed in, held--" He cursed again, not loud and not at anybody or anything. "Listen. I don't say promise; I never mentioned the word. But I have a family; I am a poor man; I have no grandmother. And if in about four months the auditor should find a warrant in the records for a thousand dollars to Mrs. Rosa Millard, I would have to make it good. Do you see?"

"Yes," Granny said. "You need not worry" (pp. 165-166).

Immediately afterwards she takes Bayard and Ringo to the empty church and makes a more verbal confession of her sins; at the same time she defies anyone--God included, apparently--to say that she has sinned for gain or greed or revenge:

"I sinned first for justice. And after that first time, I sinned for more than justice; I sinned for the sake of food and clothes for Your own creatures who could not help themselves--for children who had given their fathers, for wives who had given their husbands, for old people who had given their sons to a holy cause even though You have seen fit to make it a lost cause. What I gained, I shared with them. It is true that I kept some of it back, but I am the best judge of that because I, too, have dependents who may be orphans, too, at this moment, for all I know. And if this be sin in your sight, I take this on my conscience, too. Amen" (pp. 167-168).

Yet, despite her firm, defiant argument to the contrary, her code of values has been compromised into a form of corruption. The boys realize this. After they have carried out their ritual of revenge for her murder, Ringo puts their feelings into words:

"It wasn't him or Ab Snopes either that kilt her," Ringo said. "It was them mules. That first batch of mules we got for nothing."
 "Yes", I said (p. 211).

It is with this realization that Bayard returns home to be greeted as a credit to the Sartoris family for having avenged his grandmother. He has dealt with her human murderer because the code demanded it; he has yet to deal with the ~~awareness~~ awareness that the code can be wrongly interpreted and corrupted.

His view of his father's embodiment of the code is a more complex one. Certainly he is more explicit, as narrator, in pointing out his father's qualities than his grandmother's. Unfortunately, the veil of romance surrounding his father is difficult to see through, particularly for an imaginative child who has a very limited awareness of what war in general is like, and what this war in particular is concerned with. No doubt Bayard has read some of the books in his father's library: even years later, as narrator, he can recall that the library contained, among other things, "a complete Walter Scott, a complete Fenimore Cooper, a paper bound

Dumas complete, too, save for the volume which [his father] lost from his pocket at Manassas (retreating, he said" (p. 18)). Protected from the reality of the war, and filled with the kind of romantic ideas which these books are noted for, Bayard is understandably in the position to view his father as an heroic figure, fighting for a noble cause in glorious battle.

In "Ambuscade", when his father suggests building a stock pen, Bayard immediately envisions himself and Ringo standing like soldiers before him, watching him approach the job as if it were a battle:

He was on Jupiter now; he wore the frogged grey field-officer's tunic; and while we watched he drew the sabre. Giving us a last embracing and comprehensive glance he drew it, already pivoting Jupiter on the tight snaffle; his hair tossed beneath the cocked hat, the sabre flashed and glinted; he cried, not loud yet stentorian: "Trot! Canter! Charge!" Then, without even having to move, we could both watch and follow him...standing in the stirrups above the smoke-colored diminishing thunderbolt, beneath the arc and myriad glitter of the sabre from which the chosen saplings, sheared trimmed and lopped, sprang into neat and waiting windrows, requiring only the carrying and the placing to become a fence (p. 14).

In reality, however, his father works with the rest of them, with his coat off, and without the sabre. He approaches the job with the same dynamic quality of Bayard's vision, for he is shown "with a sapling under each

arm, going through the brush and briars almost faster than the mules", but there is little romance in the building of a stock pen .

In the same way, although aware that his father is a "little man" in stature, Bayard feels that "in conjunction with the horse [he] looked exactly the right size because that was as big as he needed to look and--to twelve years old--bigger than most folks could hope to look" (p. 14). Even his father's humble respect for and gallantry toward Rosa Millard is something which adds to his "stature" in Bayard's eyes rather than diminishing it. As Bayard recalls:

He mounted four of the steps...then he stopped and removed his hat. And that's what I mean: about his doing bigger things than he was. He could have stood on the same level with Granny and he would have only needed to bend his head a little for her to kiss him. But he didn't. He stopped two steps below her, with his head bared and his forehead held for her to touch her lips to, and the fact that Granny had to stoop a little took nothing from the illusion of height and size which he wore for us at least (p. 11).

A little later, in "Retreat", Bayard hears his father's qualities lauded by Uncle Buck McCaslin in Jefferson; in the same chapter he rides with his father's band of men and sees his father encounter a regiment of Yankee soldiers--as well as witnessing the loyalty and respect Sartoris' men have for him. These things cannot

help but add to his sense of pride in being a Sartoris and his great admiration for his father.⁶

Yet Bayard, as adult narrator, is quite capable of distinguishing between illusion and reality--between what he believed as a child to be true and what he knows now to be true--wherever such a distinction is necessary. For example, in recalling his attitude towards his father, he says:

Then I began to smell it again...that odor in his clothes and beard and flesh too which I believed was the smell of powder and glory, the elected victorious, but know better now: know now to have been only the will to endure, a sardonic and even humorous declining of self-delusion which is not even kin to that optimism which believes that that which is about to happen to us can possibly be the worst which we can suffer (p. 11).

And, as a child, Bayard knows that part of the wonder he feels about his father is tied up with his realization that this man whom the Yankees fear is also the one whom he has "heard snoring at night in a quiet house". What he learns about his father as he grows older does not diminish his respect and admiration for him: it only adds to his awareness of the man beneath the romantic veil.

⁶An adult narrator, Bayard is still caught up to some extent in this romantic aura of his father. However, the reader must keep in mind that the first person point of view determines how the story is related, and not attribute the "romanticizing" to Faulkner himself. Bayard can be excused for it, since over ten years have passed since most of the incidents of the book took place, and since he was only an imaginative child at the time. Furthermore the reader can better appreciate his deliberate deviation from the code of the past in seeing how strong a hold that past still has on his imagination.

It is also interesting that the incidents involving his father that Bayard remembers in the most detail, and relates at greatest length, are not ones involving "powder and glory". When his father's band of men encounter a Yankee regiment, the soldiers are relieved of their horses, weapons, food and clothing, and are permitted to "escape" in their underwear. It is a humorous tale, particularly because of part which Bayard and Ringo play in the "capturing" of the regiment, but it also suggests that, no matter what role Colonel Sartoris once had when commanding an official regiment, he is now more of a gadfly to the Yankees than a feared assailant. In another incident, he manages to elude soldiers who come to his home looking for him, but again it is cunning and quick wits which are demonstrated rather than "powder and glory".

In "Skirmish at Sartoris ", Bayard recalls his father's part in the immediate post-war reconstruction period. And it is here, perhaps, that he first realizes that his cause is not a holy and therefore inevitably successful one and that his father is finding it necessary to compromise his beliefs and work with men who had been his enemies.

For four years we had lived for just one thing, even the women and children who could not fight: to get the Yankees troops out of the country; we thought that when that happened it would be all over. And now that had happened, and then before the summer began I heard Father say to Drusilla, "We were promised Federal troops; Lincoln himself promised to send us

troops. Then things will be all right." That, from a man who had commanded a regiment for four years with the avowed purpose of driving Federal troops from the country (p. 228).

Now John Sartoris uses his leadership ability and vigor in rebuilding Jefferson, and, most important, in stopping the election of Cassius Q. Benbow, an ex-slave, to office of Marshall of Jefferson. This election is recalled by Bayard as being full of the same excitement and spirit as the Civil War raids, and when one realizes that from the Southern point of view Sartoris' action was a positive one such recollection becomes understandable. However, the "dashing about", and the humorous counter-pointing theme of Drusilla's abortive wedding ceremony cannot hide the fact that John Sartoris and a band of followers ride into Jefferson, encounter the Northerners who have been organizing the election, kill both of them (courteously allowing them to fire first, of course), carry off the ballot box to the Sartoris mansion, and proceed to stuff the box with opposition votes all scribbled out by one man in order to "save more time". Then Sartoris is cheered for having once again saved the community from the enemy--in this case the "new foe": carpetbaggers and Yankee liberals.

The reader--particularly the Northern reader--may find this chapter of The Unvanquished particularly hard to accept. He may not approve of the segregationist

feelings which he suspects are implicit in Sartoris' actions (although they are not stated) and he may not understand the lack of criticism, on the part of either Bayard or Faulkner, of this whole matter. Bayard is simply the recorder of what happens: he is active in it only when he shows his concern for his father's safety in facing the two Northerners singlehandedly. Yet we are not told by the adult Bayard, as narrator, how he felt about the actual incident. No doubt as a child of the Southern way of life he sees nothing wrong with the general desire to prevent an unlettered Negro from obtaining a position of authority in the community; even the reader can appreciate this. It is the method used by Sartoris and his men which seems to be at fault here: the imposing of the community's wishes in a violent manner, and, ironically, in the name of law and order. John Sartoris cannot help but appear unheroic. Perhaps even Bayard is aware that the violence is not, in the case, in the name of a Higher Cause, or a Holy Cause: that it is a matter of two opinions clashing. Again the Southern chivalric code is revealed as relative to circumstance, rather than perfect and absolute.

How Bayard comes to regard the incident is seen in his conversation with his cousin Drusilla four years later, in "An Odor of Verbena", where he quite clearly shows his doubts about the rightness of his father's methods in the

election issue. "They were men. Human beings," he argues, speaking of the two Burdens whom John Sartoris shot that day; the fact that they were carpetbaggers, "Northerners, foreigners....pirates", as Drusilla calls them, or even the "new foe", no longer seems to excuse their death so far as Bayard is concerned. Four years of peace have given him a wider perspective in viewing his father and his father's code of behavior; Bayard is no longer a child, and, what is more important, he has spent a year at university, living away from home. During that time he has no doubt come into contact with values which are different from those he has grown up with and, without the familial pressure upon him to follow the Sartoris code, has been free to follow his own intuitive responses. Bayard himself says that his new point of view has not been taught to him by Professor Wilkins, with whom he has discussed these things; he has not even taught it to himself, since it goes "further than just having been learned". What he has concluded is that

if there was anything at all in the Book,
anything of hope and peace for His blind
and bewildered spawn which He had chosen
above all others to offer immortality,
Thou shalt not kill must be it...(p. 249).

This of course is nothing new: in fact, such an ideal inspires most of North America's criminal codes as well as its religious codes. Yet Bayard's affirmation of this commandment will come into conflict with Drusilla's code

of Behavior:-the Sartoris code, or, more correctly, the code of behavior idealized by the Southern aristocracy and exemplified by the Sartoris family. According to that code, as Drusilla states it, there are "worse things than killing men....There are worse things than being killed...." (p. 261). That something worse would seem to be lack of honor, in the first instance, and a lack of necessary romance and glory, in one's personal image, in the second. What Drusilla sees as an ideal is for a man to "...love something, a woman preferably, well, hard hard hard, then to die young because he believed what he could not (could not? would not) help but be" (p. 261).

And this ideal, however romantic, has death at its centre. Drusilla, with her childlessness, her bitterness about the death of her fiance, and her subsequent embracing of a man's role in the war, is like the symbol of death itself. The way in which she looks at Bayard after stating that it is a "fine" thing to die young for a cause or for what one "could not help be" shows that she is electing him for that role, even though it may bring him death. Immediately after this statement and significant look, she demands that Bayard kiss her, embrace her, and, he reluctantly feels himself driven to do so. Symbolically he is embracing death, or a code which values honorable death: a code which is attractive to him despite his awareness of its "immoral" possibilities.

Bayard himself describes Drusilla as a "Greek amphora priestess of a succinct and formal violence" (p. 252). and so she is, demanding the sacrifice of the individual to a cause which is violent in its demands--a cause she calls a "dream".

It is in the name of this dream to rebuild and restore Yoknapatawpha County that Drusilla defends John Sartoris' post-war involvement in violence. To her, this dream justifies his forming of the "night riders"--perhaps forerunners to the Ku Klux Klan--to "keep the carpet-baggers from organizing the Negroes into an insurrection"; it also makes the struggle between Sutpen and Sartoris appear to be one between Sutpen's selfish concern over his own land and Sartoris' more noble, generous concern with all the land of the county. But Bayard realizes that his father has hated Sutpen since the war because it was Sutpen who was elected colonel when the regiment deposed him; also, he knows that his father's challenging of Sutpen to join the night riders or else fight on the matter was unnecessary, and not to his credit, particularly since Sutpen merely refused both choices, and therefore seemed to ridicule Sartoris' right to limit the choice to two. There is also the matter of the "hill man" whom Sartoris shot for a thief, but whom they would never know for sure to be a thief, since he had "shot too quick". The response of the man's wife--her pride and contempt

as she throws in Sartoris' face the money he has sent her to compensate for the death of her husband--again reveals Sartoris as a man who has lost contact with the normal human sense of values in his adherence to a code which by its very nature demands a hardening of something sensitive within the individual, an overlooking of the small details, such as individual lives, for the larger, more beautiful "dream". No doubt he has believed, with Drusilla, that there are "not many dreams in the world, but there are a lot of human lives. And one human life or two dozen" are not worth anything (p. 257).

In any case, Bayard now sees that his father can be "wrong". Seen in the post-war context, and through the eyes of a young man who no longer has the naïveté of childhood to obscure his vision, John Sartoris appears less heroic and more extreme in his actions than during the war. After all, Bayard's memories of him from the war are of skirmishes and brief encounters in which cunning, perseverance and leadership were exhibited more than force and ruthlessness, and where glory surrounded even the possibility of death because it would be death for a noble cause. Now the leadership ability appears to Bayard as a "violent and ruthless dictatorialness and will to dominate" (p. 258), and the cunning and perseverance--which were gadfly qualities when directed at a powerful and numerous enemy during the war--seem spiteful, petty,

and unnecessarily cruel when they are merely attacks on one man, Redmond, Sartoris' ex-partner in the railroad business.

John Sartoris' problem is that he is following a code of behavior which is better suited to a time of war, when the intensity and extremity of circumstances call for an intensity and extremity in human action and emotions, and idealism is as noble as pragmatism. In a time of peace, such actions and emotions appear to be out of proportion to the normal patterns of human existence, and whatever idealism once spurred them now appears to be an extravagant, distorted thing, melodramatic rather than heroic, grotesque rather than beautiful, and yet dangerous. Under this code, John Sartoris' actions seem to be a deliberate courting of death, without the Cause to excuse it or lift it to an idealistic level.

Bayard is not the only one who senses this: even Sartoris' old followers, while still loyal to him, are no longer living at the same level of intensity as during the war and do not support his provoking of Redmond. As one of them analyzes Sartoris, "I know what's wrong; he's had to kill too many folks, and that's bad for a man" (p. 260), suggesting perhaps that eventually a man becomes dulled to the possibility and significance of death--even his own--when he has been its agent so often. More likely, however, what is meant is that when

a man is responsible for killing "so many folks" he almost seeks to lose his own life as a form of atonement to release himself from a sense of guilt, and balances the scales. Bayard says of his father that he had

eyes which in the last two years had acquired that transparent film which the eyes of carnivorous animals have and from behind which they look at a world which no ruminant ever sees, perhaps dares to see, which I have seen before on the eyes of men who have killed so much that never again as long as they live will they ever be alone (p. 266).

As if realizing that he belongs to an order of things which is too disproportionate for the times, and even anachronistic now, John Sartoris tells Bayard, just before going to face Redmond in a duel:

"...I acted as the land and the time demanded and you were too young for that, I wished to shield you. But now the land and the time too are changing; what will follow will be a matter of consolidation, of pettifoggery and doubtless chicanery in which I would be a babe in arms but in which you, trained in the law, can hold your own--our own. Yes. I have accomplished my aim, and now I shall do a little moral housecleaning. I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity or the end. Tomorrow when I go to town and meet Ben Redmond, I shall be unarmed" (p. 266).

In this declaration, Sartoris in effect passes on the responsibility as head of the family and defender of the family's honor to Bayard, who will better fit into the times. He also shows his awareness of the immorality--according to the normal, peacetime code of values--of

the violent life he has been living. Although he perhaps hopes to apologize to Redmond and avoid further violence when he meets him, it is more likely that he feels that those who live by violence should die by it, and that Redmond deserves to be the executioner in this case, if fate decides it is time for him to die.

He dies at Redmond's hand, and Bayard finds himself the heir not only to the family leadership, but to that peculiar role of being "The Sartoris". Such a role demands of him a following of his father's example, but only Bayard fully understands what that example was at its finest. George Wyatt and Sartoris' old troop have little doubt that it was an example of bravery: they feel confident that Bayard will once again, as in the case of his grandmother's death, exact revenge. Ringo, Bayard's childhood companion expects something similar, if only because of Bayard's past performance and love for his father.

Drusilla sees it as a matter of honor and a kind of divine retribution. More than ever now she resembles a priestess, wearing the yellow ball gown, and the verbena in her hair, as if they were part of a uniform or ritual dress, speaking to Bayard in a tone of "passionate and voracious exaltation", like the devotee of some cult. In the scene where she offers Bayard the duelling pistols she is quite obviously like a priestess of a death cult.

She stands in the "death-filled room" where Sartoris lies, speaking with a "passionate and dying fall", and in the same tone in which she told Bayard to kiss her the summer before: kissing her and accepting the role as sacrificial victim of the code are clearly the same thing. Even her choice of words makes these aspects clear:

"Take them. I have kept them for you. I give them to you. Oh you will thank me, you will remember me who put into your hands what they say is an attribute only of God's, who took what belongs to heaven and gave it to you. Do you feel them? the long true barrels true as justice, the triggers (you have fired them) quick as retribution, the two of them slender and invincible and fatal as the physical shape of love?" (p. 273).

In the next breath, however, she shows herself to be not only "voracious", as Bayard has already repeatedly described her, but verging on insanity; as she tells him,

"...How beautiful: young, to be permitted to kill, to be permitted vengeance, to take into your bare hands the fire of heaven that cast down Lucifer..." (p. 274).

In other words, this act of vengeance is for her a playing of God on the part of Bayard. In taking such a role he becomes not only the agent of death but a holy warrior of a holy cause, or the priest of a cult who must risk death and carry out a ritualistic killing in order that the cult itself and the order of life it represents may live. For this reason Drusilla kisses Bayard's hand, as if blessing it; as she does so she resembles a priestess kissing the

hand of an archbishop or head priest. She also gives the whole situation a chivalric air: she is like the lady of the castle, bestowing her favor on her chosen knight before he goes into battle. The verbená which she puts in his lapel becomes symbolic of the knightly duty she imposes upon him. However, Bayard makes no motion to play the role assigned to him, and Drusilla realizes suddenly that he is not going to kill Redmond:

Then her eyes filled with an expression of bitter and passionate betrayal. "Why, he's not..." she said. "He's not...And I kissed his hand," she said in an aghast whisper; "I kissed his hand!" (p. 275).

All this is crucial for Bayard, who sees the whole matter of revenging his father's death as a conflict between his own principles and those of the code he has been brought up under. Can he act as he believes is the right way, despite the pressures of the code to do the opposite? As he thinks to himself while leaving Prof. Wilkins' home, upon first learning of his father's death, "At least this will be my chance to find out if I am what I think I am or if I just hope; if I am going to do what I have taught myself is right, or if I am just going to wish I were" (p. 248. Italics Faulkner's). In other words he is struggling between his individualism--in the form of the principles that he himself has formed--and his particular heritage of values--in the form of Drusilla's demands. Bayard sees his struggle as the need to stick to principle

in the face of blood and raising and background; to be faced without warning and made to deliver like by a highwayman out of the dark...(p. 249). However, though he feels strongly that he should not kill Redmond, he is still afraid of being thought a coward by Drusilla and the county people; worse than that, he must be sure that he is not simply falling back on his principles out of cowardice in the face of death. For he is afraid of dying: he knows this, feeling the fear intensely when he looks upon his dead father.

Luckily he has Aunt Jenny, his father's sister to help him make the decision. She tells him that she would still think well of him if he were to hide in the loft all day. Although she has lost someone she loved during the war, the way Drusilla has, her loss has made her wise and grave, not bitter or "intolerant". While Drusilla is associated with verbena, symbolic of knighthood and death, Aunt Jenny is associated in Bayard's mind with the two jasmine cuttings, which are living, growing, things she brought from her home when she came to stay with Sartoris. What she salvaged from her home was something beautiful and truly "genteel": panes of colored glass from a window; in contrast, Drusilla seems to have salvaged, from the ruin of her past life, only her horse and the bitter uncompromising nature which has lead to her voracious, passionate appetite for "honorable" violence.

It is Aunt Jenny who gives Bayard the key to confidence in his beliefs when she points out that quite often what appears to be courage is merely luck or circumstance: the fact that there is "no bloody moon" to expose the deed, or make one a clearly lighted target. She seems to be suggesting that there are two types of courage, and that the type which Drusilla demands is a foolish variety which will not stand up to scrutiny under the light of reason. "No bloody moon" can also be interpreted as a vow, or prayer or warning: let there be no bloodshed for the moon to illuminate; achieve your self-respect, your peace with yourself and your society, without bloodshed.

It is with Aunt Jenny's reassurance that Bayard goes into town and faces Redmond unarmed. Redmond does not shoot him in order to kill him; both individuals know that they are simply acting out a kind of ritual, and that it is as necessary for Redmond to fire two useless, unaimed shots at Bayard as it is for Bayard to face him alone. And in the end George Wyatt and the rest of John Sartoris' followers come to recognize Bayard's act as exhibiting a higher form of courage than that which they had anticipated: higher because it does not demand death, but in fact gives life. Even Drusilla appears to accept his action as courageous. Although she leaves before he returns home, she puts a sprig of verbena on his pillow. Since verbena

has had, throughout this chapter, the connotation of a garland, or even of a knight's emblem, her gesture shows that she is willing to concede that he has shown honor and bravery even though he has not followed her concept of chivalry.

The manner in which he has acted is, of course, a compromise: the reader would be naive to see it as otherwise. However, as a compromise it differs from that which Rosa Millard was led to make in that it satisfies the requirements of both the social pressures and the individual conscience. So far as the chivalric code is concerned, Bayard's act contains the necessary quality of honor without the violence which has distorted that code during the war. It is an act which restores the code to the proper proportions for normal everyday living. It is done, however, with full realization on Bayard's part that the code lives in each individual's interpretation of it and must be tempered according to the individual conscience in order that it be of any value or validity.

If Bayard Sartoris stands at the point where the blaze and glory of the chivalric code reaches its zenith and begins to decline, Quentin Compson, the nineteen year old narrator of section two of The Sound and The Fury,⁷

⁷(New York: Random House, 1946). All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation..

stands in the twilight of its day. Fortunately, Bayard is able to see the necessity of accepting the changing values of his time and can re-interpret the code in his own terms. Quentin is not so fortunate.

For him, acceptance of such a change--or of change at all--is almost impossible. Most of his obsession with time, and his attempts to become oblivious to the passing of time (as symbolized by the deliberate breaking of his watch), stem from his desire to stop the minute by minute changing of something which he feels must remain absolute and immutable.

Just what this something is, is not immediately clear, either to the reader or to Quentin himself. In the first instance it appears to be his childhood relationship with his sister Caddy, a relationship which has been weakening year by year as Caddy becomes more sexually mature and increasingly involved with men. Caddy's development as a woman projects her into a world which Quentin, who is still a virgin, has yet to enter. Each sexual encounter Caddy has, however minor it may be, seems to represent for Quentin a broadening of the gap between them. It is as if Quentin wishes that time would stop preserving Caddy in an eternal innocence and virginity, so that she would be totally his, untouched by the loud and sordid world around them.

Quentin's dilemma is increased by the fact that Caddy, as well as being his sister, is for him the symbol of a purity, chastity and honor that is a very necessary part of his chivalric ideal. As a child she more closely resembles this ideal, and when she falls short of it (according to Quentin's rigid standards), he is able to reprimand her, remind her of her role in his moral universe. For example, when he sees her kiss a boy, at fifteen, he slaps her and scours her head in the grass (p. 152). He even becomes angry when she accidentally witnesses his own early sexual encounter with a little neighborhood girl, particularly when Caddy shows no sense of proper moral outrage. When he smears Caddy with the mud he has been wallowing in (almost as an act symbolic of his view of sex), it is as if he wants to make her aware of the sordidness of what he was doing so that she will not do something like it. If she represents his moral ideals and, more specifically, Southern white womanhood and all that that entails, she must be purer than he is, inviolate.

However, he cannot prevent Caddy's inevitable biological changing: as a human being rather than an ideal, she cannot be immutable and perfect. Unfortunately, since he has identified her with his ideals of honor and virtue, Quentin sees her loss of virginity as proving those ideals themselves somehow imperfect, inabsolute, subject to change.

In a sense, his father has been telling him all along that this is the case: that "purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature" (p. 135), and that belief in an ideal of purity is therefore unrealistic, un-natural, doomed to end in despair and disillusionment. Women, according to Mr Compson, are vessels too frail to contain one's ideals; they have no codes of honor themselves but merely acquiesce to operate within men's codes of honor, consequently do not feel a sense of sin when they fail to live up to those codes.

Perhaps Quentin suspects that his father is right, but to admit this would mean relinquishing his ideals. As Michael Millgate says,

in Quentin's obsession with family tradition and honour it is understandable that he should refer to his father, the head of the family, as a transmitter of that tradition and as a source of authority and advice. The irony of the situation, however, and a major cause for Quentin's tragedy, is that just as his mother has failed him as a source of love so his father fails him utterly in all his roles of progenitor, confessor and counsellor. He has become, indeed, Quentin's principal enemy, his cold and even cynical logic persistently undermining the very basis of all those idealistic concepts to which Quentin so passionately holds. Throughout the section there is a battle in progress between Quentin's romantic idealism and Mr. Compson's somewhat cynical realism.⁸

The battle is taking place, of course, in Quentin's mind, as he wanders around Cambridge on the last day of his life.

⁸Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1966), pp. 95-96.

Again and again his father's phrases recurr in his thoughts: he is as obsessed with them as he is with the image of his sister. Certainly they are one of the sources of his anguish, reminding him of the folly of idealism, propelling him towards a suicide which will end the struggle within himself once and for all. What is hardest of all to accept, however, is not the challenging and undermining of his ideals by his father so much as the fear that, as his father says, this whole moral dilemma will someday no longer bother him as it does now; that it will only whiten his hair overnight without altering his appearance at all (p. 196). Since Quentin's universe is defined in terms of his ideals, he cannot imagine an existence without some system of order and perfection. For him, "temporary" is "the saddest word of all" (p. 197). His father is correct in interpreting Quentin's thoughts of suicide as an attempt to do something" in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh and aware both of itself and of the flesh" (pp. 195-196). In other words, by committing suicide Quentin hopes to freeze his idealism into a state of eternal changelessness untouched by time.

Suicide is Quentin's final means of dealing with his moral dilemma. Before he reaches that point he attempts, desperately and defensively, to ignore the truth in his father's comments and act as if the chivalric code were

still operating. He first tries to persuade himself that Caddy was merely the innocent victim of Dalton Ames, that Ames "made her do it" because he was stronger than she was (p. 169). When Caddy does not affirm this suggestion as he wishes her to, he takes the next step in the "honorable" approach to family dishonor: he suggests that he kill her and then himself. Twice he asks her, while holding his knife against her throat, if she remembers the time as a child when she muddled her drawers. It is as if he wishes he could see the sullyng of her honor as a similar kind of innocent action, equally venial. Perhaps it is his suspicion that this is the case--that Caddy's loss of virginity is a natural and inevitable part of life and not the tragic occurrence which his idealism has made it--which makes him unable to carry out the dual suicide. This scene parallels that in which Caddy offers herself to Quentin. He is unable to commit incest, even though to do so would make valid his confession to his father that he has done so. In both cases, the fact that Caddy is willing to go along with his ideas seems to be what stops him. Quentin is not able to physically carry out his desires; he would rather play with the concepts of incest and death than act on these impulses. As he tells his father, regarding the idea of incest:

i was afraid to [make her do it] i was afraid she might and then it wouldn't have done any good but if i could tell you we did it would have been so and then the others wouldn't be so and then the world would roar away (p. 195).

In other words, a confession of incest without the actual physical reality of incest would contain all the social horror of such an act without involving a violation of his pure relationship with Caddy. It would place them both in a private place in hell; ostracized by society and therefore free of society's intrusion, but at the same time still inviolate, ideal.

Quentin exhibits the same horror of physical confrontation when he attempts to fight a duel of honor with Dalton Ames. He can go through all the melodramatic actions and words associated with the role of a knight defending his lady's honor: telling Ames to leave town by sundown, threatening to kill him; but when he actually attempts to hit Ames, he passes out. What makes matters worse is that Ames, whom he does not regard as a gentleman, gallantly pretends that he has knocked Quentin out, and even offers him his horse to ride home on.

Ironically, while wandering around Cambridge on his last day, Quentin--the defender of his sister's honor--is accused of attempting to assault a little Italian girl whom he has been treating in a brotherly way. Moreover, it is her brother who comes to her "rescue" and attacks

Quentin, causing Quentin to laugh hysterically at what he sees as the bitterly humorous aspect of the situation. Quentin later loses in his fight with Gerald Bland, whom he has momentarily confused with Dalton Ames; according to Shreve's comments, Quentin didn't even hit Bland, although Spoade seems to speak as if he did. In any case, Quentin not only fails in his original attempt to avenge Caddy's seduction, but fails each subsequent time he tries to take the role as defender of the chivalric code. It is, one indication of the code's decline that it should have, as its true advocate, someone as weak as Quentin, or that its strongest and most forceful embodiment should be in the Gerald Blands of this world. Bland, with his proper rowing costume, his upper-class snobbery, his story about his faithful "nigger", projects the image of the Southern gentleman even while rendering the code of the gentleman meaningless by his actions and coarse talk.

Perhaps the most serious affront to Quentin's image of himself as the defender of Caddy's honor occurs with Sydney Herbert Head, the man whom Caddy plans to marry. Dalton Ames represented to Quentin the reality of Caddy's loss of virginity, but he was at best an ineffectual, papier-maché villain. Head, on the other hand, is in Quentin's eyes a true "blackguard", having been expelled from university for cheating and therefore almost by definition not a gentleman. What is worse, Head shows

the same kind of hypocricrisy regarding the chivalric code as Bland does. Speaking of Quentin's ideals of honor, he says,

a young man gets these ideas and I'm all for them / does him good while he's in school / forms his character / good for tradition the school / but when he gets out into the world he'll find that everybody else is doing the same thing and be damned to (p. 128).

By placing idealism into a context of something which is good only for a young man at school, Head is also labelling Quentin's sense of morality as juvenile. A little later he calls Quentin a "half-baked Galahad", echoing Shreve's humorous comment (on hearing that Caddy was planning to marry) that "young Lochinvar rode out of the west a little too soon" (p. 112). Not only must Quentin face the fact of his failure to maintain the chivalric code: he must, in anguish, see himself as a ridiculous, almost quixotic, figure in others' eyes.

In this role, Quentin is somewhat like Quentin Durward, a young Scotsman in a romantic novel of the same name by Sir Walter Scott. Durward is an idealistic young man who believes in and practices the chivalric code even though he is living in the latter half of the fifteenth century, an age, Scott says, when chivalry was dying out along with the feudal system which had bred it. At several points in the romance Durward's gallantry and idealism are ridiculed by individuals who are more cynical

or realistic in their approach to life. As Scott says,

a tribe of scoffers had risen who pretended to supply what was naturally useful in chivalry by other resources and threw ridicule upon the extravagant and exclusive principles of honor and virtue, which were openly treated as absurd, because, in fact, they were cast in a mould of perfection too lofty for the practice of fallible beings. If an ingenuous and high-spirited youth proposed to frame himself on his father's principles of honor, he was vulgarly derided, as if he had brought to the field the good old knights Durindarte, or two-handed sword, ridiculous from its antique make and fashion, although its blade might be the Ebro's temper and its ornaments of pure gold.⁹

However, Durward not only triumphs over those who would reduce his chivalric conduct to the level of a quaint gesture, but seems to prove the values still to be found in such an approach to life. Quentin Compson, caught in a society which is undergoing a similar emergence from a feudalistic system, is nevertheless unable to make the chivalric code triumphant even on an individual level.¹⁰ If the reader can assume Faulkner's familiarity with the

⁹Walter Scott, Quentin Durward (Edinburgh: Adam and Chas. Black, 1871), Introduction, p. 3.

¹⁰When Faulkner was asked about the parallels between his Quentin and that of Scott he only said that he did "not necessarily" mean that Quentin was therefore the type of romantically-minded Southerner who might be influenced by Scott's novels. This does not deny the parallels, however, particularly in view of the fact that Faulkner seems to have misunderstood the question. In any case his subsequent comments on the way in which Scott's Highlanders seem to have much in common with Southerners after the Civil War would suggest his familiarity with Scott's novels. Faulkner in the University, eds. Fredrick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 135.

Scott romance, the implications would seem to be that this is not only not an age of chivalry, but is not an age of romance, either; that the modern hero can not even be a hero, but must be a kind of anti-hero in spite of all his efforts. Or, Faulkner may be suggesting that in Quentin Compson's case the chivalric code has become too rigid, too hysterical, too much a stifling of the life force.

Certainly Faulkner makes quite explicit the fact that Quentin is in love with death "above all", loving and living in "a deliberate and almost perverted anticipation of death" (p. 9). In comparison to Caddy's spontaneous vitality and sensuality, Quentin's inflexible, puritanical and even impotent assertion of ideals appears life-denying. In his obsessive idealism, he appears to have developed an abhorrence of some aspects of the physical, natural world, particularly sex. At one point he thinks of Caddy's sexual relations with Dalton Ames in terms of "whispers secret surges smell the beating of hot blood under wild unsecret flesh watching against red eyelids the swine untethered in pairs rushed coupled into the sea" (p. 195). At another point he sees women as "delicate equilibrium of periodical filth between two moons balanced....Liquid putrefaction like drowned things floating like pale rubber flabbily filled " (p. 147). Considering that the reader mainly sees Caddy's sexual experiences through the distorted lenses of Quentin's consciousness, it is hardly

any wonder that they appear to represent a rather vulgar promiscuity. It is interesting to note that Benjy, who has not moral sense at all and objects to Caddy's relationships with men simply on an emotional basis, associates Caddy with such positive and elemental things as the fire, the pasture, the smell of leaves and trees, and sleep. In view of these associations, her sexual freedom could be seen as "the expression of a natural rebellion against the repressive demands made upon her by the different members of the family".¹¹ That she herself feels "doomed" and "dead" is an indication of the morbid influence on her of Quentin's ethical sense. As Peter Swiggart suggests, Caddy appears to have developed her sense of guilt under the impact of her brother's puritanism.¹² Her fate is the fate of anything vital under a system whose rigidity has become a kind of sterility.

If Quentin is a negative figure in his adherence to the values of the old order, Sydney Herbert Head is hardly less so in his embodiment of modern values. His casual, flippant dismissal of the fact that he was expelled from university for cheating shows a complete disregard for honesty. His attempt to bribe Quentin--first with the offer of a job in the bank he works for, and then with

¹¹ Millgate, p. 97.

¹² The Art of Faulkner's Novels (University of Texas Press, Austin, 1962), p. 91.

actual money--shows the level to which he will stoop to buy popularity and smooth over any rough moral edges in situation: he buys his way into the Compson family in a similar way by giving Caddy an automobile, which at least impresses Mrs. Compson. With his slangy expressions, his pompous cigar and his allusions to an affair with "a little widow over in town", Head is a rather pathetic figure. Nevertheless, he is, like Jason Compson (although lacking Jason's ruthlessness), a symbol of the new order which is destroying and replacing that order which Quentin, and the Compson family as a whole, represents. This new order will eventually turn the Compson estate which once sported "formal lawns and promenades and pavilions laid out by the same architect who built the columned porticoed house furnished by steamboat from France and New Orleans" (p. 6)--into a square mile containing "row after row of small crowded jerrybuilt individually owned demiurban bungalows" (p. 9).

The decline in the chivalric code is mirrored in the decline of the Compson family itself. The present generation is the end of a

long line of men who had had something in them of decency and pride even after they had begun to fail at the integrity and the pride had mostly become vanity and self-pity; from the expatriate who had to flee his native land with little else except his life yet who still refused to accept defeat, through the man who gambled his life and his good name twice and lost twice and declined to accept that either, and the one who with only a clever small

quarterhorse for tool avenged his dis-
 possessed father and grandfather and
 gained a principality, and the brilliant
 and gallant governor and the general who
 though he failed at leading in battle brave
 and gallant men at least risked his own life
 too in the failing, to the cultured
 dipsomaniac who sold the last of his patrimony
 not to buy drink but to give one of his
 descendants at least the best chance in
 life he would think of, (p. 13).

The title of "Twilight", which Faulkner wrote on the first page of the manuscript of The Sound and the Fury, seems a pertinent term of description for the state of both the chivalric code and the Compson family as they appear in this novel, suggesting the moment when "the dimmed glory of an eminent past is about to fade into ultimate extinction."¹³ The family's decline perhaps indicates the innate fallacy in attempting to cope with an idealized view of past performances which, in their very idealization, are impossible to emulate and therefore are bound to create disillusionment in those individuals who try to use them as standards for everyday living. Each generation, comparing itself to a distorted image of past generations, cannot help but believe itself lacking the same power and splendour. Unfortunately, if such a belief becomes an obsession, it may create an apathy which, in effect, makes the belief a truth. Or, it can

¹³Millgate, p. 86.

lead to the despair which Quentin shows, and the sense of fatalism which he reveals when he tells Caddy, "There's a curse on us its not our fault" (p. 176).

Quentin's vision of his family shows an awareness of this decline into a shadowy twilight. He sees his mother in terms of "a face reproachful/ tearful/ an odor of camphor and of tears/ a voice weeping steadily and softly behind the twilit door/ the twilight-colored smell of honeysuckle" (p. 114). He also recalls a scene in one of the books in the family library, portraying "a dark place into which a single weak ray of light came slanting upon two faces lifted out of the shadow" (p. 191). For Quentin these two faces were those of his mother and father, turned "upward into weak light holding hands, with the children below even them without a ray of light" (p. 191).

Mr. and Mrs. Compson are both the immediate cause of the darkness in which the children find themselves, and the victims of a greater darkness over which they have no control. Mrs. Compson is, admittedly, a self-pitying, self-centred, hysterical woman whose chronic illness and neuroses conveniently remove her from the necessity of giving love and strength to her children and whose insistence on the social status of her own family, the Bascombs, undermines what strength and unity the Compson family might have. Again and again Quentin

says to himself, "If I only had a mother". One might even say that part of his inability to love others--except in an idealized way--stems from the lack of physical maternal love in his childhood. His mother is, after all, a rather shadowy, dreary figure, associated in his mind with sorrow, sickness and complaint. Her personality seems to have been determined, in part at least, by her disappointment in discovering that her husband is a failure and a drunkard and will never restore the Compson name to the status it at one time had. Perhaps when she married him, he exhibited the potential for emulating the past success of the Compsons. Her expectations have exceeded reality.

Mr. Compson, on the other hand, appears to have been disillusioned by his discovery that the values which he was brought up under and which he sees in the classical world of his "dogeared Horaces and Livys and Catulluses" (p. 8) are no longer to be found in the modern world. Though he counsels Quentin in cynical terms and speaks of the meaninglessness of existence, "it is plain that it was from him that Quentin derived his high notion of the claims of honor."¹⁴ He is a disillusioned idealist who nevertheless still retains certain wistful and ironic

¹⁴Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 336.

vestiges of his lost idealism. Although he talks about the fallibility of women, his reaction to Caddy's promiscuity is apparently such that even Caddy feels that she has led him to want to drink himself to death. Perhaps his cynicism is merely a mask which he wears to hide a sensitivity and despair not unlike Quentin's.

Because of his parents' inability to provide him with either a proper sense of proportion in his adherence to the chivalric code or an admirable example of alternate action in view of the changing times, Quentin is forced to work out his dilemma alone. Ironically, he chooses to follow their example of escape--in his case escape through suicide rather than through chronic illness or alcohol. He escapes the destruction of the chivalric code by time, progress and human fallibility. His tragedy is that he is unable to adapt his moral views to a changing universe and accept human nature as a part of that universe. As one example of the individual's relationship to the precepts of social morality, his case shows the dangers of a too rigid adherence to the past.

Sanctuary¹⁵ has been called William Faulkner's most pessimistic novel. Cleanth Brooks sees it as, among other things, a product of the era in which it was written,¹⁶

¹⁵(Signet Books: New York, 1954), [copyright 1931]. All future page references are also from this edition and will be placed in parentheses after the quotation.

¹⁶William Faulkner, p. 131.

presenting a picture of the sterile modern wasteland where the forces of corruption are those mechanical actions, unnatural passions and ruthless attitudes bred by a society whose system of values has decayed or grown irrelevant. Certainly Popeye, the villain of the piece, could be seen as a symbol of such a society. He himself is impotent and obtains his sexual pleasure through perverted means; his face is described as having a "queer, bloodless quality, as though seen by electric light" (p. 5); his body has the "vicious depthless quality of stamped tin" (p. 5); his eyes are compared to "two knobs of soft black rubber" and his black suit and stiff hat to "a modernistic lampstand" (p. 7); he is afraid of entering the woods at night and panics at the sudden appearance of an owl, as if he feels alien in a natural world. With his "black" smell and his waxen, "dead" pallor he has a distinctly corpse-like connotation. At the same time, his dangling cigaret, tight black suit and pistol suggest the urban gangster of the nineteen-twenties and thirties.¹⁷ His rape of Temple Drake, the contemporary representative of pure white Southern womanhood, could symbolize the modern industrial, amoral society's violation of the

¹⁷ John Lewis Longley, Jr. The Tragic Mask, (University of N. Carolina Press; 1957), p. 143.

chivalric code and the old traditional order from which that code stems.

In The Sound and The Fury, Quentin Compson futilely tries to obstruct and deny such a violation. In Sanctuary the only parallel of this attempt is to be found in that of the idealistic lawyer, Horace Benbow, who also fails to combat the forces destroying the old concepts of honor, justice and decency. However, Horace is an adult, a man in his forties, for whom perhaps the "old" concepts were once viable. There is no young idealistic advocate of the chivalric code--not even one as ineffectual as Quentin. For the young people in the novel the chivalric code has not even the power of an ideal: it has become merely a social pretension, associated with manners of dress and public behavior, with social status and family importance and is no longer adhered to as a personal standard of morality and conduct.

Although he sees himself as a Southern gentleman, Gowan Stevens¹⁸, the young college student escort of Temple Drake, merely exemplifies how distorted that concept has become. He believes that the prime virtue of a Southern gentleman is the ability to hold one's liquor and it is his attempt to prove himself such a gentleman

¹⁸His first name, with its suggestion of "Gawain", might be an ironic comment on the type of knight-like chivalry he exhibits--or fails to exhibit--when it comes to rescuing Temple.

which sets the scene for the incident at the Old Frenchman's Place. He is drunk when he meets Temple at the train; he insists on driving out to the Old Frenchman's Place to get ahold of some of the bootleg liquor which Lee Goodwin sells; once there, despite the fact that he is completely out of his depth with men like Popeye and Goodwin, he continues to drink. When he wakes up after passing out for a second time, he is so overcome with shame at his "ungentlemanly" conduct the night before and his disheveled appearance, that "the prospect of facing Temple again [is] more than he [can] bear" (p. 50) and he deserts her. Ironically, when he writes Narcissa Benbow his flowery, melodramatic letter of goodbye, he speaks of the dishonorable experience which he has been involved in as having injured no one but himself. It is as if, in his egocentric concern over gentlemanly action and public shame, he has forgotten all about Temple's being present. It is no wonder that Horace Benbow, knowing what being a gentleman really involves, mocks the letter, and later, when he finds out just what Gowan was referring to, says bitterly, "Her nice, well-bred young man. Her Virginia gentleman....when I think of people like that walking the earth with impunity just because he had a balloon-tailed suit and went through the astonishing experience of having attended the University of Virginia..." (p. 93). Although well-meaning, Gowan is

much like Gerald Bland in The Sound and The Fury, full of the pretensions of being a gentleman even while denying the truth of that role by his actions.

Temple Drake does not have similar pretensions about her role according to the chivalric code. In fact, unlike Narcissa Benbow, who no doubt sees herself as the image of the dignified white Southern "lady" (and yet acts ruthlessly, selfishly and immorally), Temple at first shows no real attempt to follow such a traditional concept. She is a jazz age flapper, with eyes "cool, predatory and discreet", a "bold painted mouth", a face "dusted with recent powder" and hair in "clotted red curls" under a brimless hat (p. 19). She is on probation at her college for slipping out at night to ride with town boys; she has so many dates that she can not always remember who it is that she is supposed to be going out with. Gowan Stevens angrily tells her that he has seen her name on the wall of a lavatory and accuses her, in far from gallant terms, of playing around all week with "barber-shop jellies" and "any badger-trimmed hick that owns a Ford" (p. 24). Although it appears that her father and four brothers have tried to make her act according to the traditional ways of a lady, she exhibits all the reckless freedom and disregard for convention that is associated with modern women.

Yet, as Cleanth Brooks observes, "Temple's mind is thoroughly conventional"¹⁹, and she is still very much a wide-eyed child, despite her eighteen years and her many dates with boys. To Ruby, Goodwin's common-law wife, she looks "no more than an elongated and leggy infant in her scant dress and uptilted hat" (p. 35). She really knows nothing about evil or the evil impulses in some men: to her such things exist only in books. Although she has had more freedom than that previously permitted to Southern girls, she is ignorant of what real life is like and believes all men must be like the college boys she has dated, all people like those she has met at home and at school. Frightened by the unspoken threat of assault which she senses in the men at the Old Frenchman's Place, she says to Ruby, tremulously, naively, "Things like that dont happen. Do they? They're just like other people. You're just like other people. With a little baby" (p. 33). She cannot understand that she is no longer in a world where she can seek the sanctuary of either family status and protection, or the vestiges of the chivalric code in undergraduate boys who will not take advantage of her coquetry.

¹⁹Brooks, p. 133.

The evil she has stumbled into is something she would never have believed to exist. As Ruby tells her,

"Do you think you're meeting kids now? kids that give a damn whether you like it or not? Let me tell you whose house you've come into without being asked or wanted; who you're expecting to drop everything and carry you back where you had no business ever leaving. When he was a soldier in the Philippines he killed another soldier over one of those nigger women and they sent him to Leavenworth..." (p. 35).

Lee Goodwin is, however, not the most dangerous man at the Old Frenchman's Place: Popeye is there, too, and, despite his impotence, he is paradoxically, the biggest threat to her virginity. Tragically, Temple does not know how to deal with such evil. She tries to gain comfort from the thought that her father is a judge, that her brothers will come to her rescue or somehow protect her honor. In other words, she tries to see herself as an object to be protected, defended, according to the chivalric code. But her very actions destroy her attempts to re-establish herself within the image of the code. She is too well-schooled in the role of the modern girl, and almost automatically resorts to the means she has learned for getting her way with men--a mixture of coquetry and bold derision. First she appeals to Popeye, with a "cringing grimace", to drive Gowan and herself into town. "Be a sport", she says, as if Popeye were simply refusing out of faint spite to play a game. When he calls her a whore, she insults

him: "What river did you fall in and with that suit on? Do you have to shave it off at night?" (pp. 30-31). When this still fails to move him she cries, petulantly, "You mean old thing" (p. 31).

Exhibiting her usual recklessness and excitability, she darts in and out of Goodwin's house like a frightened animal, yet does not seriously try to escape, even when she learns that Gowan has deserted her. She retains a naive faith in her inviolability as a Southern woman: nothing can happen to her in such a position. As she later tells Horace Benbow, she even imagines herself as wearing a chastity belt, or as lying dead in a coffin, dressed in white with a veil like a bride's. Both images suggest an attempt to escape through fantasy the reality of what might happen to her, rather than deal with that reality logically. Yet, at the same time that she is lying on the shuck mattress in a kind of helpless wishful thinking, she is silently urging Popeye angrily to touch her, silently calling him a coward because he is taking such a long time before attacking her. Her reaction at this point is a pathetic mixture of anticipative impatience and horrified aversion.

To say this, however, is not to imply that Temple purposely leads Popeye on and provokes her eventual rape, or that she is ripe for the kind of corruption he

represents.²⁰ Her silent taunting, like her fantasizing, stems from fear. She tells Horace Benbow later that the reason she silently urged Popeye to touch her, rape her, was because she wanted him to get it over with so that she could go to sleep. Sleep, like the images in her fantasies, would be a blissful escape from the frightening reality looming over her. Even having to go through the horror of the rape first, before being allowed to escape, would be better than a drawn-out anticipation of horror.

Her attempting to change herself, through wishful thinking, into a boy, emphasizes this desire to escape. If she were, even subconsciously, desiring the rape, she would hardly indulge in such fantasies. Nor does she stay at the Old Frenchman's Place because of her fascination with the evil that she finds there: she underestimates that evil until it is too late to leave easily, and then is so terrified by the threat of that evil that she is rendered physically unable to save herself. In her fear she helplessly lets Ruby take her to the corn crib, rather than to the edge of the property from where she might be able to find her way to the road; she childishly appeals to the half-wit, Tommy, to protect her by keeping Goodwin and Popeye from the barn. If wishing could remove her from the place, she would be gone immediately. Unfortunately, some

²⁰As, for example, John Lewis Longley, Jr. declares in The Tragic Mask, p. 143.

kind of intelligent, clear-headed action is needed, and Temple is singularly unable to take such action. All her upbringing and experience have ill-prepared her for this kind of circumstance. Perhaps to the very last moment she half believes that something so dreadful as rape cannot happen to her; that someone or some form of luck, justice or morality will protect her, save her. As she is being brutally raped by Popeye, she screams out accusingly to the blind, senile old man sitting nearby, who is oblivious to what is happening to her. It is as if she momentarily sees him as a symbol of the blind justice who allows such outrages to occur, or as a symbol of her own previous blind hopes of inviolability and rescue, which kept her from following instinctive urges to run away. "Something is happening to me!....I told you it was going to!...I told you! I told you all the time!" (p. 59) she cries, shocked that such a thing could really be happening to her--that the chaste temple of her body and her inviolable womanhood could actually be violated in this manner.

The unnaturalness of this act is emphasized later, in the passage where Temple is riding into Memphis with Popeye. Faulkner links, in one paragraph, the picture of the "soft radiance of May", the flowering of dogwood, lilac, wisteria and bougainvillea, with Temple's state as she sits beside Popeye, still bleeding from her recent rape.

It is as if her own instinctive sense of the paradox between the promise of Spring and the regeneration which that season implies--as well as the promise of her own youth--and the corruption and death she is being drawn into, causes her to scream as she stares "vacantly and stupidly at the rushing road-side" (p. 78).²¹

Significantly, when Temple does momentarily escape from Popeye's car at the filling station, she runs to hide behind a "greasy barrel half full of scraps of metal and rubber" (p. 79), rather than seeking help from any of the people around, and is of course found there by Popeye. The mechanic who shows Popeye where she is, the barrel and Popeye himself are parts of the modern world from which, it would appear, there is no escape. Temple is no more successful in trying to hide in such a world than she was in belatedly trying to find protection in the sanctuary of the chivalric code.

She is not, however, running away from Popeye, but from the eyes of a passing boy from school. This action seems to suggest her sense of shame before the eyes of society. If, according to the chivalric code, a woman's

²¹ This scene is echoed later when Horace Benbow, broken and weeping after his confrontation with evil, in the courtroom, says of the Spring he is driving through, "It does last...Spring does. You'd almost think there was some purpose to it" (p. 165). As in Eliot's poem, for the inhabitants of the modern wasteland Spring brings no fertility but only pain .

value and honor are tied up in her state of chastity, then Temple is a "fallen woman", dishonored, irrevocably beyond any claims she might have made for belonging to the code. It is Temple's belief that she is "ruined" which is responsible for her subsequent behavior at Miss Reba's brothel: she feels that if she is already debased in the eyes of society, nothing she can do now can damn her any further. In fact, perhaps she feels that the most suitable place for a fallen woman is in a brothel; that, despite the fact that she was not responsible for her "ruin", she is now no different from any of the prostitutes at that brothel, except in the small matter of degree of sinfulness. Temple shows the same cringing shame when she confronts her father and brothers at the end of her testimony in court. Knowing that they see women in terms of the image of the code, she expects them to feel towards her the way they might feel towards any prostitute. At that point she is perhaps more justified in her sense of shame: she spent time in the brothel, has brought about the death of Red, and has lied on the witness stand to protect her seducer, Popeye. Earlier, however, before arriving at the brothel, it is only her acute awareness of her debased position in relation to the chivalric code which causes her sense of shame. She crouches behind the barrel of metallic refuse as if instinctively associating herself with its contents seeing

herself as something rejected by decent society, rendered valueless and "trashy" according to its moral standards. All that is left to her is the appearance of decorum: she combs her hair and fixes her makeup; she worries about the fact that there is blood on her coat. Her concern over appearances at such a time is much like that which Gowan Stevens exhibited earlier, showing that she too has confused the physical appearance or embodiment of honor with the Platonic ideal. After all, if she did not see honor as residing in a woman's physical state of chastity and therefore lost forever when that state is physically changed, she would realize that she is no more sinful or dishonored now than she was before her rape.

Yet it is not only she who feels this way. She is a victim of a society which, true to her interpretation of it, often confuses decorum with honor, a physical state with a moral state. Horace Benbow, hearing her account of her rape, thinks that it would be better for her if she were dead; the District Attorney speaks of her as a "ruined" child. Narcissa Benbow, in her treatment of Ruby Goodwin, best exemplifies the attitude which sees only the superficial aspects of a human being's relationship to social codes: since Ruby is only Goodwin's common-law wife, since she was once a prostitute, she is therefore not worthy of the sympathy and understanding of "decent" people, but is seen as a kind of affront to society,

something distasteful which should be swept out of sight as soon as possible.

Like Caddy Compson in The Sound and The Fury, Temple's own sense of being ruined leads her to act that part. At the brothel she drinks great quantities of hard liquor, smokes incessantly, drenches herself with expensive perfume, and dresses in a "spurious Chinese robe splotted with gold dragons and jade and scarlet flowers" (p. 130), like the concubine of an eastern emperor. All her conscious actions become part of the role of harlot. When she appears in court she is dressed in the tawdry fashion of the kind of woman she feels herself to be:

From beneath her black hat her hair escaped in tight red curls like clots of resin. The hat bore a rhinestone ornament. Upon her black satin lap lay a platinum bag. Her pale tan coat was open upon a shoulder knot of purple....her two motionless slippers with their glittering buckles lay on their sides as though empty. Above the ranked intent faces...she sat in an attitude at once detached and cringing, her gaze fixed on something at the back of the room. Her face was quite pale, the two spots of rouge like paper discs pasted on her cheek bones, her mouth painted into a savage and perfect bow, also like something both symbolical and cryptic cut carefully from purple paper and pasted there (pp. 160-161; *italics mine*).²²

²²The emphasis on the metallic quality of her clothes here might also suggest that she has come under the influence of the modern world (as it negativistically associated with metals in the description of Popeye).

The words "cringing" and "detached" best reveal her attitude to her situation, before and at the trial. In the car on the way to the brothel, she cringes from the eyes of passing people and from Popeye's touch, yet for the most part has the look of a sleepwalker, vague and stupid. She cringes and writhes away from Popeye at the brothel, and from the doctor who comes to examine her, yet she recounts the story of her rape to Horace Benbow in a "bright, chatty" tone of voice, with an "impersonal" vanity. The cringing comes from her fear and her shame; the air of detachment from her own feelings of shocked, stunned disbelief that such a thing has really happened to her. She seems to vacillate between the two states and at times, as the above passage suggests, exist in the two states at once.

The truth of the matter is, of course, that these two attitudes are both part of the same desire to escape the horror of her situation. One is an actual, physical drawing away from it; the other is a mental or psychological dissociation. In some instances--for example, her drunkenness, frenzied dancing, and obsessive passion for Red, at the roadhouse--the two approaches seem to merge as Temple attempts to lose herself and her awareness of guilt in some form of action which will obliterate the pain of conscious thought.

This attempt to escape reality perhaps explains Temple's lying on the witness stand. She first tries to avoid answering, and then, as she begins to answer, she tries to avoid looking into the District Attorney's eyes. When this fails, she fantasizes, as she has done before, as if believing that by putting Goodwin into the role of her assaulter she can annihilate all that which followed with Popeye and Red, and remove her own sense of guilt about Red's death as well. Just as she was earlier able to sound to Horace Benbow almost as if she were recounting a story about someone else, she now has reached the point where even the details of that story can be distorted. As Michael Millgate points out, there is no real indication, in Faulkner's presentation of her testimony, that she tells the court of her stay in the brothel.²³ Perhaps she is encouraged by the District Attorney's placing her in the position of a victim, and feels that to admit only to the rape will also restore her to the protectiveness of her family and society as a whole. For, ironically, although the adherents to the chivalric code may see Temple as irreparably ruined by a violation

²³The Achievement of William Faulkner, pp.316-317. Millgate goes on to say, however, that Temple has been corrupted by Popeye, and encouraged to lie by her father, who doesn't want anymore scandal--a view with which I do not agree.

to her womanhood, they can also become most aware of the sanctity of womanhood in view of such a violation, and claim her back again, ruined or not, as a symbol of Pure and Sacred Womanhood defiled by a human agent of evil.²⁴

The District Attorney is also aware of this aspect of the chivalric code, and uses it to achieve Goodwin's conviction. Whether or not he is aware of the actual truth of Temple's situation, he speaks in terms of moral outrage about her violation and the terrible wrong done to her, appealing to the "good" men, the fathers and husbands on the jury and in the court, to see her as a "ruined, defenseless child" (p. 163), whose assaulter should not merely be hung, but should be subjected to "a bonfire of gasoline" (p. 160).

True to his suggestion, the townsmen rally to act according to their sense of moral outrage against the chivalric code. They burn Goodwin before he can be hung, despite Horace Benbow's attempts to clear him. And Temple is reclaimed by her father and four brothers, even before the trial is over. The reader's last sight of her in Sanctuary is in the Luxembourg Gardens. Her father has

²⁴A similar reaction is seen in "Dry September", when the townsmen, who have previously had little interest in Miss Minnie Cooper, react to her with a new respect once it is rumored that she has been raped by a Negro, and swiftly, irrationally, go about avenging her honor by killing the Negro.

apparently taken her away to Europe, to remove her physically from the shame and scandal of the whole incident she has been a part of.

Yet her face, in the mirror of her compact, is "sullen and discontented and sad" (p. 178). She is being forced back into the appearance of decorum which she once flaunted as a reckless college student, and the role does not suit her. This fact accounts for her boredom and restlessness, her sullen expression. Her sadness, however, may indicate that she is discovering that even physical escape cannot remove the memory of guilt. As Requiem for a Nun illustrates, she will continue to see herself as a ruined woman in the terms of the chivalric code and will continue to carry out those actions which she sees such a role to imply, even after her marriage to Gowan Stevens. It will take a great shock--the murder of one of her children--to shock her into awareness of what she is doing: that in attempting to escape guilt by embracing it, she is destroying herself and the lives of those around her. And at that time she will try so hard to face reality that she will credit to herself a depravity and inclination to corruption which, according to Sanctuary, she did not really have.

Faulkner seems to be suggesting in Sanctuary the destructive possibilities which the chivalric code can have on those who see themselves so strongly in relation-

ship to its standards that escape or fantasy become the only alternatives to their situation. If The Sound and The Fury and Sanctuary were the only statements of Faulkner's view of the chivalric code in the twentieth century, the reader could indeed conclude that the code was no longer relevant to modern society, and that those incidents of its appearance only proved its deterioration and destructiveness. As the Reivers shows, however, such a conclusion must be qualified by Faulkner's later thoughts on the matter.

In both Sanctuary and The Sound and The Fury, the chivalric code is seen as under assault by the forces of progress and modernity. Part of its irrelevance to the modern world stems from its seeming to belong to an old order which appears to be dying out because of an inability to change with the times. Adherence to the code, as Quentin Compson's case suggests, is therefore apt to be defensive, a desperate clinging to values which can not survive in a world which no longer considers them important, even as ideals.

In The Reivers,²⁵ the dichotomy between progress and tradition is no longer as apparent. In fact, the suggestion seems to be that the two need not be mutually exclusive,

²⁵(New York: Random House, 1962). All future page references are to this edition and will be placed in parentheses after each quotation.

but can co-exist: that the individual can move with the times even while retaining a respect for and adherence to traditional values.

Such an approach to progress is perhaps most obvious in the buying of the automobile by "Boss" Priest, the grandfather of the young protagonist of the novel. The old man is a representative of the old order: it is from him that young Lucius has learned his gentlemanly conduct and moral values.²⁶ He is not at all a progressive in his thinking especially so far as the modern world is concerned but believes, according to Lucius, that the motor vehicle is "an insolvent phenomenon like last night's toadstool which, like the fungus, will vanish with tomorrow's sun" (p. 25). Nevertheless, he buys an automobile, and although he does so in order to thwart Colonel Sartoris, the president of a rival, upstart bank in town, who has forced the town council to pass a law forbidding automobiles within the city limits, he makes a regular habit of riding in it, not to show his defiance of Colonel Sartoris but because he is "interested in teams,

²⁶His name would almost lead one to see him as similar to the head priest of a spiritual order. He is, indeed, the main spokesman for the chivalric code in the story and it is he who hears Lucius' confession of sins after the boy has returned from Memphis. Since the Priest family does not appear in any earlier works about the McCaslin-Edmonds-Beauchamp clan, Faulkner might have used the name in order to emphasize that Lucius and his grandfather are representatives of the better aspects of the code: that in them the code is untainted and has been passed down from elder to child as a kind of sacred ritual.

vehicles" and is "a far-sighted man, a man capable of vision" (p. 38). Despite his own feelings about the automobile, he is willing to grant that there will someday be other such vehicles in Jefferson--although he hopefully projects this time to ten or fifteen years in the future--and he predicts that in twenty-five years all the roads in the county will be suitable for automobiles.

In other words, although he is certainly conservative, he is not reactionary. He might move begrudgingly with the times, but he does not have a cynical or despairing attitude towards elements of change. He is able to assimilate change into his pattern of existence and accept the real world which is subject to the laws of change. This aspect of his character is important to keep in mind, for as well as having helped in teaching Lucius to follow the traditional code of a gentleman, he has apparently presented the boy with a positive example of the ability to accept the real world for what it is, even though it frequently falls short of one's ideals.

Perhaps more than in the case of the automobile, this ability is exhibited near the end of the novel, when Grandfather Priest meets Miss Reba, the madame of a Memphis brothel, and treats her as courteously as he would any lady. In Lucius the ability is revealed by his reactions to the world encountered during his stay in Memphis with Boon Hoggenbeck and Ned McCaslin. Although the boy

becomes temporarily disillusioned by his elders' failure to keep promises or act with the proper decorum, he is able to not only take everything in his stride, but to retain his own principles and resist the forces of corruption.

At the time of the trip to Memphis, Lucius is only eleven, but already he has a clear idea of what constitutes good and evil. "Borrowing" his grandfather's car in itself is a sin, and he sees himself as a follower of the goddess of Non-Virtue as soon as he begins to work out a plan in his mind for getting away from Jefferson without arousing his relatives' suspicions. He feels that Non-Virtue makes it too easy for him to lie to his family about where he will be for the next four days: his own feeble soul has little chance against the "incredible matchless capacity for invention and imagination" which his impulses for misbehavior give him. Despite all the worry which he causes his family, it is this lying about his intentions which he feels sorriest for when he returns to Jefferson four days later. He has broken his promise to his mother to help his aunt with the other children and he has lied; and since a gentleman does not break his word or lie, he expects and even desires punishment for such sins. The reader may smile at this sentiment, but it is an indication of the strength of Lucius' moral training, and shows that his is not merely a code of social gestures but represents a much deeper sense of duty to oneself and others.

Lucius' trip to Memphis provides him with a valuable, although at times unpleasant, series of lessons. He learns his first lesson before he has even left Jefferson: that he has within himself a capacity to sin, that his innocence is no shield against impulses to do wrong, and that the world provides no assistance for him in resisting such impulses but willingly accepts his lies. In other words, he discovers that he is completely on his own and personally responsible for his own soul; no longer will his good behavior be determined mainly by the dictates and assurances of his parents. Such a realization not only prepares him for what he will encounter in Memphis, but is a step towards moral maturity.

The main lesson he learns, however, is that there is a world which lies outside his code of moral behavior. In his innocence, he at first does not know this, and Boon Hogganbeck does little to prepare him for such a discovery, short of telling him, as they get washed in a room upstairs in Miss Reba's brothel, that he will be able to handle anything he meets, and that there is "nothing you will ever learn that the day wont come when you'll need it or find use for it" (p. 194). Believing that the brothel is the boarding house which Boon has claimed it to be, Lucius politely bows to Miss Reba, and to Mr. Binford, the "landlord" of the establishment. Almost at once, however, he begins to see the differences between

these people and those he is accustomed to. Miss Reba, for example, has hair that is "too red", wears the biggest yellowish-colored diamonds he has ever seen, paints her face with make-up in an age when ladies did not do so, and swears like a man. Mr. Binford, despite his gentlemanly appearance, speaks unchivalrously to the two "ladies" at the dinner table, calling them bitches. And the women themselves have something "wrong" about them. As Lucius says of the older one:

It wasn't that she was old, like Grandmother is old, because she wasn't. She was alone. It was just that she shouldn't have had to be here, alone, to have to go through this. No, that's wrong too. It's that nobody should ever have to be that alone, nobody, not ever (p. 110).

Nevertheless, these people do not particularly impress upon him any real sense of immorality, and are not agents of corruption. In fact, Miss Reba, and Miss Corrie, Boon's mistress, make an unsuccessful effort to control Mr. Binford's language for Lucius' sake. Both women are impressed and even a bit awed by the boy's polite manner; it is as if he reminds them of a way of life they had almost forgotten existed.

If anything, Lucius influences their attitudes and conduct. When Boon tries to fondle Miss Corrie publicly as he no doubt has always done, she is too aware of Lucius' presence to respond accordingly. Lucius notes that she does not even look at Boon, but looks at him,

Boon's hand dropping and already gripping one cheek of her bottom, in sight of us all, she straining back and looking at me again with something dark and beseeching in her eyes--shame, grief, I don't know what--while the blood rushed slowly into her big girl's face that was not really plain at all except at first. But only a moment. She was still going to be a lady. She even struggled like a lady....

"Ain't you ashamed of yourself", she said (p. 132).

Of course, Lucius does not consciously influence Miss Corrie. Part of the effect he has on her and on Miss Reba stems from his innocent assumption that they are both worthy of respect--an assumption as much based on ignorance as on an upbringing which has taught him to treat all ladies with respect and has neglected to mention that all women are not ladies. Nevertheless, by innocently treating Miss Corrie as if she were a lady, he causes her to want to act like one, if only to prevent disillusioning him. At the same time, Lucius represents a standard of conduct which she respects and recognizes as proper, despite her professional indiscretions. When she later vows to him that she will stop being a prostitute it is because she is determined to prove that his innocent, mistaken defining of her character is at least a prophesy, and not just a quixotic piece of folly. The virtue of the chivalric code would seem to be, therefore, that it sets a standard for human aspiration. It may not describe human beings the way they are, but in describing them the way they might be it can, as Faulkner puts it, cause the human heart to "believe in itself, believe in its

capacity to aspire, to be better than it is, might be".²⁷

Strangely enough, the most immoral person Lucius encounters is Otis, the young nephew of Miss Corrie, whom she has brought in from a farm in Arkansas with the hopes that he will learn some refinement in the city. What he shows, however, is that refinement cannot be learned as readily as evil can, and that the kind of "refinement" which Lucius exhibits is something much deeper than a brief stay in the city could ever instill. Otis is completely without moral scruples and is quick to incorporate the most corrupt aspects of city life into his view of the world. His biggest discovery seems to have been that money is the basis of all human relationships. So sure is he of this that he is actually surprised to find that there are policemen who will offer assistance without needing to be bribed first. He himself always holds out for a monetary payment before doing something, and sees people only in terms of what he can get from them. To him, Memphis is full of money-making possibilities, and he regrets only his inability to get some of that money himself. He regards his own previous state of innocence as time wasted in ignorance. As he says,

²⁷Faulkner in the University, Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds. (New York: Random House, 1965) p. 78.

"When I think of all them years I spent over there on that durn farm in Arkansas with Memphis right here across the river and I never even knowed it. How if I had just knowed when I was four or five years old what I had to wait until just last year to find out about, sometimes I just want to give up and quit. But I reckon I wont. I reckon maybe I can make it up" (pp.142-143).

How he has gotten this way is questionable. Certainly the adults he has observed in Memphis have not set him a particularly good example, and in their paying him to do things for them have corrupted him into expecting payment for what he would otherwise have done for free. However, it is not their fault alone. As his account of the peephole business in Arkansas reveals, Otis has been without a proper sense of values for years: his stay in Memphis has simply broadened the horizons for his corruption. In any case, it is interesting to contrast him with Lucius. Both boys stay in Memphis for a short time, but Lucius manages to return home having learned something of the world without having been corrupted. The knowledge he has acquired has cost him his innocence. He says of himself, "I knew too much, had seen too much. I was a child no longer now; innocence and childhood were forever lost, forever gone from me" (p. 175). Yet this has been a step toward manhood, not immorality. As his feelings of guilt upon returning home show, he is still very much aware of right and wrong, and still is most concerned with that "wrong" which involves the chivalric code. Perhaps the

difference between the reactions of the two boys to the evil aspects of life lies in their difference in moral training. With no such training, Otis' loss of innocence has left a moral vacuum into which the most readily accessible "values" rushed. Lucius, on the other hand, has a moral context in which to place the new knowledge he has gained; his instilled sense of values and attitudes form a strong counter-force to the forces of corruption.

Lucius feels from the start that there is something wrong with Otis: without realizing it, he sense the disparity between his own innocence and Otis' worldliness. Yet, lying in bed with Otis that night, he begins to feel that something is wrong with him because he is unaware of some vitally important but horrible piece of knowledge which Otis possesses and which he too must inevitably gain:

It was like I didn't know what it was yet: only that there was something wrong and in a minute now I would know what and I would hate it; and suddenly I didn't want to be there at all, I didn't want to be in Memphis or ever to have heard of Memphis: I wanted to be at home (p. 154).

Although dreading this knowledge, he is irresistably drawn toward it and hates himself for feeling this way.

When he hears the story of how Miss Corrie--whose real name is Everbe--was initiated into prostitution as a child, and of how people paid to watch this debasement through a peephole which Otis devised, he is horrified,

not so much by learning the truth about Everbe as by learning of the depths of callousness to which human beings can sink:

I was hitting, clawing, kicking not only at one wizened ten-year-old boy, but at Otis and the procuress both: the demon child who debased her privacy and the witch who debauched her innocence--one flesh to bruise and burst, one set of nerves to wrench and anguish; more: not just those two, but all who had participated in her debasement: not only the two panders, but the insensitive blackguard children and the brutal and shameless men who paid their pennies to watch her defenseless and undefended and unavenged degradation (p. 157).

His disillusionment is relieved slightly by Everbe's promise, directly after the fight, to give up being a prostitute.

Then I had been asleep, it was Miss Corrie this time, kneeling beside the mattress....
 "I made Otis tell me", she said.
 "You fought because of me. I've had people--drunks--fighting over me, but you're the first one ever fought for me. I aint used to it, you see. That's why I dont know what to do about it. Except one thing. I can do that. I want to make you a promise. Back there in Arkansas it was my fault. But it wont be my fault any more" (pp. 159-160).

This promise and her obvious desire for repentance somewhat restores to him a world where individuals abide by vows of intention and feel guilt about past sins. However, the next day, when he sees her newly re-instated virtue under threat by both Boon and Butch, the crude deputy sheriff, he senses that he can no longer rest his idealism on a faith in human strength of character. He knows his own inability to resist Non-Virtue, and fears for Everbe:

But I was more than afraid. I was ashamed that such a reason for fearing...existed; hating it all, hating all of us for being the poor frail victims of being alive, having to be alive....just as I had hated Otis for telling me about Everbe in Arkansas and hated Everbe for being that helpless lodestar for human debasement which he told me about and hated myself for listening, having to hear about it, learn about it; hating that such not only was, but must be had to be if living was to continue and mankind be a part of it (p. 174).

At this point his circumstances are much like those of Quentin Compson, in that he is faced with the knowledge of sex and must somehow cope with the fact that people are not perfect like the ideals he believes in. But unlike Quentin, Lucius is able to accept this knowledge, partially because, unlike Quentin, he is kept moving so fast during the next few days that he has little time to brood. Partially, however, it is because he is a much more practical young person than Quentin and comes from a much more normal family. Having been surrounded by rather decent, average people all his life, he cannot become convinced that all people are evil simply on the basis of discovering that a few are this way. Also, his age is such that he is not really personally involved in his newly acquired knowledge of sex. What horrifies him is the insensitivity of Everbe's corruptors, and not necessarily the sexual act itself. Later, when he learns that Everbe has broken her vow to him and given herself sexually to Butch, he is disillusioned because she has

broken a vow, not because she has committed any kind of immoral action. In other words, what offends and disillusion him most are those actions which do not correspond to the chivalric code he holds as an ideal. Quentin, however, seems to be disgusted by the sexual act itself, as his thoughts show when he juxtaposes the idea of Caddy and Dalton Ames making love with the idea of swine running coupled into the sea.

It is important that Lucius learn just where his code of behavior has its limits, and it is this which Everbe's breaking of her vow teaches him, for Everbe does so out of her love for Boon and her desire to help him. In other words, love takes precedence over propriety. And that love is not always the type which fits into the chivalric concepts. For example, Lucius does not understand that Boon has struck Everbe out of jealousy and love: to Lucius such an act is against the code which sees woman as a creature worthy of one's protection and respect. Like Quentin, Lucius goes in search of honorable vengeance. He finds Boon and fights him, crying in "anguish, rage, outrage, grief" while he swings wildly and ineffectually at the big man. At this time, Ned McCaslin gives him a piece of practical philosophy which helps him:

"Hitting a woman dont hurt her because a woman dont shove back at a lick like a man do; she just gives to it and then when your back is turned, reaches for the flat-iron or the butcher knife.

That's why hitting them dont break nothing; all it does is just black her eye or cut her mouf a little. And that aint nothing to a woman. Because why? Because what better sight than a black eye or a cut mouf can a woman want from a man that he got her on his mind?" (p. 263).

Such a philosophy may apply only to the class of people Lucius is encountering in Memphis, but it is necessary that he learn this, and not demand people who have no adherence to the chivalric code to still live by its dictates. He is also saved from too much disillusionment by his own sense of loyalty to Ned. Much as he would like to go home now in his despair and disappointment, he feels that he cannot let Ned down, but must remain to race the horse for which Ned has exchanged Grandfather Priests' car. If his disillusionment has been the result of his idealism, it is nevertheless his idealism--in this case his loyalty to Ned--which moderates that disillusionment, for in remaining, Lucius becomes involved in the race and can temporarily forget his unhappiness.

When he returns home after his experiences in Memphis, Lucius expects to be punished, but both he and his father realize that simply whipping him would be wrong. Whipping is for children; Lucius is now on the threshold of manhood. As Lucius recalls the incident,

If after all the lying and deceiving and disobeying and conniving I had done, all he could do about it was to ship me, then Father was not good

enough for me. And if all that I had done was balanced by no more than that shaving strap, then both of us were debased (p. 301).

What his grandfather offers him is not a punishment, but a mature way of facing one's guilt. Lucius must learn to live with his newly acquired knowledge about life and about himself. As Grandfather Priest tells him this, he also re-defines what a gentleman is:

"A gentleman can live through anything. He faces anything. A gentleman accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences, even when he did not himself instigate them but only acquiesced to them, didn't say No though he knew he should" (p. 302).

Such a definition removes the word "gentleman" from its unfortunate modern connotations of social gesturing, obsessive idealism or effeminate fastidiousness. It combines the practical with the ideal, manly fortitude with strength of character. As such, it is part of a concept which can withstand whatever the changing times might bring.

Faulkner himself has said that the hope for the modern South lies in the fact that, although people like the Snopeses will breed and succeed in an industrial society, "there will be something left of the old cavalier spirit that will appear, that does appear....people who believe in simple honor for the sake of honor, and honesty for the

sake of honesty".²⁸ Lucius Priest is the embodiment of such a view. His innocence and idealism not only look backward to the traditions of the past, but affirm the value of a viable tradition in the present, despite the negative forces which threaten to strip society of its values.

²⁸Faulkner in the University, p. 80.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

After examining the instances in Faulkner's fiction where young people confront the codes of their society, can one say that, true to the quotation which began this paper, these children always "act on the circumstances" of a situation rather than on the rules or codes governing it? The answer is no, if by "act on the circumstances" one means act outside the rules, in the sense of being exempt from their demands and restrictions. The child cannot escape the effect of the codes on his life. He is molded by them from birth, acquiring knowledge of them and respect for them through a kind of osmosis as well as through his elders' instruction. He accepts them unconsciously, as he accepts most other aspects of the world around him, and seldom doubts their validity. The moment of confrontation generally occurs when the child suddenly discovers that his own personal experience, or his innate and as yet uncorrupted sense of what is morally right, appears to contradict what the codes dictate as truth. It is a moment of conflict between the individual emotion of perception and a code which is quite often made up of illogical concepts that in themselves bear little resemblance to reality. If the child decides to follow his own instincts about the situation at hand, he does so in full awareness of his deviation from the usual pattern

of behavior and undergoes a great sense of anguish as a result. His "acting on the circumstances" is, in other words, really a reaction against the rules, rather than merely a spontaneous action oblivious of any other approach.

Moreover, not all of Faulkner's children do "act on the circumstances". Quentin Compson is so unable to accept those circumstances concerning his sister which deny the validity of the chivalric concepts he holds that he kills himself. Joe Christmas not only accepts and acts upon the rules of the religious code, but also demands that others follow them, too, in their treatment of him. Because in terms of that code he is sinful, he expects punishment from his society. He cannot understand or accept the circumstances where the women he sleeps with are not concerned about his Negro blood and are interested in him only as a sexual partner. In fact, if one considers the ten young people who have been discussed in this paper, it becomes evident that six of them--Quentin, Joe, Gowan Stevens, Temple Drake, Roth Edmonds, and Lucius Priest--act on the rules of the code rather than on the circumstances in which they find themselves.

However, one cannot conclude that the quotation from Intruder in the Dust is therefore entirely false. Significantly, the children who, follow the codes, for one reason or another, suffer as a result. Gowan is

ridiculed; Lulus is disillusioned; Roth feels anguish and guilt; Temple is raped; Quentin becomes insane and commits suicide; Joe is mutilated and murdered. The children who act on their own impulses do not escape some anguish and guilt from breaking with tradition, but there is always some suggestion in the story that they achieve peace of mind, even though in Isaac McCaslin's case this peace of mind is later shattered by his realization of how much he still adheres to the code he once tried to abrogate. Apparently a too rigid adherence to or reliance on the codes is seen by Faulkner as dangerous and at times even fatal. What he seems to be implying is not that children, by their very nature as young and somewhat innocent, are automatically going to act outside the rules of their society, but that it is still possible for the child to do so, provided he has the strength of character and has not been conditioned to do otherwise. He is, in any case, freer than the adult, who, having once encountered a similar confrontation, has now settled down to live with the choice he made and has little hope of ever again feeling called upon to change his mind.

The individual who attempts to cut himself away from his society completely is not the ideal. Isaac McCaslin shows how ultimately impossible such an attempt is. Quentin Compson's suicide is only a more tragic example

of the same type of extremism, even though the reason for his "withdrawal" is different from Ike's. The fate of each of these individuals shows that there is something inherently wrong with his reaction to the conflict he has encountered.

Faulkner himself has divided some of his heroes into groups according to reactions, and expressed what he feels to be the most positive reaction:

There seem to be three stages: The first says, This is rotten, I'll have no part of it, I will take death first. The second says, This is rotten, I don't like it, I can't do anything about it but at least I will not participate in it myself; I will go off into a cave or climb a pillar to sit on. The third says, This stinks and I'm going to do something about it....What we need are people who will say, This is bad and I'm going to do something about it; I'm going to change it.¹

Obviously Quentin Compson fits the first category or "stage", Ike McCaslin the second, and Bayard Sartoris, Sarty Snopes and Chick Mallison the third. Faulkner does not mention at this point two other positions which the individual may take: he may say, "This is rotten, but I can't do anything about it", and continue to follow the status quo, as Roth Edmonds does, or he may not be aware that he actually has the ability to choose his position, even though he is aware that the situation is unpleasant or horrible. The latter category would suit, in varying degrees of appropriateness,

¹Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., Faulkner in The University (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 246.

Joe Christmas, Temple Drake, Gowan Stevens and Lucius Priest. Of these four, Joe and Temple seem rather helpless in their dilemmas, both caught in worlds to which they feel alien, both victimized not only by that world but also by their own ignorant following of the codes by which they have been conditioned. Gowan Stevens is ignorant even of the need to change things; Lucius exerts change without really choosing to do so, because his innocence prevents him from realizing the effect he has on others.

What emerges from such a categorization--and perhaps justifies it--is the discovery that Faulkner's young protagonists have, for the most part, the opportunity and ability to choose, to exercise some measure of free will in approaching their situations. Faulkner may feel that free will "functions against a Greek background of fate",² and may show certain of his heroes in particular acting according to a sense of doom or determinism, but these cases are not so frequent as many of Faulkner's earlier critics would have one believe. And the suggestion is that each adult has had, at some time in his childhood, the same moment of choice regarding his relationship to the codes of his society. To that moment he has brought a degree of conditioning experienced as a very young

²Faulkner in the University, p. 38. He goes on to say that sometimes fate leaves man alone, but that man can "never depend on that. However, man "always has the right to free will and we hope the courage to die for his choice".

child, and, after that moment, the factors engendered by his choice may have swept him along in an apparently fatalistic fashion, but even this amount of determinism does not mean that the individual is completely helpless under the inevitability of some pre-ordained destiny. Temple Drake, for example, is able to achieve salvation in Requiem for a Nun, years after her experiences with Popeye.

Perhaps the best metaphor to describe the situation of free will-in-fate which Faulkner presents is that used by Robert Frost in his poem "The Road Not Taken". One comes to a place where the road of life separates into several different roads and a choice is necessary, even though it is impossible to know at that time where each road might lead. Theoretically, one could come back and take another road later but, as Frost says, "knowing how way leads on to way", it is doubtful that this will happen: in one's own sense of having come so far one way there is a kind of determinism, even while the ability to use free will is still present. Joe Christmas feels, as he is running and hiding after having killed Joanna Burden, that he has been on the same road for thirty years, a road which has "made a circle" and brought him back to where he started. Yet he chooses to leave the woods where he has been hiding and get back onto the paved road leading to town; he has deliberately gotten a ride

into town in a passing wagon, even though he knows that he will be captured when someone in town recognizes him. He chooses to let the road take him to the destiny he expects and now is willing to accept.

In the "inheriting" of the social codes there is, of course, a certain sense of fate at work. The child has no choice in that matter. In Absalom, Absalom! Quentin Compson appears in many ways to be representative of all the young protagonists in Faulkner's writing who, by being born in the South, fall heir to its history, its attitudes, its forces. He is rather unwillingly introduced to the story of Thomas Sutpen, and sits through Rosa Coldfield's long narration only out of respect for her. He fails to see why she has picked him to listen to the story; after all, he is no relation to Sutpen nor to her and the incidents she describes happened long before his birth, in the time of his grandfather. His father suggests that Miss Coldfield has chosen Quentin because his grandfather was "the nearest thing to a friend Sutpen ever had" and in a way helped Sutpen to become established in the county. "So maybe she considers you partly responsible through heredity for what happened to her and her family through him", he declares (p. 13).

Whatever the reason, Quentin finds himself becoming drawn into the story of Sutpen, and by the end of the novel he is obsessively preoccupied with the piecing

together of the whole pattern of Sutpen's rise and fall.. The story has taken on a larger significance for him; its implications touch him, follow him even to his room at Harvard. It is not only that the past is extending into the present to haunt him, but also that he sees the same conditions that created and destroyed Sutpen's dream as still existing in his own time and having direct bearing on his own situation. In effect, Sutpen's story is that of the South itself, embodying its hopes, weaknesses and failures. Quentin, as a young Southerner, is heir to all these aspects of the South and "responsible through heredity" of this kind, as well as of the kind his father suggests, for a past in which he played no part.

This sense of the past's influenceing the present may be oppressive, but it provides man with a rich context. As Faulkner has said,

no man is himself; he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as "was" because the past is. It is a part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his and her ancestry, background, is all a part of himself and herself at any moment. And so a man, a character in a story, at any moment of action is not just himself as he is then; he is all that made him...³

By putting his young protagonists in conflict with social

³Faulkner in the University, p. 84.

codes which stem from the past, Faulkner not only shows various approaches to the problem of man's place in society, but also indicates what man's relationship should be to the past, to tradition. Man does not "prevail" by total rebellion. He does so by acting decisively, morally and individualistically within the context of his society and its moral codes, acting in such a way as to satisfy its demands and those of his own conscience. In the examples of Bayard Sartoris and Chick Mallison there is some measure of triumph on both the individual and social levels because such a compromise has been achieved.

At the same time, his young protagonists are involved in a process of trying to understand their society and what they themselves feel about it. Quentin Compson's outcry, in Absalom, Absalom! of "I dont hate it! I dont!" shows the same kind of ambivalence which Chick Mallison appears to feel towards the South. Both boys love the South because they are so much a part of it, yet feel a definite hostility towards various aspects of that land. Quentin never seems to reach a full understanding of the South, and cannot resolve his confused feelings about it. Chick is more successful.

The process of Chick's understanding might mirror Faulkner's own. While it is true that nearly all of Faulkner's novels show to some degree, an affirmation of life and of man's ability to prevail, the novels before

1938 appear to delegate those characters who represent these positive qualities to minor or secondary roles. So the positive force of Dilsey is outweighed by the negative or gloomy forces of Benjy and Quentin in The Sound and the Fury, and Lena Grove takes a secondary position to that of Joe Christmas in Light in August. After 1938, however, books such as The Unvanquished, Intruder in The Dust, Requiem for a Nun, and The Reivers exhibit a conscious effort to present the "old verities" which he spoke of in his Nobel prize speech in 1950, and show the individual reaching a positive resolution to his conflict with society, its codes, and his own personality. That three of these books have children as protagonists only emphasizes the fact that for Faulkner the child is the most suitable agent for illustrating man's capability for change.

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