The Human Spirit in Faulkner's Fiction

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THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN FAULKNER’S FICTION

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This dissertation is dedicated to my late husband, Dana Greenawalt, whose human spirit was indeed awesome.
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The dissertation examines the presence and form of the human spirit within selected characters in the works of William Faulkner. Faulkner, in his 1950 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, concluded that man is immortal because he has a soul, a spirit, capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance, and that the duty of the writer and the poet is to write about these things. Many previous readers, however, had viewed Faulkner’s writings as dealing primarily with grotesque characters and immoral themes.

Characters possessing the human spirit reveal the following characteristics of the life force: surprising energy, competitive joy, peak experiences, resistance to adversity, survival in the face of death, courageous activity in emergency situations, and living out a life-purpose. I have also incorporated the work of John Teske, suggesting a social dimension of the human spirit extending through several generations.

A biographical sketch of Faulkner is provided, including literary influences on Faulkner and his use of experimental structure.

Characters analyzed are selected arbitrarily to mirror and reflect humanity as a whole in that they contain both human strengths and flaws in varying amounts. This dissertation also discusses the human spirit in terms of its appearance within the four social classes described in Faulkner’s work. The human spirit’s role in relation to nature, war, machines, and life after death is also studied.

Thus study assesses Faulkner’s great theme, the human heart in conflict with itself, his valuation of love over rationalism, man’s struggle with good and evil and his need to overcome evil by acknowledgement, struggle, discipline, and effort.

Conclusions generated by this study were: (1) From his earliest publications, Faulkner has written about a positive human spirit. This was not a new idea emanating from the Nobel Prize speech. (2) For Faulkner, the presence of the human spirit is a human trait, found to a greater or lesser degree in all individuals. (3) Social class is unrelated to the presence of the human spirit in
Faulkner. (4) The life force can be present in good or evil men. The other more developed qualities of the human spirit -- patience, endurance, love, concern with a social legacy -- occur only in men making moral choices; and (5) In Faulkner, love must take priority over rationalism in people conveying a strong human spirit.
INTRODUCTION

William Faulkner’s enchantment with “problems and vicissitudes of the human spirit” essentially went unnoticed until his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1950. His emphasis on the human spirit surprised the literary world, which had often characterized Faulkner’s work as violent, dealing mainly with the miseries of life, and even depravity. That a man could write about shocking, even immoral themes and still consider himself concerned with positive virtues and personal strengths was paradoxical.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore Faulkner’s emphasis on the human spirit and to suggest that, even in his most depraved characters, he also reflects on the human spirit, perhaps by negative example. Even Faulkner’s “evil” personifications carry some elements of this life force. Likewise, Faulkner addresses the issue of the human spirit through interactions and confrontations with some non-human forces, such as machines, war, and nature. I will suggest that Faulkner’s literary characterizations correspond to his stated beliefs about man and his spirit, and I will illustrate Faulkner’s belief that “man will not only endure but will prevail.” Man’s human spirit must do more than simply survive; it must continue to evolve and develop.

To begin, I will define specifically what I mean by the term human spirit, in order to provide a means to recognize its presence within specific characterizations.
CHAPTER I  DEFINITION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The human spirit is a somewhat nebulous concept. It is a term used casually by many but resistant to specific definition. I will define the human spirit as a clinging to, and celebration of, the life force, present from birth up until the final hours preceding death, as noted by the late Pope John Paul, II. “Even in the frailty of the last hour, human life is never meaningless or useless” (Murphy A6). In the simplest example, the human spirit excels in moments of joy - - - joy stemming from competitive achievement or peak experiences, for example. The human spirit can also be experienced in terms of resistance to adversity, survival in the face of death, and courageous activity in emergency situations. In this context it may be synonymous with will power, a refusal to accept conditions as presented, a drive to continue when most individuals would stop. Lastly, the human spirit may simply partake in the act of living, fulfilling what one considers the human being’s role in dutifully performing one’s functions.

The Olympics are perhaps one of the clearest examples of competitive joy, one of the features of the human spirit. The Greek civilization placed high value on physical fitness, upon competition, and upon the spirit of play.

All over Greece there were games, all sorts of games; athletic contests of every description: races - horse, boat, torch-races; contests in music where one side outsung the other; in dancing - on greased skins sometimes to display a nice skill of foot and balance of body; games where men leaped in and out of flying chariots; games so many one grows weary with the list of them (Hamilton 18). The Olympic victor would be awarded prizes and his victory would be recorded in poetry and songs. The Greek spirit celebrated life, perhaps because the threat of war was always
imminent. Greeks were keenly aware of the persistence and transcendence of the human spirit and awarded great honor to its manifestation within the winner of the competition.

A “peak experience” is a dimension of living, available to all of humanity, not just to the physical or mental athlete. It can be defined as a highlight of one’s life which carries with it a spiritual kind of knowledge, a feeling that one has achieved mastery and conquered a most difficult feat, and that this accomplishment is positive and in tune with life’s purpose. There may be a fusion with “something greater,” a feeling that the surrounding environment “applauds” the accomplishment. The individual feels “on top of the world” and the feeling-state he possesses at this time will always be remembered. An example of a peak experience might be reaching the top of a high mountain, knowing the climb was difficult, that most people could not have made it, and thus creating a personal feeling of competence, achievement, even momentary glory, always to be savored.

The human spirit is called upon in sorrow just as much as in times of joy. Nowhere is it more prevalent than in dealing with pain and suffering, especially in people with extended illnesses. The will to live can be strong (fight) or weak (give up), the individual’s lifespan long or short. For example, cancers can be fast growing or slow. In coping with illness we see dramatic differences among people. We see some people infused with the human spirit and determined to maintain it at any cost; we see others choosing to allow the human spirit to weaken, ebb away, and die.

Death appears to signal the termination of the human spirit, although this may be misleading, as transformation is also a possibility. Death represents the threat of the unknown and thus creates an existential anxiety for many people. How the individual deals with the reality of death tells us something about his human spirit. It is a given task of humanity to confront the reality of death at some point within life.

Emergency situations serve as a catalyst to call out the human spirit and sometimes to enable the individual to transcend normal human boundaries. For example, people have been able to lift up a car when a child was trapped beneath it. Emergencies are “tests” just as much as competitive games are, but the difference is that in the emergency, the individual does not know the test is coming. Heroics occur in emergencies, they occur in
war, and they occur sometimes in everyday life. They may make the individual aware of values or strengths that he did not know he possessed.

Dr. John Teske is a psychologist who extends the concept of the human spirit and gives it a social dimension. He suggests that neuropsychological data is necessary but insufficient to account for the human spirit (1996) and that “its emergence is evolutionarily and developmentally rooted in social interdependence” (1998). He defines the human spirit as: “that aspect of human mental life by which we can apprehend meanings and purposes extending beyond our individual lives.” Sharing, giving oneself to entities beyond the self, is also important. He also suggests that within man is a neurologically based “moral space” and that the individual communicates with his own moral space by a kind of internal narration. The moral space is created in part out of cultural values. The sense of meaning in our lives derives from narrative communication which tells us we must transcend, move beyond, become greater than the self, for the evolution and progress of humanity. When a man becomes capable of making a contribution to the human race, his human spirit transcends his own individual identity and becomes part of a greater and larger whole. “Life beyond death” may also be based on the long-range importance of that life to the community and to the world, generally Only man of all the animals, who is aware that he will die someday, can make that sacrifice, that contribution. Man’s body can become ill, his mental state can be disturbed, but his spirit can remain healthy and stable if he understands and accepts these principles.

For the purposes of this paper, we are going to be concerned with the portrayal and manifestation of the human spirit in the literary characters created by William Faulkner. Before we proceed to his works, I will present a brief review of Faulkner’s life and comment upon how the human spirit is demonstrated throughout Faulkner’s own life.
CHAPTER II WILLIAM FAULKNER: BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born September 25, 1897, in New Albany, Mississippi. His parents were Murry Falkner and Maud Butler Falkner, members of an old Southern family. The Falkners moved to Oxford, Mississippi, in 1902 when William was five, and he learned to love Oxford and considered it his home throughout the rest of his life. The addition of three younger brothers completed the family constellation: Murry (Jack), born in 1899, John (Johncey) born in 1901, and Dean, born in 1907.

Faulkner’s first book, The Marble Faun was published in 1924. The “u” in Faulkner’s name had begun to appear intermittently some years before, attributed to a printer’s error (Collins 11). Apparently Faulkner himself inserted the “u.” Lewis Simpson, in the forward to the book written by Murry Falkner, indicated that Colonel William C. Falkner originally spelled his name with the “u.” As an adult he chose to drop the letter, stating that “as often as he had to sign his own name, it was folly to keep an extra letter in it that changed neither the look nor the pronunciation. Therefore he never did use the ‘u,’ nor did our grandfather, nor our father” (Falkner xviii). William, and then John and Dean, changed the spelling to Faulkner. William was later to state: “I secretly was ambitious and I did not want to ride on my grandfather’s coat-tails, and so accepted the ‘u’ and was glad of such an easy way to strike out for myself” (Parini 7).

Faulkner appears to have had a relatively normal childhood. Initially he did well in school, even skipping a grade, but eventually he became bored, began missing classes, and dropped out of school in eleventh grade. He was, however, always an avid reader and books were available at all times in his home. In 1908 he may have witnessed the lynching of a black man, Nelse Patton, on the square in Oxford. In 1909 he worked in his
father’s livery stable where the men of the countryside would meet to swap stories, and Faulkner was an avid listener, as well. He also listened to stories from the family nanny, Caroline Barr, and to stories from the town’s aging war veterans. From the age of seven, Faulkner visited the hunting and fishing camps, trips that were part of the tradition and ritual of southern manhood. These settings provided him with another source of stories. Faulkner utilized materials handed down through the oral tradition to provide a basis for his own literary creations.

William was not an altogether happy child, however. He was very dependent on his mother, Maud, who insisted that he spend time reading every day. Maud would read, too, and she remained William’s friend and confidant throughout life. Even in later years they would drink coffee together whenever William was in town. Faulkner’s relationship with his father, Murry, was very strained, however. Faulkner regarded his father as a weak man who depended heavily on his grandfather to constantly bail him out financially and who drank heavily; William both resented and pitied him (Parini 18). His closest emotional relationship as a child may have been with his nanny, Caroline Barr.

Faulkner’s relationships with his peers were also strained. He was not popular in school, did not like sports, but was considered friendly and courteous. He daydreamed in his classes and was not perceived in any way as academically gifted. He always chose to dress in a highly formal manner, with a dandyish streak, that further alienated him from the student community. He did form a close relationship in 1914 with Phil Stone, four years his senior. Stone would serve as literary advisor, mentor, close friend, and eventually, agent (Parini 30).

Faulkner’s younger years are important because he was involved in gathering materials for his future writings. He was already developing personality characteristics that made him unique. He also began to experiment in his writing forms. Faulkner listened and observed. He was sincerely interested in people and in life, even though he was not always comfortable in his interactions with them. He had an inner confidence in himself, freeing him from the need to conform to school, teachers or peers. He was able to operate from an inner, not outer, standard because of his self-trust and self-regard.
At age 19, Faulkner worked briefly as a clerk at his grandfather’s bank. Here he began to partake of his grandfather’s stash of liquor and began to establish a dependency on alcohol that would become an addiction. Faulkner inherited a biological tendency toward alcoholism but he also embraced alcohol as a companion, a faithful partner in all of life’s ups and downs, joys and sorrows. Upon completion of a major work he would go on a drinking binge “to celebrate.” The alcohol did not appear to interfere with Faulkner’s productivity for his literary works, but had a very noticeable detrimental effect when he was in Hollywood, attempting to write screenplays, which he did not enjoy. Faulkner never really chose to address his alcoholism as a problem, despite repeated admissions to a sanitarium to “dry out,” and stated he considered drinking “a normal healthy interest” (Lion 149).

At the beginning of his career, Faulkner wrote poetry before turning to prose. He began spending time at the University of Mississippi campus where his written work was accepted into college publications, and he also completed drawings for the yearbook. Faulkner had established a relationship with Estelle Oldham, a daughter of one of the aristocratic families of Oxford, and intuitively he had always felt that someday they would be married. He was thus devastated when Estelle married Cornell Franklin in 1918. He tried to enlist in the United States Army but was rejected because he was too short. He then turned to the Canadian RAF, which did accept him, and he completed training but was discharged without ever experiencing active service, because the war ended. During his training Faulkner had written home about daring escapades that never happened. These stories grew and exaggerated into war injuries after which Faulkner developed a limp and began using a cane. This pattern of falsification and exaggeration would be revived whenever he felt himself under stress or duress - he would then begin retelling the war stories and resume his disabilities. When he felt in control and more secure, no “war souvenirs” would come up in the conversation.

Faulkner held two mundane jobs and failed miserably at both of them. In 1921 he worked at Doubleday Bookstore in New York City. Faulkner recalled that he was fired because he was “a little careless about change or something” (Parini 61). He was hired as
postmaster at the University of Mississippi but lost this position after he was rude to customers, did not bother to deliver the mail on time, and read other people’s magazines. He also utilized time on the job to write his own stories and poems. He resigned from the post office after three years when, allegedly, charges were filed against him by the postal inspector.

Faulkner left Oxford for New Orleans in 1925 and began to contribute stories and articles to the New Orleans Times-Picayune and to the Double Dealer, a New Orleans literary magazine. He lived in the French Quarter in New Orleans and received encouragement for his fiction from Sherwood Anderson. He also used Anderson as a model writer, studying his daily routine, and concluding that writing as a career was something that suited his own temperament, as well. During this period Faulkner traveled to Europe for the first time. In addition, his first two novels were published: Soldier’s Pay in 1926, and Mosquitoes in 1927.

Faulkner’s third novel, Sartoris was published in January 1929. In June, 1929 Faulkner married his “predestined” partner, Estelle Oldham, now divorced with two children, Malcolm and Melvina. The marriage was not a happy one, but it did endure. Estelle also had a drinking problem and she tended to overspend, creating a great deal of financial stress for Faulkner. She had even attempted suicide by drowning during their honeymoon period. Two children were born of the marriage. The first daughter, Alabama, died in infancy. Jill, the second daughter, was a delight to Faulkner, and he centered his life more and more around her as time progressed. Faulkner purchased an old mansion in 1930, and christened it Rowan Oak; it would become the family home and a source of comfort to him throughout his life.

The years from 1929 to 1942 are considered Faulkner’s highest peak of creativity and production. Faulkner himself spoke of “one matchless time” when, in a writer’s life, speed, power, and talent are all coexisting (Lion 149). Jay Parini entitled his biography of Faulkner One Matchless Time, and defined this time as “when inspiration came, for the most part, easily, when he had found, not simply his own voice but a teeming chorus of voices, each of them distinct, whole, and authentic” (279). The Sound and the Fury was
published in 1929, As I Lay Dying in 1930, Sanctuary in 1931, Light in August in 1932, Pylon in 1935, Absalom, Absalom! in 1936, and Go Down Moses in 1942. He would publish more novels after this time, but they would not receive the critical acclaim of his novels from this peak period. The works above are considered to be his greatest creative accomplishments.

Faulkner maintained a serious commitment to writing throughout his life. His powers of concentration were legendary. When working on a project, he would establish a writing routine, and would allow nothing to interfere. “We are here to work. It is either sweat or die. Where is there a law requiring we should be happy?” (Lion 14). We should not exclude his more famous statement: “You can’t drink eight hours a day. Or make love. Work’s about the only thing a fellow has to do to keep from being bored” (Lion 64). But Faulkner did not stop working when he left his desk. He would always observe, make notes on what he saw, and read whenever possible. He also continued to write in the face of negative critical reviews that would have inhibited a more conformist individual, and he often demonstrated incredible persistence under adverse conditions.

In 1932 Faulkner made the first of several trips to California to write screen plays. This was writing that he did not enjoy and did not feel that he was adept at, although he was considered by others to have a gift for screenwriting. Most of the time, Faulkner was in Hollywood because he needed the money. Faulkner disliked the Hollywood scene although he did establish a strong friendship with director Howard Hawke and enjoyed hunting with Clark Gable. About Hollywood he stated, “I don’t like the climate, the people, their way of life. Nothing ever happens, and one morning you wake up and find yourself 65 years old” (Lion 52). Faulkner would travel to Hollywood when he needed money but would return home to Oxford as soon as possible. While in Hollywood he drank more and more and became an undependable worker, although the studios tended to keep giving him contracts because of his famous name.

Faulkner was forced to deal with three family deaths around this period. His father, Murry, died in 1932. In 1935 his youngest brother Dean was killed in a plane crash, inducing guilt in Faulkner who had encouraged him to learn to fly and had, in fact, sold
Dean the plane in which he crashed. Lastly, Faulkner’s beloved nanny, Caroline Barr, died in 1940. Faulkner cried as he delivered her eulogy.

Faulkner continued to be unhappy in his marriage but made a conscious decision never to dissolve it. He did, however, engage in three significant love affairs, all of lengthy duration, in which he wrote letters to his paramours and discussed his work with them at times. His first relationship was with Meta Dougherty Carpenter and lasted intermittently for fifteen years, even through her marriage to another man. She was probably the greatest threat to the endurance of his marriage and he did at one time consider leaving Estelle for Meta. He met Joan Williams, a much younger woman, in 1949 and she became the center of his life for a long period. Estelle was aware of this relationship but grudgingly tolerated it. Faulkner also had a close relationship and friendship with Else Jonsson whom he met on his trip to Sweden in 1950. Although these women were important to Faulkner emotionally, none of the relationships were important enough that he would choose to leave Estelle or let them threaten his position in society.

Faulkner had published The Unvanquished in 1938, The Wild Palms in 1939, and The Hamlet in 1940. He then published Intruder in the Dust in 1948, Knight’s Gambit in 1949, A Fable in 1954, Big Woods in 1955, The Town in 1957, and finally, The Reivers in 1962. These publications were critically judged to be less powerful and of diminishing quality compared to those from Faulkner’s highest peak of creativity. The publication of The Portable Faulkner (1946), edited by Malcolm Cowley, had previously revived interest in Faulkner’s work and had generated a new audience of readers. Faulkner was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for A Fable in 1955, but in the critics’ judgment, the book was a failure.

Faulkner was notified November 8, 1950, to say that he was the winner of the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature, the aspiration of every writer. He traveled to Stockholm, Sweden, accompanied by his daughter Jill, where he accepted the award and presented his now famous speech (Appendix A).

Prior to his receiving the Nobel Prize, Faulkner was an extremely reclusive individual who valued his privacy, and he was notorious for his rude behavior toward
representatives of the press. He often refused to give interviews, did not correct published
ersors about himself, and was also fond of providing imaginary truths when questions
were asked. He typically referred to himself as a “farmer,” rather than a writer (Lion 65).
In his later years, however, Faulkner developed into a person willing to share his
experiences and thoughts, especially to help new writers. In 1957 he accepted a position
as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, and continued to
teach for several years in that capacity. His daughter Jill and her husband, Paul
Summers, already resided in Charlottesville, and in 1958 Faulkner purchased a home
there. He then alternated between Oxford and Charlottesville for the remainder of his life,
spending time when possible with his three grandsons.

In 1954 Faulkner had attended an international writers’ conference in Brazil at the
request of the United States government. He performed well and was then asked to make
more “good will” trips for the state department, traveling to Japan, the Philippines, Italy,
and Iceland. He was an effective presenter and was well received everywhere, in his
deliverances demonstrating the development of a mature attitude of social conscience, as
outlined by Teske (1998). His seminar in Nagano City, Japan where he interfaced with
fifty Japanese literature professors, was especially outstanding and has been well-
documented (Lion 1968).

Throughout his life Faulkner loved and rode horses. He especially enjoyed foxhunting
and became a member of the Farmington Hunt Club in Virginia. He experienced several
falls from horses in his later years, perhaps due to his excessive drinking. He died at 64
years of age, from a heart attack following a fall from a horse three weeks earlier. He was
buried at St. Peter’s Cemetery in Oxford on July 7, 1962.

This biographical sketch of Faulkner was presented to show Faulkner’s own struggles
with the human spirit, struggles that were lifelong and intertwined with the religious
values and moral principles that he portrayed in his literary works.

Faulkner was always a loner, alienated from the mainstream of social discourse. He
was taunted by his childhood and college peers because of his formal dress and aloof
manner, and was referred to as “Count No Count” (Parini 52). He was not close to his
wife and apparently sought closeness in his affairs, but his closest relationship was with his daughter Jill. Many of his personal and professional relationships deteriorated due to his drinking. The inhabitants of Oxford did not respond well to his works, many objecting to his presentation of the South in what they regarded as a degraded and violent manner. That Faulkner could continue to write in spite of these obstacles is to be admired. He transcended his alienation to write about other people, even if he could not always relate to them positively.

Faulkner never seemed to seek or need approval from outside. He wrote his books for himself and not for readers or critics. He had little interest in meeting other contemporary writers. He seemed to write from a “directive within,” a life’s purpose. He sensed or “knew” as a young man that he would be a famous writer, and nothing would deter him from this belief. Faulkner always seemed to experience joy from his profession of writing and peak experiences would have been the birth of his daughter Jill and his being awarded the Nobel Prize.

Obviously, overall Faulkner was not a happy man. He suffered from anxiety, depression, and inadequacy feelings, to name a few problems. But he created a fictional world populated by a huge number of complex characters, each struggling with physical, mental, and spiritual crises. Faulkner’s world of Yoknapatawpha County mirrors the human world. The crises of the characters are all crises of the human spirit. What Faulkner knew and learned, he placed within his characters and thus he passed on his knowledge to his myriad of readers. This would be his legacy and his social contribution. “His measure of life was not how long one could enjoy it, but what he did with it” (Falkner 190).

**Literary Influences**

The literary influences on Faulkner cannot be listed in total because he was such an avid reader and believed “every writer is influenced by every word he ever read
anywhere” (Lion 176). As a child, Faulkner was urged to read by his mother, Maud, who encouraged reading of Plato, Aristotle, Conrad, and Kipling, in particular (Falkner 17). There was always a daily newspaper available in the home.

Faulkner stated that he read “Don Quixote once every year. I read Moby Dick every 4-5 years. I read Madame Bovary, The Brothers Karamazov. I read the Old Testament every 10-15 years. I carry a complete Shakespeare in one volume with me and I read a little of that almost anytime. I read in and out of Dickens some every year, and in and out of Conrad the same way, some every year” (Lion 110-111). Faulkner listed as his own favorite books Conrad’s Nigger of the Narcissus and Melville’s Moby Dick (Lion 17). His early works reflected the influence of the English poets, Houseman and Swinburne.

Faulkner did not typically read works of his contemporaries. He admitted reading James Joyce and Marcel Proust but maintained he wrote with the stream of consciousness technique before reading Joyce. Among his contemporaries, he credited Thomas Wolfe with being most daring in his approach, willing to attempt new experimental forms of writing, to “take chances.” “Wolfe had tried so hard and failed magnificently” (Parini 294). The failure was not important; Faulkner lauded the attempt. Faulkner rated himself second among the contemporary writers on this dimension. He offended Ernest Hemingway by noting that Hemingway had chosen a “safe style,” mastered it, stuck to it, but did not take chances at moving out in experimental directions i.e., did not risk failure (Parini 294).

Balzac was always a favorite of Faulkner (Parini 59), and Faulkner’s huge panorama of Yoknapatawpha County lends comparison to Balzac who created a multitude of characters and placed them in a limited environment, then generalizing to a larger whole. Both Faulkner and Balzac “universalized reality, staying small to go large” (Parini 243). In an interview with a French student in 1952, Faulkner claimed Balzac as his “greatest model” (Parini 350). Like Dickens and Balzac, Faulkner “needed to take possession of a large imaginative landscape filled with characters representing parts of reality as he found it” (Parini 106). Faulkner himself stated: “I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too” (Lion 255). He also
understood that his creative universe would be large enough to encompass everything he wished to say. “Beginning with Sartoris I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top” (Lion 255). Faulkner was able to analyze deeply this “postage stamp sized area” in a small, rural state of the union, and generalize his observations to humanity as a whole.

Critics have also taken note of the religious influences in Faulkner’s works. Barth places Faulkner “strongly and unmistakably within the Calvinist camp, in a direct line of kinship from Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards” (11). He believes in original sin, the depravity of human nature after the fall. A theme of predestination also runs throughout his works. Faulkner stated that he read the Old Testament “for the fun of watching what people do” (Lion 112). The New Testament he considered to be more similar to art or poetry.

Some reviewers, and Faulkner himself, consider his religious position to be close to that of Henri Bergson, a French philosopher. Bergson theorized the notion of fluidity of time, suggesting that time is experienced as duration and apprehended by intuition (McGreal 430). According to Faulkner, only the present moment exists, which includes both the past and the future, and that present moment is eternity (Lion 70). Bergson also believed in an “elan vital,” a creative impulse and living energy which continuously shapes all life. The “elan vital” relates to the life force that we are suggesting is the human spirit. Bergson promoted the idea of two opposing currents: inert matter in conflict with organic life. The strength of the human spirit at any given time is related to the strength of each current - the human spirit will be strongest when organic life is dominant, weaker when inert manner dominates but has not overcome.

These are not the only literary influences on Faulkner; others that might be mentioned are T. S. Eliot and several French writers and poets. Life was actually his most important teacher, his observations and memories the means by which he generated his writings. He learned from the masters, but in the final analysis the writing is his own. “Anyone in
writing is writing about truth and there’s only one truth, and any one writer worth his soul is never satisfied with the job he’s done because it wasn’t as moving as he wanted it to be, so he tries again” (Lion 116-117).

Experimental Structure

Faulkner’s innovations in the structure of the novel are well known and deserve at least brief discussion before turning to characterization.

William Faulkner wrote in a style unlike that of any other author. “Faulkner has grappled with the experimental in all its complexity and yet has contained it within a dramatic storytelling” (Beck 93). Because of this style, his work is difficult to read and the reader must “work” by fitting pieces together, solving mysteries, in order to partake of the meaning of the story and the messages it is meant to convey. Faulkner uses over-elaborate sentence structure, marathon sentences with trailing clauses, and parentheses within parentheses and provides the reader with obsessive detail about his subject. He repeats words. His style creates a hypnotic dreamlike effect in the reader which promotes immersion in the stream of consciousness monologues and dialogues and increases empathy for his characters. As Malcolm Cowley stated: “Faulkner novels have the quality of being lived, absorbed, remembered rather than merely observed ” (PF xxvi). Although Faulkner’s characters are often engaged in dramatic actions, at the same time this hypnotic effect creates a quietness, a stillness which generates a sense of the relaxed, slow moving South. Faulkner also utilized “favorite words” again and again in his writings in order to create a sense of familiarity and involvement in the reader, words such as myriad, impalpable, profound, outrageous. The reader might need to go to the dictionary for the meaning of these words initially, but with repetition, they would take on a friendly ambience. He also seemed to delight in describing the weather and details of nature.

Faulkner would deliberately withhold meaning in his stories, leaving issues
unresolved and indeterminate. At times he is inconsistent in using details, and he might change the name of a character from one novel to the next. His best novels end with suspension, leaving the final interpretation up to the reader. He seems to communicate an ambivalence about whether life is meaningful or meaningless.

Faulkner often uses alternation of viewpoint as a technique. Sometimes the narratives are of varying levels of intelligence, coherency, and accuracy. The reader must lift the element of truth from each narrator to piece together a “whole” that is rational.

Faulkner is famous for his disordered time sequences, illustrated most vividly in The Sound and the Fury. The novel moves constantly from past to present and the effect of the past on the present can be observed, with some effort.

Persistent patterns in Faulkner’s work involve comparisons and contrasts of opposite states of being. For example his descriptions range from intense motion of action to the quiet immobility of nature. He moves from loud sounds to complete silence, from turbulence to quiescence (Slatoff 79).

Daniel Singal suggested that Faulkner was attempting to reconcile two divergent approaches: the Victorian urge toward unity and stability and a modernistic drive toward multiplicity and change (1). Generally Faulkner is regarded as a modernist writer. Absalom, Absalom! and “A Rose for Miss Emily” contain Gothic motifs and styles. Faulkner includes elements of horror but also frontier humor tradition (Cowley xxvii).

To conclude, Faulkner’s unique style is just that-- his own chosen method of writing. As noted previously, he wrote to tell a story and was, for years, unaware that his work would be read by others. He did not choose to read the critical reviews, but he would not have changed his style, anyway.

For the purposes of this paper, however, we are not concerned with style as much as with characterization. As we progress, we will be studying Faulkner’s characters with an eye toward their demonstration of the human spirit. We expect that this manifestation of spirit will be different within the following groups: the old order or declining aristocrats, the progressive but greedy newcomers, the blacks, the mulattos, and the poor whites. Prominent characters from each group will be discussed and the traits of the human spirit
isolated. The old order will be the first group addressed.
CHAPTER III SOCIAL CLASS AND THE HUMAN SPIRIT: THE OLD ORDER

The majority of William Faulkner’s characters all live in the same neighborhood: the legendary Yoknapatawpha County. Yoknapatawpha County was created by Faulkner to house his hundreds of human beings, who are struggling to have as good a life as possible in a South that was attempting to recover from the devastation of the Civil War. It is based on a real place, Lafayette County, Mississippi, with its county seat at Oxford, where Faulkner grew up. Lafayette Country portrayed a multiple generation view of southern society as it developed on the western edge of the expanding cotton frontier. It also replicated the social diversity of the deep South.

Don Doyle (2001) has written about the historical roots of Yoknapatawpha and suggests that Yoknapatawpha was both a product of Faulkner’s creative imagination and the actual history of the region. Blotner, in his biography of Faulkner published in 1974, drew extensive parallels between the fictional events and characters in Yoknapatawpha and their counterparts in the “real” Lafayette County.

Yoknapatawpha County originated in the 1830’s when the Chickasaw Indians were forced out of the area. The county included rich cotton planters and slave owners who lived in mansions, farmers with few or no slaves, and a group of poor whites living in substandard conditions. Jefferson was the county seat but, unlike its counterpart of Oxford, it contained no university. It was, however, the center of town activities, the economic and political hub. Within Yoknapatawpha County were also some small hamlets, scattered about. Faulkner’s writings are about the resident families of this county, and they span several generations within some of the families.
A. The Old Order

Howe (1962) suggests than clan, rather than class, forms the basic unit in Yoknapatawpha County. Pride in family and reverence for ancestors pervade all the social stratum. We will begin by discussing the families representing the old order, or the “declining aristocracy,” namely the Sartoris family and the Compson family. Historically both of these families possess traditional values: they believe in honor, ethical, and responsible behaviors. “They represent vital morality, humanism” (O’Donnell 83). Howe presented a slightly different view, stating “the Sartoris family has always been under a compulsion for glamorous self-destruction, which is to say that the Southern tradition, flawed from within (because of slavery), drives toward its own death” (40). As we examine some of the different individuals within the Sartoris family, perhaps both of these viewpoints contain some truth.

John Sartoris

John Sartoris is the archetypal ancestor of four generations of the Sartoris family. Based in part on Faulkner’s own great-grandfather, William C. Falkner, John Sartoris is an amazingly strong presence who manifests a very vibrant human spirit. He was a strong leader, respected for many years after he actually stepped down from power. For example, note Miss Emily Grierson’s insistence that she need not pay taxes because John Sartoris had decreed that she did not need to do so (CS 120).

John Sartoris is first described in The Unvanquished and initially he is presented, by his twelve year old son Bayard, as a heroic figure. “Then we could see him good, I mean Father. He was not big; it was just the things he did, that we knew he was doing, had been doing in Virginia and Tennessee, that made him seem big to us” (9). John Sartoris rode a
big white horse “and when you thought of Father being on Jupiter it was as if you said: together they will be so big, you won’t believe it ” (10).

Later, however, in the incident with the carpet-baggers who were “stirring up niggers,” he appeared hard, ruthless, and believed that he was justified in shooting the outsiders. The act of killing would take a toll on John Sartoris, though. “When a feller has to start killing folks, he ‘most always has to keep on killin’ ‘em. And when he does, he’s already dead himself” (Sartoris 35). In a conversation with his son, after the railroad he built was finished, and he had been elected to the state legislature, Sartoris predicted his own death. “Redlaw’ll kill me tomorrow, for I shall be unarmed. I’m tired of killing men” (Sartoris 35). The confrontation validated his prediction and he died the following day.

John Sartoris was perhaps most attractive in his sympathetic stance toward Drusilla. Initially he respected her great desire to fight among the members of his troops, even though she was a female. Eventually great social pressure was placed upon John Sartoris to marry Drusilla because she had fought in his regiment, by his side, been on the road with him for many months, and now lived in his home with his own children. Certainly Sartoris was a strong enough man to refuse, to insist that there had never been a relationship between them. However, out of sympathy, kindness, and understanding, he allowed the marriage to take place. He is courteous to Drusilla after marriage, but really is indifferent to her. When Drusilla and Bayard kiss, both know Bayard must tell his father about it, but when this happens, John Sartoris has other concerns and never reacts.

John Sartoris had an obsession with power and glory. He was an action-taker, a good decision-maker, and when called for, especially in battle, could trade safety for surprise and recklessness. He possessed a strong will and commanded respect from others. He was an excellent leader of his own household, with family and servants respecting him and obeying him without resistance. He carried his responsibilities single-handedly and did not lean on others. This characteristic can, however, result in a lonely position in life, and Colonel Sartoris did not share his concerns with others. Had he done so, he might not have become so weary of life. He provided for his children, treated them with respect, but
was not present to provide much nurturance or direction. He set his son Bayard up in life to become a lawyer, handed over his affairs, but there was little talk of love, little direction for living life.

John Sartoris even took control of his own death by going to meet his nemesis, Redlaw, unarmed. He knows what will happen but he is weary. But even then he doesn’t relinquish total control. “Even after his death people keenly sense his presence” (Sartoris 19).

John Sartoris was strongly in possession of the life force, the “elan vital.” He acted with a sense of purpose, almost as if he were “directed” by a higher power. He enjoyed his successes in the war, in building the railroad, and in politics. He represented the old order in that he always behaved in a chivalrous manner, usually was honorable or tried to be. He may have been selfish but he tried to be heroic. He had the power to persist and endure for many years. His weakness was in his strong independence, his patriarchal attitude toward others. We do not know of his loving anyone. He chose to become a legend rather than caste his lot with common humanity. He left a dynasty and a dramatic history that would influence future generations of Sartorises and others. He would become the yardstick by which they would measure themselves. In his time, the Yankees demolished his home but he would rebuild and recover. The family was not as materially rich as before the war but they continued to be well-to-do, and continued to be members of the old order.

Granny Rosa Millard

Rosa Millard is presented in only one Faulkner book, The Unvanquished. She is the mother-in-law of John Sartoris and she lived during the Civil War, on the Sartoris plantation when it was ransacked. She was placed in charge of John Sartoris’s son Bayard, and his black friend and lifelong companion, Ringo. At the time of the novel the boys are 12-15 years old. She was also in charge of the Sartoris household while John
was off fighting in the war.

Granny Millard is described as old, thin, “light,” crafty and strong. She was, in a simple sense, just an elderly, Southern lady. She was completely loyal to her son-in-law John, whom she often referred to as her son. Howe describes Granny as a “creature of popular fiction rather than adult imagination (43). She is portrayed as a representative of the aristocratic way of life as it was disturbed by invasion from Northern forces. As such, she may have lacked depth of personality but she could easily be visualized, almost as if she were in a movie. She developed a distinctive character, not from a description of her inner thoughts, but from a description of the three hats she literally wore: John’s old hat which she wore on top of her head rag when she went to fetch wood, a decorative hat borrowed from a friend, Mrs. Compson, and a sunbonnet which was her own. Occasionally she carried a parasol which at any time could be converted into a weapon with which she could “beat people” or defend herself. So Granny could be perceived as something of a comic character.

On the other hand, Granny took her role as substitute parent very seriously, washing the boys’ mouths out with soap whenever they used profane language. They would then be instructed to kneel and to ask for the Lord’s forgiveness. Lying was another sin for which the boys would first be whipped and then instructed to pray. On one occasion Granny lied to protect the boys, hiding them under her skirt after they fired at a Yankee officer and killed his horse. Granny trembled, but stuck to her story that she had not seen the boys, until the Yankee officer pretended not to know they were there and finally left.

Granny was a representative of Southern womanhood in that she totally deferred to the male head of the household, John Sartoris, and they seemed to have a great deal of mutual respect for each other. On the other hand, Granny could dominate the black household staff and always made them do her bidding, even if to them, it seemed unreasonable, for example, taking the heavy chest of silver up to her second floor room one day and then moving it back downstairs the next.

Granny was perceived by Bayard and Ringo, the narrators, as strong and determined to get what she wanted. As Ringo would comment, “she cide what she wants and then she
kneel down about ten seconds and tell God what she aim to do and then she git up and do it. And them that don’t like hit can get outer the way or get trompled (93).

Granny was crafty and opportunistic in her dealings with the Yankee troops and officers. She made clever calculations and discovered a way to steal mules from the Yankees, re-brand them, and then sell them back. Her motives were not greed but rather generosity -- to help feed her neighbors and to help poor folks around her. “I wish we had enough to share with them” (83). She helped a young black woman with a baby, giving them food and suggesting they return home after their own people had abandoned them. She also “borrowed horses,” and she was not sure who the horses belonged to because their owners were not present when she “borrowed” them. But she promised to return the horses in good condition and instructed her staff to take good care of them.

Granny is able to pull the wool over the eyes of the Yankees for a long time because she presents herself as an old lady in need of help. She is able to charm the officers who give her even more than she requests.

Granny’s downfall comes when she realizes she does not have enough money. She wanted to be able to help John Sartoris rebuild his estate. She had actually been too generous and had not planned well. She entered into a partnership with Ab Snopes, and trusted him against the advice of others “because he fought on the right side of the war” (149). She allowed Snopes to persuade her to have dealings with a group called Grumby’s Independents. This group wore no uniforms, and after the Yankees left, this rag-tag posse engaged in raiding smoke houses, stables, and pillaging houses where there were no men. They stole money and silver. Ab proposed that Granny could sell horses to this group.

Granny’s last mistake was to assume that the unscrupulous people she was dealing with would not hurt her because of her status as an elderly Southern lady, i.e., that they would obey the chivalric code of honor of the South. The villains she encountered, however, were not of the old order; and in the new order, the concept of honor did not exist. Granny was shot and killed by the outlaw Grumby, in part since she felt invincible because of her identity, and in part due to the fact she did not recognize that the times
were changing.

Granny Millard is a manifestation of the human spirit in that she adapts to her environment under very rigorous conditions (the Civil War). She sees her home destroyed, and her possessions robbed, but she endures and finds new avenues through which to make money. A strong point is that she shows compassion and helps even the blacks who perceive themselves as “free” and desert the plantation. She does not agree with their actions and tells them to go home, but she gives food and holds no grudges. Granny upholds the moral order and performs good parenting in that she teaches moral standards to the boys. She exhibits “spunk” and determination. Her downfall is essentially clinging to the old order when it is no longer viable and not recognizing that the times and the people have changed.

Bayard Sartoris

Faulkner presents Bayard Sartoris, John’s son, in three phases of his life: youth (12-14), young adulthood (24), and old age (69-70). Some of his other characters are also seen over the course of their lifespan (Joe Christmas, Aunt Jenny), but in Bayard the life changes are presented simply, without confusion of multiple relationships.

Bayard is first introduced in The Unvanquished as a boy of twelve who views his father’s participation in the war and his family’s trials and tribulations as rather romantic and exciting. Bayard seldom feels afraid in the circumstances where he finds himself because he trusts his father and his grandmother to take care of him. He participates in games and competition with his friend Ringo, has a sense of humor, and also has fun. Bayard is a more sheltered child than Ringo even though he has been more places and seen more things. He is not aggressive and really doesn’t want to hurt anyone, but when it is time to avenge his grandmother’s death, he can and does, pull the trigger. Bayard is the narrator throughout The Unvanquished, and he describes the war and its devastation through a child’s eyes.
Somewhere between ages 12 and 24, Bayard analyzes and categorizes his life experiences and formulates his own beliefs and code of behavior. “The behavior of the family and friends is finally judged for what it is, often shrewd, sometimes ingenious and impulsive, but not always right or just” (Hoffman 83). Bayard is studying law in college and has become a man of intellect and rationality, a person who rejects violence as a preferred method of handling crises. This position is strengthened by his father’s assertion that he was tired of killing, no matter what the reason.

Thus, when 24 and in college, Bayard received the news, delivered by Ringo, that his father has been killed by a former business associate, now called Redmond, he was aware that his father intentionally went to the confrontation unarmed. He must now make a decision whether to respond with violence, as his father’s wife Drusilla, his father’s old troops, and the townsmen expect him to do, or to follow his own inclination --- to also confront Redmond unarmed, refusing to extract revenge. Bayard has a dilemma because he disagrees with the community expectations and with the act itself, but he has been a member of that community and still yearns for its understanding and acceptance, reactions he believes he will not obtain. He also knows, as do the townspeople, that Redmond had not acted in a cowardly manner but that John Sartoris simply did not defend himself.

Bayard is supported in his decision not to fight by his Aunt Jenny and he acts in a manner consistent with his beliefs. Bayard confronts Redmond unarmed and is very lucky that Redmond fires twice into the air, walks out, and takes a train out of town. Bayard does not lose face and the townsmen shift in their views and conclude “maybe you’re right, maybe there has been enough killing in your family” (251).

Bayard has changed a lifestyle pattern through his behavior. He killed Grumby for revenge after Grumby killed his grandmother. This time he decides not to kill and acts in a new and different mode, even though he believes the new action will provoke rejection from people whose opinion he values. He chooses what he has decided is the correct moral path, even though it is different from that of his father and from his own previous path. As Brooks suggests, he has not just rejected the old code, but he has transcended it.
Bayard can be viewed as representing “the reconstructed South in a new and positive way. The Unvanquished seems to portray a new age free of racial intolerance built by fresh, uninhibited young people without prejudice (Seyppel 69). Bayard is seemingly able to break from tradition because he has been “gently nurtured” by Granny Millard as a child and Aunt Jenny as an adult, and he is legally trained. Moreover, he never was presented as callous or brutal (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 86).

The last portrait of Bayard Sartoris is when he is 69 or 70 years of age, “a crotchety old banker” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 100). He is deaf, which adds to his natural and chosen condition of isolation and provides him with means for avoiding situations, if he wishes. He is no longer interested in much of anything except passing time quietly and comfortably, and he has retained little of tradition except some sentimental details that had personal meaning for him. Old Bayard, as he is referred to now, is not happy to see his grandson return home. Young Bayard carries his name but he is wild and impetuous. Furthermore they do not have much in common; in fact Old Bayard is disapproving of his grandson. He no longer has anything to tell Young Bayard and he is not morally competent to help him.

Old Bayard is worried about death. He has a growth on his face which he fears may be cancerous. He refuses to cooperate with his modern doctors but instead applies a home medicinal remedy delivered to him by Old Man Falls. To everyone’s surprise, by the time Bayard is forced to consult a surgeon, the “black glop” falls off and his skin is pink and without blemish. Bayard took a chance with his life, and this time it paid off.

The next risk Bayard takes, however, is not so successful. What he did cultivate in common with Young Bayard was to engage in wild automobile rides, the two of them courting death together. It was by speeding on a slippery road that Old Bayard finally accomplished his desire, succumbing to a heart attack as Young Bayard saved the car.

In the early portion of his life, Bayard is a happy young boy, strong in spirit, thriving on the excitement provided by the war and his colorful father, John. When, at 24, Bayard chooses to meet Redmond unarmed and wins his gamble that he will not be killed, he has a “peak experience,” a transformation within himself, a realistic success in which he
earned the admiration of others. Like all peak experiences, this moment will stand out in Bayard’s memory for the rest of his life. But as he grew older, Bayard became ordinary, complacent, comfortable, and perhaps selfish. He clearly demonstrates Cleanth Brooks’ description: “a young man who has his heroic hour may very well subside into a lifetime of rather conventional duties” (Yoknapatawpha 101). Bayard’s memory and his human spirit weaken and he chooses to resent his grandson, Young Bayard, rather than to help him. He does not leave any emotional or spiritual legacy to his descendants and thus fails to pass on to his family and hence to society, whatever he may have learned in his life. He dies quietly, selfishly, and, in contrast to his father John, will rest quietly and be remembered by few.

Aunt Jenny

Virginia (Jenny) DuPre was born in 1840 in Carolina. She was the younger sister of John Sartoris and the aunt of Bayard Sartoris, only 10 years his elder. She was married for two years until her husband was killed in the war. By the time she came to live with the Sartoris it was 1869 and she was about 30 years old. She brought with her “the clothing in which she stood and a wicker hamper filled with colored glass, a few flower cuttings, and two bottles of port” (CS 728), which had been John Sartoris’ mother’s deathbed legacy to him (Sartoris 24).

Miss Jenny adopts the Sartoris men as her own and provides nurturance, advice, stability, and sanity within the household. She represents the aristocratic, old order virtues and has inherited a set of moral principles and a code of conduct. She is part of, and understands, the old South. Aunt Jenny is intelligent, and prone to sharp, ironic commentary. When Bayard is 24, she provides him with love, respect, and support in his decision to face Redmond alone and unarmed. After that time she keeps house for him and in Sartoris, she and Bayard are the two Sartoris remaining from their generation. Aunt Jenny is older than Bayard but, in their later years, thinks and acts younger. She \

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admires the Sartoris bravado and risk taking but understands that they will eventually lead to destruction and doom. Later on, she attempts to get Young Bayard to care about himself and is partly responsible for his marriage to Narcissa. Although he respects Aunt Jenny in many ways, Young Bayard ignores her admonitions about his fast cars and angry behavior.

Aunt Jenny knows who she is and understands her role in life. She is feminine and womanly but never chooses to marry again as she is busy taking care of the Sartoris men. She is nurturing, like Rosa Millard, and more emotionally expressive and kind. By the time she enters the picture, the patterns of the Sartoris men have been set. She can love them and attempt to make their lives better, but she cannot change or control them.

Most of the descriptions of Aunt Jenny present her as asexual, past her prime in life, postmenopausal, and thus able to use her intelligence uninfluenced by hormonal fluctuations. She, again like Rosa Millard, is free to relate realistically to the world, to comprehend and do what she must do to achieve her desired outcomes (Harrington & Abadie 96-97). She is a counter-influence to Drusilla, Bayard’s step-mother, and provides strength to enable Bayard to refuse to follow his step-mother’s wishes to revenge his father’s death. Miss Jenny also serves as teacher, mentor, and mother-figure to Narcissa for a time. Later, she will reject her.

In Sartoris, Miss Jenny is a very old woman. Her personality characteristics, wit, sharp tongue, and wisdom are exaggerated and she is portrayed as “more tart, more acid of tongue, more the old matriarch set in her ways” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 101). At times now she seems more critical than she does nurturing. She has complete control over the Sartoris household and is still capable of running it well. She attempts to threaten Young Bayard into coming home to meet his responsibilities but is unsuccessful since he refuses to answer her letters. She also loses the control she thought she had over Narcissa when the younger woman names her baby Benbow instead of John, as dictated by Miss Jenny. Whereas in the past everyone always listened to Jenny, now she is losing power, losing influence; the younger generation is choosing not to listen.

Miss Jenny receives the news of Young Bayard’s death as she is attempting to send
him another telegram to come home. A week later Simon, her longtime and loyal black servant, is bludgeoned to death. “I think, Miss Jenny said, who had not spent a day in bed since she was forty years old, that I’ll be sick for awhile” (Sartoris 275). She decides beforehand that she will be sick for three weeks. At the end of this time, on the day of Benbow’s christening, she goes to the cemetery, looks at the Sartoris graves, and remembers. It is her method of handling grief and a time to consider a world without Sartoris men, at least until Benbow grows up. She ponders a statement made by Narcissa long ago, that a world without men might be quieter, more peaceful. She ritualistically celebrates the end of an era.

The last time the reader encounters Aunt Jenny is in the short story “There Was A Queen,” when she is 90 years old, wheelchair-bound, living in a window above the flower garden that she tended for years. She still refers to Benbow Sartoris as “Johnny.” She is cared for by a black female servant, Elnora, who had been instructed by Colonel Sartoris before his death to do just that: “No outsiders from town” (CS 728). Elnora voices to herself disapproval of Young Bayard’s wife, Narcissa, whose relationship with Aunt Jenny has sadly deteriorated even though they live together in the big Sartoris house. Aunt Jenny has realized that Narcissa manipulated her in order to get close to Bayard and she faces the fact that Narcissa never talks or shares with her -- they are not friends as she once thought. When Narcissa leaves the household and spends two nights in Memphis, the first time she has ever been away from her son, everyone is perplexed. Upon her return, Narcissa tells Aunt Jenny that she has spent the night with a federal agent in order to regain possession of the sick love letters written to and about her, by Byron Snopes, 13 years prior. With this act, which Narcissa thinks is necessary and therefore right, Miss Jenny repudiates Narcissa clearly, once and for all. She has transgressed the code of the old order, stepped over the line. It is obvious that Narcissa is not a Sartoris. Miss Jenny then requests her hat, puts it on, and quietly dies in her chair while Narcissa and Benbow are eating. Like John Sartoris, Miss Jenny has controlled her own death.

Miss Jenny demonstrates a strength of spirit similar to that of her brother John. She is
respected by all the people she encounters, including the black servants. She is described by Elnora as being “quality”. “Born Sartoris or born quality of any kind ain’t is, it’s does” (CS 732). She understands and lives the values of the old order. She is always honorable in her dealings. She is basically a nurturing individual and unselfish, and she tries to teach either directly or by use of irony. She is very strong but she is comfortable in her feminine role. Her peak experience was when she provided support for Bayard to face Redmond in his own way, and his success was her success too. Miss Jenny enjoyed taking care of the Sartoris men and she created an identity for herself as a Sartoris woman. She demonstrated wisdom about the meaning of life and illustrates this by burying her men with strong, simple, but appropriate epithets. She also demonstrates Faulkner’s values of persistence and endurance. It would seem appropriate to say that Miss Jenny enjoyed her life but she did end it without leaving much behind, i.e., her social legacy was limited, perhaps because she lived too long and the younger generation did not respect her. She did develop a relationship with Benbow, and they were close, but his mother would remain with him and Miss Jenny’s eventual closeness would likely have been limited.

Drusilla

Drusilla makes her appearance in *The Unvanquished* as an older cousin of Bayard Sartoris. She is not described in flattering terms: “She was not tall, it was the way she stood and walked. She had on pants like a man” (89). Drusilla rides a horse named Bobolink and she expresses a dream to ride with the troops of John Sartoris. Bayard observes that she has no fear, a fact that she doesn’t notice herself. She requests that Bayard “just tell Colonel Sartoris that I can ride and I don’t get tired” (102).

Drusilla does achieve her dream of riding with Colonel Sartoris and his troops and proves herself in the war. She lived with the male soldiers, dressing like them, and fighting by their sides. By choosing this life she has “unsexed herself,” rejecting the role
of the Southern woman, whose intended has been killed in the war, and adopted instead the role of the male soldier. She has chosen not to grieve for her fiancé but rather to identify with him. As she writes to her mother: “I am riding in Cousin John’s troops not to find a man, but to hurt Yankees” (The Unvanquished 191). She does hate the enemy and wants to be part of the southern cause. “But she also rejects her own life and her womanhood by doing so” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 82-83).

When Drusilla’s mother, Aunt Louisa, refuses to accept Drusilla’s chosen path and insists she must marry Colonel Sartoris, Drusilla attempts to ignore her. However, Aunt Louisa enlists the aristocratic ladies of the community to join her cause, they visit, see that Drusilla is indeed living at the Sartorises, and society forces marriage upon a humiliated and embarrassed Drusilla and a tolerantly amused John Sartoris. The defeat of Drusilla comes when she is forced to put on one of the dresses she hates. Drusilla is depressed because her personal identity has been rejected, brutalized, and she knows there is no connection between what happened on the battlefield and what her mother and the ladies are saying happened. Even Colonel Sartoris kindly concedes “they have beaten you Drusilla” (203). The wedding is a bit of a fiasco, but it does occur. The implication though, is that it is a marriage in name only. There is no suggestion of intimacy between Drusilla and Colonel Sartoris.

Following her marriage to John Sartoris, and at his insistence, Drusilla wears dresses and sprigs of verbena in her hair. “She said verbena was the only scent you could smell above the smell of horses and courage and so it was the only one worth the wearing” (220). When Bayard is 20 and Drusilla 28, they walk in the garden and she looks at him differently, romantically, and demands that he kiss her. Bayard protests that she is his father’s wife but she persists and eventually Bayard does kiss her, with passion, and then again, both agreeing and understanding that he will report this act to her husband, his father. Bayard does so, and finds “it was worse with him than not hearing it: it didn’t even matter” (Unvanquished 231).

Drusilla reappears in the short story “An Odor of Verbena” which is also the last
chapter of *The Unvanquished*. After Colonel Sartoris is killed by Redmond, Drusilla pleads with Bayard to avenge his death. She reminds Bayard that he killed Grumby to avenge Granny Millard’s death. She attempts to make him take the dueling pistols by pressing one of them into his right hand and then kissing the hand. She becomes hysterical in her urgency to make the revengeful act happen. In this scene she demonstrates her passionate commitment to the old code of honor and must sense that Bayard is having his doubts as she implores him to honor the code. She pleads so desperately that she begins to laugh hysterically and is escorted away at the insistence of Miss Jenny. Despite her over-identification with the code, she does seem to care for Bayard as she leaves a sprig of verbena on his pillow. She may have lost respect for Bayard but she still cares about him.

Drusilla appears to be a woman “out of sync” with the time period and the society within which she lives. To the average Southern man and woman she was a freak. Along with her identification with the code, she also identified with the world of men and certainly was not equipped in any way to assume the role of John Sartoris’s wife. She could not help being bitter toward her family who forced her into a role and a life she did not want. Drusilla is not violent but she is more helpless and hopeless. Certainly she is depressed, and in a modern society she might have been suicidal as a result of her alienation and rejection. In modern society, however, her alternative lifestyle would have been tolerated, if not accepted. At the end of *The Unvanquished* Drusilla leaves to go home but it is unclear where home is - unclear what she will find there - but it is most likely not happiness. She was brave, but bravery in a Southern woman was scorned, not honored.

Drusilla shows strength of spirit initially in that she has a dream and pursues it vigorously, against strong opposition from others, and against all odds. She worked at cultivating the necessary skills to achieve that dream i.e., learned to ride horses, fight, and proved that she had abilities in these areas. She was also willing to undergo the hardships that were a part of the Civil War, such as battling the cold weather and sleeping on the ground. But like a hero who returns from the war un-rewarded, her efforts were not
appreciated or praised. Colonel Sartoris allowed her to live in his house, like one of the children, but she served no important function there until her marriage. This was adequate for Drusilla, who did not have a positive self-concept and gave evidence of few personal needs. When her family suggested that her behavior had been immoral and she must marry, she was crushed. She could not believe how misunderstood her motives had been. Sadly, she allowed her spirit to relinquish its energy, and she succumbed to the desires of others. Eventually, she made one last bid to plead for the honor she believed in, and then she just faded away.

Drusilla experienced peak moments: when she was accepted into Colonel Sartoris’s troops, during battle, and when she won a bluff by threatening to shoot Bobolink. But in the end her spirit is depleted, weakened, sapped. She probably hates herself because she is not a man and has so little control. She can only remind Bayard of the code but she cannot make him choose it, choose her. When she chooses to go, no one cares, although Bayard will always remember her.

Young Bayard

Young Bayard is a veteran of World War I who returns home in 1919. He returns to his grandfather (Old Bayard) and to Aunt Jenny. He is depressed, apathetic, angry, and violent. He is searching for meaningfulness and a “way to live” after the war experience. Today he would be diagnosed as having Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Some critics have considered him a member of the “lost generation.” He does not appear able to find guidance or release from his pent up feelings.

Adding to Young Bayard’s sorrow is the fact that he witnessed his twin brother John lose his life in the war, jumping out of a burning plane feet first, “thumbing his nose at Bayard in a familiar gesture” (Sartoris 206). Bayard could not save John, or find his body, even though he tried. Eventually he develops the delusional belief and guilt that he,
in fact, killed his brother.

Bayard cannot free himself of his intense love for his brother and the pain that he feels at his loss. His memory overpowers the present time and Bayard experiences flashbacks of John’s death. Although other people attempt to reach out to him emotionally e.g., Miss Jenny, Narcissa, he can only respond to them briefly, with a half-hearted effort, because his psychic energy is, in fact, tied up with John.

As much as Bayard cannot emotionally connect with other people, he also cannot connect with the tradition of his family. Bayard does not understand what the tradition is or what it is supposed to be. “That it once was there, he knows; that something should replace it, he also knows. But he cannot move beyond his awareness of loss” (Howe 35). People who could help him with this, such as Old Bayard or Aunt Jenny, are preoccupied with their own difficulties and do not perceive this lack in Bayard.

Bayard has no life purpose or true vocation. He has almost no structure of daily activities. He drinks a lot. He engages in risk-taking behaviors. Bayard buys a car and drives it carelessly, speeding, taking chances on the road, with no concern for safety. His grandfather, Old Bayard, disapproves of the car but is somehow also fascinated with it, so he develops a routine of riding with Young Bayard at least once daily. Young Bayard promises Narcissa that he will stop the reckless driving but he never does so. Eventually he kills Old Bayard by driving so recklessly that Old Bayard succumbs to a heart attack in the car. This, of course, adds greatly to Young Bayard’s already large storehouse of guilt.

Prior to the automobile fatality, Young Bayard had already demonstrated self-destructive behavior. He chose to attempt to ride a dangerous stallion, was thrown off the horse, and injured his head. He had an accident while he was driving the car alone and had to be pulled out from under water. These events slowed him up temporarily until he healed sufficiently enough to resume his destructive behavior.

During one of his recovery periods Young Bayard is attended by Narcissa, who is both frightened by and attracted to him. She rebuffs his attempts to establish a romantic relationship, which probably functions as an appeal and as a challenge for him. They do
marry, but the marriage does not seem to hold his interest for long. Narcissa is presented as a rather placid female, not really interested in the sexual aspects of marriage. She attempts to pull Bayard into the comforts of ordinary life, but does not really succeed. “It would take a more worldly woman, a wiser and also a much more passionate creature than Narcissa is, to reclaim Bayard” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 108). Narcissa becomes pregnant as Bayard loses interest, but the forthcoming baby does not engage him either.

After the death of his grandfather, Bayard feels he cannot go home. He is alone and tries to introspect at a time when introspection is not valued. He cannot face what has happened, and the beginning of self-awareness only plunges him into more emotional misery. His intelligence is not equal to his despair.

Bayard tries to turn to his neighbors, the McCallums, the family consisting of Old Man McCallum and his unmarried sons. They are hunters and trappers and live in a simple style. Whereas Bayard is full of confusion and doubt, the McCallums seem to be secure in their position, stable in the changing world. Bayard is comforted by being in their presence, quickly adapts to their routines, and feels even better once he realizes that they are as yet unaware of the death of his grandfather. Bayard obtains a temporary respite in which he hunts and talks about old times. But even with the McCallums, he is forced to deal with reality as they make many references to his brother John and his grandfather. Bayard feels deficient as he remembers ways in which John was more adequate than he is -- John would always remember to bring candy to the female servant, Mandy, whereas Bayard never thought about it. Bayard must eventually leave the McCallums but he stays as long as he can, “basking in the family stability and unity which is in dramatic contrast to the crumbling of the Sartorises” (Howe 40-41).

After leaving the McCallums, Bayard literally runs away. He travels throughout many states: partying, drinking, taking risks, always being violent. When a stranger in a bar offers Bayard a chance to fly a new, undeveloped airplane, he does so, likely sensing that this could mean an end to his misery. He flies the plane against advice and is killed. “Somewhere, something has been lost, and, as he plunges willingly to his death, that is all
he knows” (Howe 41). In the final analysis he has chosen to die in a plane crash, just like his brother.

Bayard is an example of a human spirit that is sick or numb. He lacks a purpose for living and does not give anything to his descendents or to anyone else. He is selfish, locked within his own memories, and lacks awareness of or compassion for others. The sadness of Young Bayard is that he probably does have untreated psychiatric problems, problems which if resolved, might be capable of freeing his spirit and allowing further development. But he is as crippled as if the war wounds were physical and his vitality has been sapped. He would like to fight but lacks the tools to do so and, in his state of alienation, will not request the tools from anyone else. “About Young Bayard’s soul Miss Jenny did not alarm herself at all: he had no soul” (Sartoris 67).

Narcissa Benbow Sartoris

Narcissa is a Sartoris only by marriage. She was born in 1879 and is often described as having an “unnaturally close” relationship with her brother Horace, who is 7 years older. As her name implies, she acts out of her own self-interests and can be manipulative in order to get what she wants. Narcissa appears in two of Faulkner’s novels: Sartoris and Sanctuary. She is the mother of Benbow (Bory) Sartoris, the last surviving heir.

In Sartoris, Narcissa is described as a rather shy, sweet girl who is very dependent on her brother. She is afraid of men and her ambivalent attraction/repulsion toward Bayard Sartoris is very terrifying to her. She decides to marry Bayard, with some misgivings, partly because she is fascinated with him, but she is also motivated by the fact that her brother Horace is preparing to marry Belle Mitchell. She is both competitive and afraid of being left alone.

Initially the reader has empathy with Narcissa because “she struggles to make contact with life, but fails” (Warren 251). She seems sincere in her efforts to engage Bayard and make him involved with her but “she has a deep rooted coldness and an inability to make
any concessions to men” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 107). She never becomes a real wife to Bayard even though she will be the mother of his child. When he rejects her, she turns in fantasy back to Horace and names the child Benbow, the name of her own family. 

Narcissa’s character sharpens and becomes more defined in the short story “There was a Queen.” Before much action takes place, the mulatto servant, Endora, comments on what she perceives as the inferior character of Narcissa compared to Miss Jenny. She focuses on the fact Narcissa went to Memphis for two days, leaving Miss Jenny, who is 90 years old, alone with only young Benbow and the Negro staff. She refers to Narcissa as “trash, town trash” (CS 729) and suggests that she lacks “quality” (732). We later learn that the reason for Narcissa’s trip to Memphis was to prostitute herself with a Northern, Jewish federal agent in order to recover a series of obscene letters written to her by Byron Snopes years before. Narcissa is not really troubled by the purpose for her journey but rather is relieved that she recovered the letters before anyone else read them. She, in fact, sacrificed her respectability in the name of expedience, an act that does not bother her but “kills” Miss Jenny. Narcissa initially kept the letters because they provided her with a kind of erotic excitement. She realized that the letters were missing on her wedding day. She had moments of “definite fear when she considered the possibility that people might learn that someone had had such thoughts about her and put them into words” (Sartoris 243). Narcissa does not really care about the letters but does worry about how others will perceive and judge her.

As time passes, Narcissa’s nature devolves into a despicable portrait. “In Sanctuary she reveals a depravity that is shocking” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 128). This depravity involves chastisement of Horace for involving himself in the Temple Drake case and actually sabotaging his legal efforts so that justice does not occur and two innocent people, Lee and Ruby Goodwin, are judged to be guilty. Narcissa preserves the positions of herself and her brother in Jefferson, but at the expense of truth and justice. She had become jealous and indignant at Horace’s insistence that he would help Ruby Goodwin, calling Ruby a “street walker and a murderer’s woman” (Sanctuary 117). She refused to allow Ruby to stay in her home. The real betrayal of Horace is when Narcissa goes to the
District Attorney, telling him she wants Lee Goodwin’s trial ended and Horace out of the case. She provides the D.A. with information he did not have, namely that Clarence Snopes called Horace and the next day Horace went to Memphis. Narcissa does not care that losing the case will hurt Horace professionally and she does not care what happens to the Goodwins. In her mind she “saves” Horace and sends him back to Belle, even though he had been contemplating divorce. She does not like Belle but she does not want Horace to experience the social disgrace that accompanies divorce. Narcissa works to get and maintain the approval of society at any cost. She does not respect Horace’s beliefs or feelings but cares only that he not disgrace himself in the eyes of others.

Narcissa can be viewed as a representation of the hypocritical forces of society. Her position in Jefferson, and that of Horace’s, is more important to her than justice. She worries about how Horace’s actions will be interpreted by others. She does not care what methods she uses to achieve her goals. She shows indifference and disregard for moral qualities. Her one goal is to control Horace, but she tells herself that she is only protecting him and his reputation.

As Narcissa behaves more abominably, Faulkner also detracts from her appearance. Now she is described as a “large woman” who always wears white (to create the impression of purity). She begins to enjoy her manipulations and is proud when they work. She establishes control over Horace and will, no doubt, spend the rest of her life in attempting to control Bory. If Bory adopts her values, the Sartoris lineage has come to a sad ending.

Narcissa seems to have a rather weak human spirit initially, appearing uncertain, confused, and neurotic. Once she becomes disillusioned with Bayard, and returns her focus to her brother, Horace, she becomes very manipulative, and conniving, and she appears to dismiss morals in favor of pragmatically “getting what you want.” She is a proponent of “the end justifies the means.” Narcissa is competitive with Miss Jenny for Bory’s affections. She is competitive with Belle for Horace. She “wins” in the sense that she controls her “men,” Horace and Bory. She loses in that she foregoes any moral principles. Narcissa maintains the energy of the human spirit but uses that energy in
sabotaging any moral human concerns that come to her attention. She has nothing of value to pass on to future generations or to anyone. She maintains her position in society at the expense of her soul, so to speak.

**Horace Benbow**

Horace is included in the Sartoris section of the paper--not because he is related to the Sartorises, but because he also operates with the value system of the old order. He comes from a good family. He is a lawyer who possesses humanitarian values and wants to operate with chivalry and honor. He is a “good man” who believes in justice. He is also a romantic who places the Southern woman on a pedestal and believes it is his duty and destiny to protect her.

Although Horace starts out with idealistic values, he is forced to confront the existence of evil in the world and within himself. He does grow and learn, especially in *Sanctuary*, but as he learns, he becomes saddened and defeated, and becomes more ineffectual rather than more confident. He seems unable to accept himself once he faces the fact that he does not have, and cannot have, moral perfection. He is a man who places his confidence in reason and logic, but when forced to deal with emotions, he is out of his element and cannot cope.

In *Sartoris*, Horace returns home from the war and moves in with his sister, Narcissa. Their reunion appears more like reuniting lovers than reuniting siblings. Horace is a spectator rather than a participant in life. He seems to have no male friends except social drinkers. He fantasizes a lot and obsessively tries to rationalize events in his mind. In many ways he is encapsulated within his mind and is out of the mainstream of society. He desires to be a good and moral person but his actions are weak. He is a dreamer, not a doer.

Horace must work to get out from under the ministrations of his sister Narcissa who has taken on a motherly role with him. When he has an affair with Belle Mitchell, the
wife of a friend, Horace goes against his own moral principles, and he also “sneaks” to do this without Narcissa finding out. He is like a young boy with a domineering mother who intentionally makes a “bad choice” and, in defense of that choice, will develop the strength to break away from the mother and achieve independence. Horace knows Belle Mitchell is a bad choice but he is infatuated with her daughter, Little Belle, a fact which again violates his rigid moral code.

In *Sanctuary* Horace must cope with his findings and conclusion that evil really exists in the world and that it even exists in the disposition of a young woman whom he perceived previously as sweet and pure. His notions about reality and about the nature of women have both been challenged. In Horace’s mind, if this could have happened to Temple, it could potentially have happened to Little Belle. “Little Belle has not only been fused with Temple, she has been fused with Horace himself, who, in an agony of empathy, has “felt himself” into the raped girl’s ordeal” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 129).

As Horace gains insight into his case and into himself, he actually becomes more ineffectual and less competent. If he had been able to face and accept his own attitudes, the opposite probably would have been true. But he clings to his previous view of the world and does not face reality until it is too late. His biggest failing is that he does not perceive most of the women accurately. He denies that Temple could be depraved or could lie, he denies to himself the nasty qualities inherent within Belle Mitchell, and even more so, within Narcissa. This denial eventually places Horace back in bondage to these same women. Likewise, he does not see Little Belle clearly and she becomes angry when he thinks he is protecting her but she is simply annoyed with his over-solicitation. The women in Horace’s world have moved on but he lingers within the overprotective, chivalrous code.

When Horace loses his court case, his reality is challenged again. What should have been a moral victory became a stunning defeat. Horace is forced to admit that the evil, the amoral, has power now. He does not fit in this contemporary world. It is something he never thought would happen. He had remained hopeful to the end and so the defeat was ever more crushing. Horace will use his intellectual defenses to rationalize and keep on
functioning but he now must deal with the fact that he and his views have become obsolete, that society is no longer concerned with justice but with expediency. He also must come to terms with the fact that he has not proven himself to be a great lawyer, that he had a chance to do so, but failed. As much as he wanted to help Lee and Ruby Goodwin, and he did want to, he has failed. He lacks the power of his ancestors and he does not perform like the Superman of his fantasies. He has faced the dark forces of his personality, but at the expense of his ego and self-respect.

The human spirit in Horace Benbow has taken a beating. It is tragic that he fails, in part, because he could not face the evils in society, in himself, and in others around him, especially the women. By denying parts of reality he could not defend against it, and the evils were thus able to triumph. Horace could have been an excellent warrior but he was too idealistic. Faulkner’s lesson here is interesting: to combat evil, to overcome it, one must recognize the enemy, see it clearly, and cannot pretend that it does not exist. Horace does not clearly recognize the enemy, even at the end of the novel, as he returns to Belle and Narcissa. He clings to his old principles, even though they have failed him. Horace’s peak experience has been denied him because of his own limitations.

Summary

Thus, in the Sartoris dynasty, we see an ebbing of the strength of the human spirit as it passes down to future generations. It is strongest in John Sartoris, Aunt Jenny, and Rosa Millard. These individuals demonstrate the life force, the “elan vital.” Their beliefs and moral codes are well adapted to the times in which they live. Old Bayard has a peak experience when he is in his 20’s, transcends the old order and changes its direction, but following this period, he leads a rather mundane life and does not become a strong leader. However, he can remember and savor the peak experience. Two generations later, though, we see that the human spirit has weakened, or at least has been challenged. Narcissa, Young Bayard, and Horace do not have the strength or spirit of their ancestors.
They either are ignorant of, or ignore, the moral code (Bayard, Narcissa) or find it not adaptable to the conditions of modern life (Horace). The younger Sartorises do not deal well with reality, experiencing confusion, anxiety, and depression that their ancestors did not have time to experience or think about. The human spirit is still present, but it is weakened, demoralized, ill, in need of healing. All this is, of course, similar to the position of the South following the Civil War.

The Compsons

Let us consider, now, the presence of the human spirit in the other major family of the old order, namely the Compsons. The Compsons existed along side of the Sartorises, and the grandfather, Jason Lycurgus II, Brigadier General, was a contemporary of John Sartoris in the Civil War. Faulkner, in The Sound and the Fury, concentrated on his descendents, specifically the family of Jason Compson III. This family is comprised of Mr. Jason Richmond Compson, Mrs. Caroline Bascomb Compson, and their four children: Caddy, Quentin, Jason, and Benjy. The time period is roughly the first three decades of the 1900’s.

The first Compson, according to Faulkner, was “a bold, ruthless man who came into Mississippi as a free forester to grasp where and when he could and wanted to, and established what should have been a princely line, and that princely line decayed” (FU 31). “That was blood which was good and brave once, but has thinned and faded all the way out” (FU 3). The reader encounters the generation of Compsons in which the family is decaying and disintegrating, the end of that great lineage.

The story of the Compson family is told primarily in Faulkner’s first great novel, The Sound and the Fury. Two members of the family, Mr. Compson and his son Quentin, also appear as primary characters in Absalom, Absalom! The events in the Compson family overlap in generational time with events in the lives of Young Bayard, Narcissa, and Horace. We are not treated in Faulkner’s writings to the strong Compsons living in earlier
time periods. The reader just comes in at the end, to witness the end. The parents are addressed briefly but it is really the children’s lives that constitute the bulk of the story. *The Sound and the Fury* is told from the viewpoints of the three male Compson children. Caddy does not have a direct voice, but she is a viable presence through the descriptions and reactions of the others.

Olga Vickery has described the Compson house as “a symbol of isolation” (30). This is an apt description, as all characters within the household are encapsulated within their own shells and their own realities. Mr. Compson is a passive man, cynical and pessimistic, who is quietly drinking himself to death. He shares observations, usually negatively tinged, but he does not offer any real viable help to anyone. When he does not know the truth, he is not beyond fabrication. Mr. Compson presents the picture of a man who has been beaten by life. He does not try to stop drinking for his family. He lacks the active principle by which he might have controlled Caddy and protected her from her too early sexual experiences. He fails Quentin by his insensitive and nihilistic answers to his questions and by his callous disregard of the honor principle that is so important to Quentin. He protects Benjy only in that he lets him remain home but he does not really help him or relate to him on a daily basis. He seems to dislike Jason who, in turn, probably regards him as weak. In short, Mr. Compson has retained few or none of the positive qualities of the human spirit. His alcoholism is a courting of death and a rejection of the life force. He has an illness but does not meet it with courage or resistance.

Mrs. Compson isolates herself physically by spending most of her time in her room, in her bed, because of feigned weakness and imaginary illnesses. The sick bed now provides her focus of attention. When she is up and out of her room, she clothes herself in long black dresses and orders Dilsey, the black servant, to perform her long abandoned functions. She demands attention but does not in any way provide attention for, or nurture, anyone else. She provides no mothering for the Compson children but relegates this function to Dilsey. She is a chronic complainer, a “poor me” victim, and a very unhappy woman. Like Narcissa, she is overly concerned with position and status, at the expense of love. When Caddy, in her eyes, disgraces the family, she wears black and
vows never to allow Caddy’s name to be spoken in the house again. When Maury is clearly found to be retarded, she changes his name to Benjy so he does not reflect upon her social heritage from the Bascomb family. The only child of her heart is Jason and, like Horace now, she cannot perceive the evil within him. Mrs. Compson is a failure as a woman, a wife, and a mother. Her spirit is “sick,” again untreated, and she is in such a desperate position that she can be of no help to anyone, nor leave them any type of spiritual or moral legacy.

With both parents demonstrating such depletion and devastation of the human spirit, living for social reputation and money but exhibiting no joy, compassion, or love for their children, or even for themselves, it is little wonder that the Compson children endure immense personal struggles.

Caddy Compson

Faulkner, in reference to Caddy Compson, stated: “To me she was the beautiful one. She was my heart’s darling” (FU 6). He indicated that the entire novel The Sound and the Fury stemmed from an image he had of a little girl climbing a tree who had dirty drawers from playing in the mud (FU 1). This image shows the reader first that Caddy was the adventuresome one, the child who dared to climb the tree and tried to understand her grandmother’s death while her three brothers remained on the ground. The muddy drawers also predicted Caddy’s “fall from grace” once she later became a sexually active being.

Caddy’s most positive virtue is the love and compassion she demonstrates toward Benjy, in particular. She seems to know what Benjy wants and feels. Others in the family do not, primarily because they don’t communicate directly with him (Bloom, WF, 42-43). She is sensitive enough to give Benjy objects to comfort him, for example, the red and yellow cushion, the slipper. When Benjy is disturbed by the fact she wears perfume, Caddy washes it off so that she once again smells “like trees” and Benjy is reassured. She
essentially is Benjy’s mother (in addition to Dilsey), and as long as she is in the house she provides mothering to him and increases his security. Caddy is never ashamed of Benjy, nor is she impatient. She takes wonderful care of him, especially as she has never really had a mother herself. She is a sweet, natural, and loving individual.

Caddy also mothers Quentin and Jason, but to a lesser extent. She plays with Quentin, functions more as an equal, and they have positive, and perhaps sexual, feelings toward one another. Jason is the brother she seems not to have valued as much.

Caddy is essentially an affirmative individual who must break out of the Compson household because it consists of hopeless gloom. She is both brave and desperate. Again Faulkner provides an image, this time one of “the fatherless and motherless girl climbing down the rainpipe to escape from the only home she ever had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding” (Lion 245).

The central event of The Sound and the Fury is Caddy’s affair with Dalton Ames. “It is her ‘sin,’ her breach of ethics or conduct, her act of bringing the outside world within the family pattern” (Hoffman 51). Benjy senses Caddy’s loss of virginity and howls or laments. Quentin is horrified at her breach of the honor code and wants to protect Caddy and restore the honor, even raising the extreme idea of telling Mr. Compson that they have committed incest. Mrs. Compson feels personally betrayed, wears black, and dictates that Caddy’s name will never be spoken in the house again. Mr. Compson is detached as he expects little of females, anyway. Jason uses Caddy’s emerged sexuality as a reason to abhor her. Caddy, as a person, becomes “lost” in the minds of all of her family members. Her actions are judged according to the negative impact they have on each individual. What is a natural maturation, a healthy sexual interest, becomes convoluted and negatively judged. The reason Caddy became flirtatious and sought closeness from men was likely because she had received little or no mothering or affection in her home, except from Dilsey. She did not want to remain home and take care of her brothers for the rest of her life. Her experimentation in sex was natural but foolish. For Caddy, “sex was a fate, not a temptation” (Howe 51). As Caddy grew physically and emotionally, she fell away from spirituality.
Once Caddy learns she is pregnant, she marries, but the marriage fails. Her daughter, Miss Quentin, is raised in the Compson household by Jason and Mrs. Compson. Caddy continues to be as responsible as she can, sending money regularly for Miss Quentin’s care and once paying Jason to allow her to simply look at the child (when she bargained to “see” her). However, she functions now as more of an older sister to Miss Quentin, a sister who financially supports her but lives and exists elsewhere. When last seen, Caddy is in the company of a Nazi officer, a “brutal” man, similar to Dalton Ames, and very unlike Quentin.

Caddy demonstrates these values of the human spirit: compassion, endurance, and persistence. She has to escape the Compson household in order to survive emotionally, but she cannot take her child with her and must leave her to survive in that household as best she can. Faulkner has described The Sound and the Fury as a tragedy of two women: Caddy and her daughter (Lion 222). Caddy does not realize that she is continuing the cycle of bad parenting, because as a child she was a good parent. She is depleted of the energy, and the opportunity, required to be a good parent. This is the disaster than causes the real fall and ending of the Compson family. Caddy does not impart any values to Miss Quentin. Perhaps she felt she was not worthy to “know her.” Caddy is responsible financially, but Miss Quentin needs more than money to nourish her own human spirit.

The behavior of each of the brothers traces back to their interpretation and judgment of Caddy’s actions. While Caddy remains the central figure, her behavior greatly impacts the other children.

For Benjy, Caddy’s removal from the household constitutes a great loss. He is an idiot who does not comprehend time. “What happened to him 10 years ago was just yesterday” (FU 64). So Caddy remains a viable presence for Benjy that he experiences in vivid flashes of brightness and comfort and then remembers his loss. When he moans, he yearns for Caddy and the order in the world that she represented for him. He does not know what he is actually seeing. “That the only thing that held him into any sort of reality in the world at all, was the trust he had for his sister, that he knew she loved him and would defend him and so she was the whole world to him, and those things were flashes
that were reflected on her as in a mirror. He didn’t know what they meant” (FU 64). When Caddy left, Benjy lost his closest communication with the world and he actually lost two mothers, first Mrs. Compson and then Caddy.

After Caddy is gone, Benjy is left to the devices of Jason who eventually has him castrated and incarcerates him in an institution. He is eventually separated from Dilsey and from the family as a whole, to moan his loss of Caddy by himself, where no one understands. Benjy, by virtue of his retardation, is incapable of positive assertion of his human spirit as he cannot really be aware of it. He senses a lot, is more intuitive than most people, and by each individual’s treatment of Benjy, “supplies a standard by which we are judged and perhaps may know ourselves lost” (Waggoner 44). That is to say, how an individual treats Benjy may serve as a measure of that individual’s own human spirit.

Quentin Compson is an intelligent college student whom Faulkner describes as “half-mad, existing halfway between madness and sanity” (FU 95). Quentin is preoccupied with the ideals, philosophies, and traditions of the past. He believes strongly in the tradition of virginity for unmarried girls and thus becomes distraught when he learns that Caddy has had a sexual encounter with Dalton Ames. He tries to defend her honor but is unsuccessful. When he cannot, he fantasizes about admitting to committing incest with Caddy as a way to resolve the dilemma. He cares about Caddy, probably too much, but she does not care for him in a sexual way because her preference is for tougher, more brutal men, e.g., Dalton, and the Nazi. Quentin cannot fulfill the code of honor because Caddy will not allow it, but he cannot renounce the code, either. He suffers over the sins and misfortunes of his family, especially Caddy’s. Quentin decides to end his life because if, as his father says, “time cures all,” then the pain he feels over Caddy’s sins is meaningless and his own values are worthless. He cannot stop time and he cannot go on without the old set of principles governing his life Thus he commits suicide in 1910. His slavery to social conduct blocks off reality. He is often considered to be “Faulkner’s Hamlet” (Bloom WF 9).

Quentin’s human spirit is overshadowed by the social code. He cannot get in touch with human values and with how he personally feels. Although he loved Caddy as a
child, he cannot reach out to her as an adult because she has “broken the rules” and dealt, what he conceives of as, a crushing blow to the family’s position in society. Like Narcissa, he places too much value on society’s opinion; but unlike Narcissa, Quentin is not selfish yet rather oversensitive and impotent to change things. He gives up his life because he cannot change things, and he differs here from Horace who has the strength to continue living and functioning even after he faces the fact that he cannot change things. Quentin lets go of the life force because he cannot compromise. His belief in the code constituted his reason for living, once it is gone, he has no reason to go on. Quentin’s human spirit is weak and is defeated by his suicidal act. He leaves nothing to his survivors.

Jason, the youngest member of the Compson family, is more like the newcomers, to be described in the next section, than he is like the old order. Robert Penn Warren describes Jason as “the Compson who has embraced Snopesism” (105). Jason lives almost completely in the present with little thought about the past or his family’s heritage. He is rational, sane, at least of average intelligence, a childless bachelor, the favorite child of his mother who viewed him as similar to her own family, the Bascombs, and unlike the Compsons.

What is prominent in Jason’s personality is his desire for money and status and his negativity and contemptuousness toward other people, including his own family members. From Jason’s viewpoint, people are to be used in order to get what you want. His motivating principle seems to be never to be taken in. Jason calculates and manipulates. People are but objects, pawns in a chess game.

Jason behaves in a brutal manner toward Caddy. About women in general, and Miss Quentin in particular, he states “once a bitch, always a bitch” (180). He is disgusted with Caddy’s sexuality, but at the same time he keeps a prostitute as a mistress, seeing her on a controlled, calculating weekly basis. His anger toward Caddy increases when Caddy’s affair with Dalton Ames comes to light. Then her husband Herbert casts her out, rejects all the Compsons, and Jason loses a coveted bank job which had been promised to him by Herbert. Jason is fixated throughout his life on an imaginary future which does not
develop, a fact for which he blames others. He raises Caddy’s daughter but abuses her verbally and physically and steals the money that Caddy sends for her support. Jason is an Iago figure. He is described by Barth as “evil incarnate in the world. There is no remorse, no human sympathy, no pity for his victims” (27). “Evil for Faulkner involves a violation of nature and runs counter to the natural appetites and affections (Brooks FE 63). Jason has no natural affection for anyone. He is hard and contemptuous of his father and older brother. He regards Benjy as a nuisance and a disgrace to the family as well as an obstacle to the position he craves. His sister is simply a bitch. He cynically uses his mother, charming her enough so that she places him in charge of the household after his father’s death.

Jason is sane but shallow. He is biased, prejudiced, e.g., hates blacks and Jews, but believes he is fair and always right. He is totally lacking in insight as to his true nature. “He consciously tries to make himself detached, hard, rational, and pragmatic (Brooks FE 68). “His one notable characteristic is that he is witty and sometimes entertains us” (Brooks FE 67).

Jason demonstrates a deficit in the human spirit, an illness, a void. He represses and denies his emotions and views them as handicaps to his aspirations. He blames others for his misfortunes and lack of progress. Rather than assisting his fellow human beings, he has no compunction about hurting or destroying them if they get in the way of his egocentric goals. His competition is not play, but battle; not competitive joy, but war, a fight to the finish. He demonstrates what can be described as the unethical modern businessman’s desire for success and power at any cost and believes he must forge his own success by stepping on others and “beating them out.” He is not a deep enough thinker to be tragic. Jason distrusts everyone and he cannot place any confidence in a universe or anything else that might be irrational. He cannot afford to relax or let go in order to have any kind of peak experience; in fact he rushes through the world, running quickly from place to place, trying to control what cannot be controlled. He never slows down to contemplate or evaluate the meanings of his actions.

Faulkner regarded Jason Compson as his least favorite character (Lion 225). This is
because Jason shows no kindness, no love, but is totally mean-spirited, unkind and unmerciful. He is alienated from the natural values of the human spirit. He cannot pass on any values because he does not have positive values or wisdom to give, nor does he have anyone to give them to.

Jason is not ruled by societal pressure like Narcissa and his mother, but he wants society to respect him as an important, successful person. He would never kill himself over an ideal as Quentin did because he believes the individual makes his own success and ideals are irrelevant. However, he would hate and might want to kill another person if he or she blocked his path to success. He is without morals and without guilt.

We do not know what happens to the last descendants of these old order families, but we can only surmise. Bory is under the control of his domineering mother who does not hold humanitarian values. Miss Quentin has already shown disrespect for others who tried to help her, stole money, and ran away with a circus performer. Not a lot of hope for the human spirit, but one never knows.

The devastation and destruction of the human spirit in the later generations of both the Sartorises and the Compsons is likely one factor that enables the Newcomers to the South to not only move in, but to assume control of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County. Whereas industrialization and progress could not be held back, they were accompanied by a new breed of men, very different from the men of the old order. The human spirit in members of the old order was psychically and spiritually depleted and ill, making it possible for the newcomers to move in easily, without much resistance. It is to the newcomers that we will now turn our attention.
CHAPTER IV THE NEWCOMERS TO THE SOUTH

The Newcomers to the South arrive after the Civil War, place value upon the acquisition of land and power, and many do not possess the honor code so prevalent in the Old Order. These new arrivals are progressive and want to make money and changes. In so doing, they are often willing to utilize amoral, manipulative, and ruthless methods. I will study the Newcomers by looking at two families: the Sutpens, specifically Thomas and Judith, and the Snopeses, with reference to Flem, Eula, Linda, and Mink.

Thomas Sutpen

Thomas Sutpen, the protagonist of Faulkner’s novel *Absalom, Absalom!* is, like Caddy Compson, never presented directly but is rather the object of concern for a number of narrators. “The difference is that Sutpen provides a dynamic rather than a static center - each successive account of Sutpen is constantly being merged with its predecessors” (Vickery 84). The end result is a fusion of at least three different accounts, “each of which belongs to a different generation and reflects a different personal bias” (Vickery 84). They merge to create a kind of legend of Sutpen. “Miss Rosa’s account is like a Gothic thriller, Mr. Compson’s account of carefully guarded objectivity is like classical drama verging on satire, and Quentin and Shreve focus on love and chivalric romance” (Vickery 86). Each narrator has his, or her, point of view and produces three different legends about the same
man. Sutpen seems to always have the aura of never being fully understood, a man of mystery.

Thomas Sutpen is born in 1807 in the mountains of what is now West Virginia (Holman 33). His family is classified as “poor whites.” “Where he lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody. He was an innocent boy, believing that if one man possessed something more than another, he had simply obtained it by being lucky” (AA 179).

The significant event occurs when Sutpen is 13 or 14 years old. He is instructed by his father to take a message to a large plantation nearby. He is met at the door by a “monkey nigger” who tells him to never come to the front door again but to go around to the back (l88). This is traumatic for Sutpen and also the end of his innocence, in a sense. He realizes that men are not, in fact, equal. “In that brief moment the central symbolism of Absalom, Absalom! was established - the boy seeking admittance and being turned away in the name of the social code. Nothing in his past had prepared him for such a moment. He had nothing or no one to help him to understand or accept it” (Vickery 94). At first Sutpen is hurt and thinks the plantation owner is cruel. He then decides, however, that social differences exist and that he, himself, can achieve the higher position if he develops a plan, a design, “a pattern which orders personal existence in basically rigid ways” (Malin 11). “The final decision betrays the instinctive response and he exchanges individual integrity for a handful of social concepts and conventions” (Vickery 94). He will no longer have to think about personal or moral choices. His change is from “a state of innocence to one of wild ambition” (Hoffman 75).

Sutpen’s design involves a plan to achieve great material riches and also to form a family dynasty. Underlying the design, too, is a desire for revenge for the way he had been treated; he would never be directed to the back door again. Sutpen naively believes that if he follows the design faithfully, he will without question obtain his goals. But he cannot discover reality using a method of weighing, measuring, and calculation. There is an intense rigidity about Sutpen’s plan: the design, once implemented, can have no exceptions, modifications, or alterations. Sutpen scorns his past, has no pride in ancestry
and no concern for his place of origin, and he directs his energies totally toward the future. “His virtues and vices are those of a 20th century man - dismissal of the past, commitment to the future, confidence that with courage and know-how he can accomplish literally anything” (Brooks FE 224).

Sutpen proves himself in the Civil War by becoming a colonel and performing as a brave and resourceful soldier (Brooks FE 193). He comes to Jefferson in 1833 with a band of wild Negroes and a French architect, and they set about building an estate and mansion to be named Sutpen’s Hundred. Sutpen is a self-educated man who obtains his vocabulary from books and not spoken English. He perceives that he needs respectability and thus marries Ellen Coldfield. “The townspeople regard him with distrust, then hatred, and finally with an exacted tolerance” (Vickery 93). “Sutpen is not aristocratic: lack of breeding, ruthless, suspicious origin and unwillingness to participate in accepted forms of social behavior except when there is personal advantage” (Barth 147).

What is bad about Sutpen’s rise to power is that he is capable of using people to achieve his goals. He is characterized by Miss Rosa as “a demon” (AA 145). He rejects his first wife and son because he discovers his wife has Negro blood. He financially provides for them but physically and emotionally abandons them without a qualm. Eventually he attempts to use women, Miss Rosa and Milly, to produce a male heir and will marry them only if they are successful. He seems to have no scruples about the pain that Henry and Judith suffer in order to comply with the design. Faulkner suggests, however, that Sutpen is to be pitied. “Amoral, ruthless, and completely self-centered. He didn’t believe he was a member of the human race” (FU 80).

Sutpen has been perceived by some as a heroic and tragic figure. “He achieves a kind of grandeur similar to Oedipus - corrupted by success, he puts confidence in his own shrewdness” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 317). Sutpen places confidence not only in his own cleverness but he is also enamored with his design which he proselytizes as a sure remedy for success. “Sutpen approximates the tragic hero in that he strives for larger ends, actively resists his fate, and fails through an inner flaw” (Howe 75). Sutpen wants to establish a dynasty. When his plan is threatened by the appearance of Charles Bon, he
takes what he regards as the necessary steps to achieve his goal, which is to remove Bon. His inner flaw is his inflexibility, that he cannot consider any other solution. “Sutpen is trapped in repetition. He repeats the undoing of his ambitions at every step” (Parker 118). The repetition here is that once again Sutpen must reject a member of his family for carrying Negro blood. As he rejected the mother, now he must reject the son. No other action occurs to him. Sutpen’s life can be seen as “a gesture of hubris. What prevents him from rising to the greatness of a tragic hero is a failure in self-recognition…he is incapable of that rendering of the self and tearing out of pride which forms the tragic element” (Howe 223). Sutpen fails again and again because he has dismissed human values (Hoffman 76). Because he has omitted humanity from his plan, this is responsible for the flaw in his design. Sutpen cannot be honest with his family members and he allows them no choices. He is over-confident and encounters hubris and is struck down for his arrogance. His extreme self-confidence is his undoing.

Sutpen is confronted with two problems in relation to his daughter’s proposed marriage to Charles Bon: incest and miscegenation. He refuses to let either interfere with his design and apparently uses Henry as a pawn to rid the family of the problem by killing Bon. “He wanted a son, which symbolized the idea, and he got too many sons - his sons destroyed one another and then him. The only son he had left was a Negro” (FU 35). Sutpen’s treatment of Clytie shows that he has no objection to miscegenation as long as he retains the position of power (Parker 157), and Clytie was not in the line of family inheritance. An actual marriage between the races is what could destroy the design. Sutpen clings to the design in his decision about Bon, but his rigid adherence to the design ultimately destroys his dynasty.

Sutpen does demonstrate some positive personality traits. He has courage, a high energy level, ambition and drive, and a strong force of personality, similar to that of John Sartoris. He never maligns his first wife. He is unwilling to accept favors that he cannot return. He searches for faults in his own acts rather than blaming others.

Yet the human spirit in Thomas Sutpen has been rejected by Sutpen in favor of a drive toward power and material riches. The rejection occurs as a teenager when Sutpen
formulates the design and vows to adhere to it. “Sutpen didn’t say he was going to be braver or more compassionate or more honest - he just said “I’m going to be as rich as he was, as big as he was on the outside” (FU 35).

Sutpen invests dynamic energy and strong force of will into his life’s pursuits. He uses his intellect, shrewdness, and cunning to achieve far beyond what would normally be accomplished. Sutpen does not believe in God, nor does he believe in good or bad luck anymore. He simply makes “mistakes” if the design does not work. “He is rationalistic and scientific, not traditional, not religious, not even superstitious” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 306).

Again, Sutpen’s design fails because he excludes the values of the heart, love, and compassion. There is no competitive joy, but rather fierce competition, with revenge as the underlying motive. Sutpen cannot alter the design for any reason - his daughter’s happiness, his son’s life - their feelings are ignored, just as he ignored his own feelings about getting rid of his first wife and son. Human feelings or drives have long been gone from Sutpen’s world because they are a threat to the design. Pure ambition is incompatible with compassion and empathy. It is a lack of empathy, a lack of understanding of the feelings of Wash Jones about family and about respect, that finally leads to Sutpen’s death at the hands of Wash. Sutpen never learns, never faces the fact, that the design has failed. Thomas Sutpen possessed great potential and for a time he was successful and powerful. But without human values integrated into the design, failure was just a matter of time. He could leave no valued legacy to his children because he possessed no human values. His children’s only example was that of a magnificent design that had failed. Sutpen showed them shrewdness and courage but not love. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Appendix A) Faulkner described man’s dilemma as “the human heart in conflict with itself.” For Sutpen this is a moot issue. “There is not conflict in his heart, for his heart is undividedly set upon one object” (Brooks FE 224).

The necessity of choosing between social patterns and the human values of the individual is not restricted to Sutpen alone. “Each new generation and every individual in it faces the same problem” (Vickery 97). We will briefly consider the choices made by
Judith Sutpen, Thomas’s daughter.

Judith Sutpen

When the reader first encounters Judith Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! She is a young girl with romantic fantasies and loving feelings toward her brother’s college friend, Charles Bon. She is willful like her father and determined to marry whom she pleases, even if this means doing so without parental consent. When Bon is killed by her brother Henry, Judith’s life and dreams are dramatically altered. She appears stone-faced and silent at the news of his death. “The past, to Judith, is simply gone, without its disappearance leaving any cloak of romance or heroism” (Parker 51). Judith endures the horrors of her fiance’s murder, buries his body, rejects suicide as a viable option, and decides to continue functioning within the home. “Judith is one of Faulkner’s finest characters of endurance - not merely through numb, bleak stoicism but also through compassion and love. Judith is doomed by misfortunes not of her own making but she is not warped and twisted by them. Her humanity survives them” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 319).

As her life continues, Judith shows growth and personal development. She learns to plow like a man. She collects dimes and quarters in a rusty can to pay for the headstone for Charles Bon’s grave. She allows Charles Bon’s octoroon wife to visit his grave. She takes Bon’s son into her home when his mother dies and cares for him in a maternal way, finally asking him to call her “Aunt Judith.” Judith clearly demonstrates responsible action and her holding the door open to Bon’s part Negro son is a humane action. When Bon’s son becomes ill with yellow fever, Judith nurses him and loses her own life to the same disease in the process.

Judith is like her father in many ways. She demonstrates much of his confidence and boldness. As a child, she watched Thomas Sutpen fight with his slaves and found this exciting and purposeful. She urged the coachman to race the coach on the way to church.
She is not afraid or frightened of events or happenings, present or future. “She matches her father’s strength of will with a quiet strength of her own” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 319). She shares her father’s view that Blacks are not equal and she urges Bon’s white-skinned Black son to leave the South and pass as a white man “to set him free, pushing beyond the barriers of color. She urges him to hide the blood heritage that she has made him aware of” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 319). She cares deeply for the boy but still cannot see him as her equal.

Judith moves beyond Thomas Sutpen, however, through her possession of the qualities of love and compassion and through the suffering that she endures. Judith is not a follower of an abstract design but rather a victim of circumstances. When Bon is killed, she has the choice to become angry and bitter but she does not select this option. Rather, she sanctifies her love for Bon by refusing to marry anyone else, taking care of his body after his death, and extending herself to the people who were important to him, including his mistress/wife and his son. She could have chosen also to reject Bon’s son but takes him in and makes him her own even though he is rebellious, self-destructive, and ungrateful through his actions. Where her father was ruthless, she is kind.

In the area of the human spirit, then, Judith is of a different essence from her father. She does demonstrate the positive virtues of love, compassion, and endurance. She does not use other people but tries to help them and ease their suffering. She does not allow her own inner suffering to inflict pain upon others. She is loyal to those she loves. Judith tries to impart affirmative values to future generations both by positive example and education/instruction, but unfortunately her teachings may fall on deaf ears. Judith is much like her father but in the area of the human spirit she has grown beyond him and is a much stronger individual. Judith’s transcendence also points out that the human spirit can develop and grow following a personal tragedy if the individual will allow that to happen.

In the first family of Newcomers, therefore, the child has surpassed the parent and become a more fully developed human spirit. We will now consider the second family of Newcomers, the Snopes, beginning with the phenomena known as Snopesism.
Snopesism

The larger extended family of newcomers to the South is the Snopes clan. The first Snopes to emerge, and the most notorious Snopes, is Flem, and the reader follows his upward progression throughout three Faulkner novels: The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion. Once Flem establishes himself in an area, his kinsmen follow shortly thereafter, and, like rodents, they seem to reproduce, spread out, take over, and eventually control the entire space.

The Snopeses are not pretty people. In Faulkner’s descriptions they are frequently described through imagery of small, unpleasant animals, e.g., a mink, a frog, a bulbous spider (Vickery 197). The Snopeses are not attractive within themselves, either, acting only for self-interest and typically acting without ethics. They are descendents of barn-burners and bush-whackers. Their primary value is money and they are greedy. They lack love and concern for each other as well as for anyone else outside their large pack. “They are rascals who indulge in unscrupulous politics and behavior. They are people outside of society, belonging to no side” (O’Donnell 91). They threaten to take over the modern South and they undermine the stability that had been provided by the Sartoris world. But the Snopes world has done more than oppose the Sartorises. “It has weakened the inhabitants internally (as it weakened Rosa Millard) in using them for its advantage; it has made them self-conscious, queer, psychologically tortured” (O’Donnell 84).

The individual Snopeses do not have strong, clearly delineated personalities. “As each new Snopes arrives, he is seen to be a slightly blurred carbon copy of the preceding one” (Vickery 169). As Michael Mok suggests, the power of the Snopeses is that “they creep over a town like mold over cheese and destroy its traditions and whatever lav’liness there was in the place” (Lion 39). Brooks describes the Snopeses as having “parasitic vitality as of some low-grade, thoroughly stubborn organism…the difficulty of fighting Flem and Snopesism is that it is like fighting a kind of gangrene or some sort of loathsome mold” (Yoknapatawpha 222). Faulkner creates characters to battle Snopesism,
such as Ratliff, Gavin Stevens, and Chick Mallison. However, it is not easy and each of these characters is outwitted by a Snopes, at one time or another.

Our discussion will be confined to four members of the Snopes clan: Flem, Eula (a member only through marriage), Linda, and Mink. As we discuss their identities and personal issues, the reader should remember that the Snopeses are powerful, successful, and clever but, like Thomas Sutpen, their dynasty essentially loses force with the death of their most prominent member, in this case, Flem.

**Flem Snopes**

Flem Snopes is the son of a shiftless sharecropper and barn-burner. He shows up one day in the hamlet of Frenchman’s Bend where Will Varner’s general store serves as the central gathering place for the surrounding countryside. Faulkner portrays him as having a “broad, flat face with eyes the color of stagnant water” (Hamlet 24) “which seemed to have no vision in them at all” (Hamlet 90). He is a thick, squat man of no establishable age between 20 and 30, “with a small predatory nose like the beak of a small hawk” (57). He wears a soiled white shirt (56) and cheap gray trousers (24) everyday on his job which is the clerk’s position in Varner’s store.

The old men sitting around on the porch of the store note that Flem first imitates his superiors and then takes over their positions and functions. “To the smallest detail Flem patterns himself and his behavior on that of Jody and Will Varner. He mimics the dress, gestures, and mannerisms” (Vickery 169). He learns quickly, increases his responsibilities, and although the villagers may not be fond of him, they admire his success and are willing to conduct business with him.

The Hamlet also establishes Flem as a master trader. “The man buys cheap and sells dear and pockets the profit. He may be taken to represent the commercial spirit in all of its parity” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 181-82). He bargains for things he wants, beating out such worthy opponents as Ratliff and Jack Houston, and to make money he devises
schemes such as selling the wild spotted horses. “Flem does nothing to change the essential pattern of Frenchman’s Bend; he merely redistributes its wealth and power” (Vickery 168). Flem’s master coup is when he bargains to marry Will Varner’s pregnant daughter in return for a large sum of money and a deed to the Old Frenchman’s place, recorded as a gift to Flem and Eula Varner Snopes.

Once Flem and Eula return from their extended honeymoon trip to Texas, where the child is born, they move to the town of Jefferson. Flem has risen as far as he can in the hamlet and now he seeks new challenges and “more people to use.” Once in town, they progress from living in a tent to renting a house and furnishing it elaborately, and, finally, after Eula’s death, Flem will live in a mansion. Likewise he progresses from clerk in the bank to vice president of the bank and eventually to bank president. The significance of the move to town is that Flem becomes motivated to obtain respectability. “The scoundrel in time is seduced away by the desire to be respectable, so he’s finished” (FU 34).

Respectability to Flem is a tool to get what he wants. “He becomes more despicable but more vulnerable as he begins to pay attention to what people may think of him” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 214). Flem uses society, too, working within its conventions to make things happen. The goal of acquiring respectability in society is finally used as a tool by Flem to motivate Eula to commit suicide. She has a choice to die or to be condemned by society. “Eula’s death is at once the final test of Flem’s ruthlessness and the signal of his victory” (Vickery 185). Flem rids himself of Eula but at the same time he is able to maintain his respectability, go to church, serve on social committees, and function as a pillar of the community.

Flem Snopes has been described as “a comic version of Thomas Sutpen” (Vickery 169). He too has an innocence which consists of acting in terms of a design, but in Flem’s case the design is purely economic. Flem is unilaterally economically motivated and he excludes all other considerations, including human values. As a clerk in Varner’s store he might have exploited customers but he never cheated them, as Jody Varner did. In the town, once the incident of the stolen brass is behind him, Flem’s public conduct is above reproach. As vice president of the Sartoris Bank he is absolutely trustworthy. As
Flem gains respectability, he becomes embarrassed by his kinsmen, many of whom are not so honest, and forces them to leave town or be placed in jail. Flem makes money and he works within the law. If one judges strictly on economic achievement “the story of Flem Snopes is a kind of success story, not a tragedy” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 307). But although he employs legal measures, Flem Snopes functions without honor and without moral scruples. “It is because he lacks honor that Flem Snopes is really invulnerable” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 222).

Flem, like Thomas Sutpen, has a strong drive and determination to rise to the top. But whereas Sutpen was motivated to establish a family dynasty, Flem is a loner without similar inclinations. Flem’s marriage to Eula is based on economic gain via her dowry. Although other men desire Eula with great intensity, Flem is impotent and has no sexual desire for her. “He is unable to bed the wife for whom all others long” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 181). He takes little interest in their daughter Linda except when he attempts to manipulate her in order to obtain her inheritance from her grandfather. Flem has no friends at all, nor does he appear to want or need any. He does not have personal relationships but instead he has “contracts.” He does not have personal enemies, either. “He remains dispassionate and indifferent. He has no emotions and no imagination because economics has none” (Vickery 170). “He has no poetry in him and no love at all. Flem is the man who deals in numbers and eschews feelings, who always remains calm and calculating, who neither trusts nor opens up to another person. He is goal directed, driven, but inside empty” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 181).

At the end of his life Flem has achieved economic success in the form of owning the mansion and acquiring his job as president of the bank, but he does not seem to be enjoying himself. He sits in only one chair in the house with his feet propped on the fireplace, as he sat many years before at Will Varner’s store. He is alone. “The house is unlived in, his car rarely driven, his tobacco unchewed” (Vickery 213). Flem is bored and seems to have lost his zest for living now that he is at the top with nothing left to achieve. “He has destroyed his purpose in life by achieving it and now must fall back on the urge to keep, protect, conserve” (Vickery 201). He knows that Mink is coming to kill him but
he does not hide or run away. “At death he transcends his own nature. Characteristic impassivity is not without courage and dignity as well” (Vickery 196). Flem never asked for help and “perhaps never recognized that his was the most wasted life of all” (Vickery 200). No one will really mourn for Flem and his function, his role as president of the bank, will pass on to someone else. His daughter arranged his death, his cousin perpetuated it, and his moral antagonists, Gavin Stevens and Ratliff, are glad to see him removed from the scene.

Flem Snopes is successful in his acquisition of power and wealth but he is bereft and penniless in the arena of the human spirit. He is far removed from the humanistic man and many times is his antithesis. He has devoted himself to economic gain at the expense of humanity. “He had to have a shrewdness about people in order to make the money which he believed was the end of existence” (FU 108). When forced to make a choice between loyalty to family and friends or a business deal, however, he always chooses business and he uses people without conscience. Feelings for others, or even his own feelings, are disregarded as irrelevant to success in business. People respect Flem for his shrewdness or acumen with figures but no one cares for him as a person, not even his wife or child. He is not a tragic figure like Sutpen, demonstrates no hubris, no insight, no personal growth in life. He acknowledges no empathy, sadness, or pity for his own empty life and cannot even acknowledge the emptiness. He has remained loyal to the economic plan and for that, he seems to have no regrets. He is liked a caricature of a human, a sketch without detailed content, an empty shell devoid of feelings, values, and emotions. His spirit is weak, totally subjected to the “plan for success.” “The excessive preoccupation with economics reduces the world to the dimensions of the ego and denies social values” (Vickery 177). He can leave nothing to his descendents except a scheme to “get rich quick” which is ultimately unsatisfying and, in a more insightful man, might lead to suicide.
Eula Varner Snopes

Eula Varner Snopes is a character in *The Hamlet* and *The Town* but she does not survive into *The Mansion*. She is the daughter of Will Varner who owns the general store and a substantial amount of property in the hamlet of Frenchman’s Bend. The Varners are “people of some wealth but without breeding or quality” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 25). “They were plain people of vigor and force, somewhat crude of fiber, and with no aspirations toward society” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 27).

Into this affluent family without pretensions was born Eula who is the last of 16 children, “the baby.” Eula is not described in entirely flattering terms, yet she possesses some unique qualities. On the negative side, Eula is “incorrigibly lazy” (*Hamlet* 106). She eats constantly and avoids walking whenever she can. At age eight she goes to school at her brother’s insistence but refuses to walk either to school, or once she is in school. She has no interest in playmates. She has a blasé attitude. “It was rather as though, even in infancy, she already knew there was no where she wanted to go, nothing new or novel at the end of any progression, one place like another, anywhere and everywhere” (*Hamlet* 106).

Eula’s claim to fame, however, is not her intellect or disposition. She is described as a goddess who possesses an unconscious seductive allure that is of a natural quality, and she attracts men in a powerful way. Brooks describes Eula as “a jiggling, undulating mass of flesh, giving off the odor of a bitch in heat, but who, as an object of love or desire, suggests some symbolism out of the old Dionysian times (*Yoknapatawpha* 179). “She belongs to the natural world, the submerged world of impulses and desires unconscious (Vickery 181). “Men are attracted to Eula but also recognize in her a principle of disorder which threatened their individual and communal security” (Vickery 182). In addition, “she has a power in her that stirs men’s desire and awakens their capacity for dreaming. Like Helen, what she represents is meant to be felt intuitively as beauty, as freedom, and above all of the inexhaustible possibilities of life. Her strength, however, makes her
vulnerable since transcendence is also defiance” (Vickery 199).

Eula seems unaware of her effect on men and for the most part rebuffs or ignores her suitors. She chooses the man who will take her virginity, Hoake McCarron, as she helps defend him with the buggy whip when he is attacked by the other suitors, and then chooses to change her clothes and go off to have sex with him. This is perhaps her single moment of passion. When she becomes pregnant and McCarron runs away, she marries Flem Snopes without much protest.

In Jefferson Eula lives with Flem and her daughter Linda but engages in an 18-year affair with Manfred deSpain. This affair is common knowledge to the citizens of Jefferson but they appear to tolerate it. It has apparently lasted more than a decade and has been characterized by constancy, fidelity, and devotion. Gavin Stevens, the town’s attorney, struggles with a romantic idealization of Eula. At one point she directly and aggressively offers her body to Gavin because he is unhappy. She states, “I don’t like unhappy people. They’re a nuisance” (Town 93). Gavin rejects the offer because his love for Eula has to remain unrequited and idealized and he cannot engage just for sex. Eula is realistic, earthy, and practical, and does not possess Gavin’s “romantic nonsense.”

When Flem Snopes calculates that the time is right to take over the bank presidency, he manipulates Eula’s father into helping him by threatening to make public Eula’s affair with deSpain. Once Will Varner signs over his stock shares and exerts influence on his friends, the balance of power in the bank can be shifted. At this point societal judgment also shifts and Eula and deSpain will be ostracized. Eula worries about the effect of this disclosure on her daughter Linda who has, up to this point, assumed that Flem is her father. It is to maintain her good reputation and Linda’s social status that Eula ends her life with a self-imposed gun shot to the head. Eula assessed the situation and decided realistically that this was the best course of action, demonstrating that “the dispassionate woman is capable of the heroic act” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 217). She commits suicide to protect the good name of her daughter. “Most of the town is aware of her affair with deSpain and many people suspected that Flem was not Linda’s father. Linda’s position will not be jeopardized unless her mother’s adultery is pointed out and the public forced
to take cognizance of it” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 209-10).

Eula does not perceive herself as dying for honor or romance but it is a practical matter of simply dealing with the facts as she assesses them. She has chosen to ignore society, not to fit herself to it as Flem did, but this is the price she must pay. Flem is initially rejected by the community and then becomes accepted whereas Eula is in initially accepted, or at least tolerated, and then becomes rejected (Vickery 182). “In the repudiation of Eula as a sinner, Jefferson also repudiates its own roots in the physical and emotional world which is the source of its strength” (Vickery 182). “Gavin has tried to make Eula respectable but he never succeeds and had he succeeded, she would have sacrificed her potency and uniqueness as a human being” (Vickery 183). Gavin also tries to make Eula a romantic as he states that she likely killed herself because she was bored, “the demigoddess condemned to live among dull shopkeepers” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 217). Eula can be viewed more realistically as “at odds with her time and her place by virtue of her nature rather than her choice” (Vickery 199). By the gesture with which she ends her life, she reveals a capacity for love, devotion, fidelity, and self-sacrifice in regard to the one person she appears to love unconditionally -- her daughter Linda.

Eula Varner Snopes is a complex character because she does not seem to participate in the human drama on a human level; instead she seems somehow above it, for the most part floating through life, tuning into her natural impulses but at the same time uninvolved with the issues that concern most mortals; and thus the comparison to a goddess. She never answers to her parents, nor does she answer to her husband or to society. In many ways Eula answers to her own inner self. She is not an emotional woman on the surface but seems bland and indifferent in most situations. Whereas most women could not have tolerated being married to Flem, Eula accepts the inevitable and works around it. She is a creature of realism more than emotion. Although she obviously enjoys the relationship with deSpain, when it is over she does not become hysterical but rather engages in an assertive act. Her suicide is not like that of Quentin Compson, full of despair and agonized pressures; it is simply a decision based on assessment of the facts.

Eula’s suicide is to protect her daughter Linda, and in this action she provides a
positive example of the human spirit, demonstrating compassion and sacrifice. Eula has been a good mother and has desired what is best for Linda, even if this might mean Linda marrying Gavin. She bequeaths to her daughter love and strength of character. She has resisted feelings of hatred toward Flem and has not given in to revenge. Eula is essentially a passive person. She is not ambitious but she lives her life as she wishes, doing what she wants to do, with whom she chooses. She probably has few regrets about her life. She has a basic honesty and a personal integrity. Although she never rises to the level of having a social conscience and leaving a legacy to humanity, within her own circle she is a strong force.

Linda Snopes Kohl

Linda Snopes is presented in *The Town* as a 16 year old girl, befriended by an older, 35 year old lawyer, Gavin Stevens, who brings her ice cream and gives her books, allegedly to aid in “forming her mind” (*Town* 179). They develop a close platonic relationship which endures throughout the time Linda leaves Jefferson, marries, participates in the Spanish Civil War, is widowed, becomes deaf, and returns to Jefferson. Faulkner recounts Linda’s return to Jefferson and her subsequent role in contributing to the demise of Flem Snopes in *The Mansion*. Linda initially leaves Jefferson in 1927 at age 19, following her mother’s death and funeral. She returns in 1937.

Linda is first described as a girl of 13 or 14, depicted by utilizing a comparison to a pointer dog. “She was not friendly but rather intense, walking exactly like a pointer dog walks before it freezes onto the birds” (*Town* 131). She does not look like her mother, Eula, nor is she described as beautiful, but she is a strange and troubling figure who elicits fascination in Gavin Stevens. She is intelligent and eventually becomes class valedictorian. Gavin feels an attraction for Linda but treats her in a chivalrous manner and always reminds himself that she is “too young.” He needs to idealize Linda as he had Eula and again he chooses unrequited love, even when Eula gives him permission and
actually pleads with him to marry her daughter. Gavin always remains loyal to Linda in their platonic relationship and she encourages him to marry another woman, Melissandre Backus. Even after Gavin marries Melissandre, Linda and Gavin choose to continue a “special relationship.” “The two in the world who do not need the act of sex in order to trust and love each other” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 224).

Linda appears to harbor troubled and confused feelings toward her mother and she desperately wants a father. When Flem pretends to love and approve of her in order to get her inheritance, she falls prey to his manipulation and naively signs the papers that forfeit her inheritance from her grandfather in exchange for being allowed to leave Jefferson and go to college elsewhere. After her mother’s death Linda questions whether Flem is her father or not. Only after Gavin Stevens swears to her that he is, can she allow herself to grieve for her mother.

Linda leaves for life in Greenwich Village in New York following the unveiling of her mother’s tombstone, which contains a mocking eulogy. She falls in love with and marries a young Jewish sculptor, Barton Kohl. It is a passionate but brief marriage as shortly thereafter Barton is killed while participating in the Spanish Civil War. Linda is a casualty of the war, too, a female wounded war veteran with both of her eardrums blown out with the result that she is deaf, communicates by writing on a tablet, and “talks in a quacking duck’s voice” (Mansion 217). “She is frank and direct and lacks feminine softness” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 220). Linda becomes a card-carrying Communist and advocates equal education for the Negro children at a time when Jefferson is not progressive. She has abundant energy and high ideals, but the community is suspicious of everything for which she stands. She has no family or children and wants to be needed and to give herself to a cause. Her values are extremely antithetical to those of her legal father, Flem, and “he is the perfect incarnation of all that she despises in the system of finance-capitalism” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 227). Linda is treated with sympathy by Gavin, Chick, and Ratliff, and Gavin defends Linda’s right to do “whatever her idealism demands that she should do” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 226).

When Linda returns to Jefferson she has matured and has changed her thinking about
many of the prior events in her life. She has faced the fact now that Flem is not her father and that he tricked her as a young defenseless girl into signing away her inheritance. She has good reason to hate him as she faces the personal betrayal. She comes back to Jefferson with a purpose and that purpose is revenge. Whereas Eula is frequently compared to Helen of Troy, Linda is more similar to Diana the Huntress (the pointer grown up). She now understands the sacrifice that Eula made for her and understands that Eula too was a victim of Flem’s manipulations, at least indirectly.

Linda clearly plans Flem Snopes’ death but she is not the perpetrator. She has encapsulated some of Flem’s ability to use people, to utilize knowledge of a person’s patterns in order to take advantage of them. She selects the perfect man to kill Flem, Mink Snopes, and through Gavin Stevens, sets the person free from prison to accomplish his mission. Although she may proclaim her innocence, or at least Gavin does, Linda knows exactly what she is doing and she is clever. “She becomes a sort of Medea, an implacable avenging spirit, biding her own time, giving no hint of what she actually means to do…willing to live in the same household with the hated Flem Snopes as she coolly plans his execution” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 227).

After Linda’s purpose of destroying Flem is accomplished, she will leave Jefferson because she has grown beyond it. Having righted the wrong, as she sees it, there is no need for her to stay. Her car has been ordered months ahead of time and will be waiting when she is ready to go.

Gavin Stevens does not perceive Linda any more clearly than he did her mother, Eula, and he cannot face Linda’s true motives. He completely underestimates her as a woman and as a committed human being. He has perceived Linda as someone who would find love but would “believe it involves agony and anguish or it is not really love” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 224). Linda did indeed suffer some of the gloom and doom that Gavin suggested in relation to her late husband. Gavin cares for Linda, but the memory of her dead husband will always stand between them now. Linda will not marry Gavin, and when she offers her body to him, as her mother had done years before, he refuses again.

Linda Snopes Kohl is an compelling study of the human spirit. She does have the
capacity for love and loves her husband, Gavin, and eventually her mother. She is loyal to those she loves. However she also has the capacity for anger and revenge and can act on the basis of these feelings without guilt. She has adopted the role of “avenging angel.”

Linda can move beyond the personal, though, and the final form of her love can be seen as humanistic. “What moves her is the eternal hope, millennium dream: of the emancipation of man from his tragedy, the liberation at last and forever from pain and hunger and injustice of the human condition” (Vickery 206). Linda preserves the vision and thus will carry it with her in her life after Jefferson.

When Linda participates in the killing of Flem Snopes, “she contributes to the destruction not of a specific Snopes but of Snopeism itself--the destroyer of life, love, human values, and human dreams” (Vickery 207). Her act transcends the purely personal revenge. Her legacy to the future is to rid the world of a piece of evil in defense of positive spiritual values. She has, in effect, hunted down and destroyed Darth Vader. “Like Eula she is imbued with mythic proportions and attributes. But hers are the qualities not of Venus but of Diana” (Vickery 207). Linda’s activism surpasses Eula’s seductive passivity in the area of the human spirit.

Mink Snopes

Mink Snopes’s story is told in The Hamlet and in The Mansion. The reader’s first encounter with Mink is when he gets into a dispute with Jack Houston over the possession of a cow. Mink is a poor sharecropper who allows his cow to be pastured and fed in Houston’s field because he cannot afford to take care of it. When Mink goes to retrieve the cow to sell it, Houston gets the local court to say that Mink must pay $18.75 for feeding costs or he cannot take back the cow.

Mink decides to kill Jack Houston over the cow issue. He feels it is a question of honor, that Houston has inappropriately impounded his cow. The legal decision possesses no meaning for him. Mink hides in the bushes and intentionally ambushed Houston when
he rides by on his horse. Mink is apprehended and jailed but he counts on his cousin Flem, upon his return from his Texas honeymoon, to bail him out and buy his freedom. Mink is sure this will happen because he has been brought up to believe in “the clan” and he possesses clan standards and virtues himself. When Flem refuses to help him, through the act of never showing up, in Mink’s eyes, Flem has violated the bond of the clan. Only after he has been judged guilty and sentenced to “life” does Mink face the fact that Flem never intended to come and help him and that he, in fact, wanted Mink to go to jail. Mink is sentenced to the penitentiary at Parchman with the only hope of parole in 20 or 25 years. He realizes that Flem has betrayed him and vows revenge upon his release.

Flem will commit one more atrocity upon Mink during his incarceration. He uses another family member, Montgomery Ward Snopes, to suggest an escape plan to Mink when he is 5 years away from parole. The escape plan fails because a guard is informed of the attempted escape prior to its occurrence. Mink is re-apprehended and beaten while wearing a set of woman’s clothes, a further humiliation. Mink realizes that Montgomery Ward is the culprit but also realizes that Montgomery Ward is only a pawn being moved by Flem. Another 20 years is added to Mink’s sentence and his anger intensifies. He now lives only to exert revenge upon Flem by killing him. His life now has a direction and a purpose.

Mink is never described as a pleasant personality. His very name is reminiscent of a weasel. He is often compared to a poisonous snake, a rattlesnake, or viper (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 220). Mink meets his wife at a logging camp run by her father. In the camp she has sexual relations with any man she chooses, and the suggestion is that she had 30-40 men prior to Mink. After the collapse of her father’s “business,” she marries Mink. He beats her and also their two children and does this on the night he kills Houston, driving all three of them from the house. Brooks suggests that “the marriage confirms Mink’s masculinity -- he treats his wife harshly and perhaps answers her needs” (Yoknapatawpha 220). However once Mink is in the penitentiary, he forgets that he ever had a family. After he leaves Parchman, 38 year later, he passes a few feet away from his youngest daughter, who has become a prostitute, and he does not even recognize her.
Mink has lost complete touch with his family and they no longer exist in his world.

“Mink possesses only two things of value: his identity and the savage pride with which he defends that identity” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 230). He is indifferent and mean in response to any human demands or claims. He is selfish and self-centered. His identity has become that of an angry, vengeful man. “But because he owns nothing but himself, he must protect the honor of that self with passionate ardor” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 230). Mink is furious when his lawyer suggests that he use an insanity plea. He takes responsibility for the fact that he intentionally planned to kill Houston to protect his honor.

In prison Mink demonstrates remarkable patience and singleness of purpose. He does not count the days or the years but simply exists in the present moment. He has faith that the day will come when he can be released and he can kill Flem. Mink has faith that justice will be served. “He is one of Faulkner’s many Calvinists who do not believe in a god of love or mercy, but do believe there is a final justice” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 232). Mink guides his actions by his deep belief in “Old Moster’s” fairness. In some deep sense, Mink is a religious man.

After 38 years, Mink’s petition for pardon is granted, signed by Linda Snopes Kohl. Mink has not been in the outside world for 38 years and he has little money but he continues to trust in Old Moster. He arrives in Jefferson five days later “an old tired man, moved by past compulsions” (Vickery 200). He confronts Flem and kills him, although he is forced to shoot twice, as the gun misfires. “He does not kill Flem in the heat of anger. Instead he kills with regret and almost pity for his victim” (Vickery 196). By accomplishing his vengeance, Mink has achieved his sense of purpose and fulfilled his own life. He is now free to lie down upon the earth, to relax and enjoy whatever life he has left with a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment.

The human spirit is strong in Mink Snopes in that he is concerned with accomplishing what he has decided is his life’s purpose. “The obsessive, agonized behavior of a Mink Snopes is not very different from the quieter concerns of all of us” (Hoffman 26). Mink has also concluded that his purpose is consistent with the plan of Old Moster (God) so
that he receives some support and energy from a higher power which keeps him focused
and optimistic as to the outcome of his endeavors. Mink can perhaps be criticized for not
making a stronger commitment to his nuclear family but his loyalty is to a larger unit, the
clan, and it is clan justice that he reestablishes.

Both Mink and Linda Snopes Kohl demonstrate heroic resolution and commitment to
their cause. “What is needed to destroy Flem is certain characteristics which he himself
possesses. Mink has singleness of purpose and can devote the remainder of his life to
accomplishing his goal. He can ignore factors which otherwise might interfere. Like
Flem, he has implacable self-sufficiency and ruthless determination” (Vickery 204). Thus
Mink, even more than Eula, repudiates everything that Flem stands for. He finds his
values in himself, not in society. He rejects the church but still maintains strong religious
beliefs that direct his life. He will not be controlled by the law, even though he clearly
knows it can punish him. “He has rejected the social and economic definitions of man”
(Vickery 205). Mink demonstrates the value of the self, of the individual man. He is not
intelligent enough, rich enough, or social enough to leave an inheritance to the human
race but he has shown honor within himself, maintained clan loyalty, and even more
directly than Linda, has rid the world of a evil man.

The portrait of Mink ends the discussion of the Newcomers to the South. Whereas the
central concept of the Old Order was Honor, we have seen that the Newcomers bring a
shift in focus with emphasis on Achievement and Progression. We will now attempt to
shift our own focus to a third group of individuals living in Faulkner’s South: the Blacks
and the mulattos.
CHAPTER V  THE BLACKS AND MULATTOS

Faulkner wrote about the Blacks in the South in his books Go Down Moses and Intruder in the Dust. In so doing, he attempted to dispel the myth that “all Negroes are lazy, are nasty, and are always raping white people” (Harrington & Abadie 117). The Negro virtues praised by Faulkner in his short story “The Bear” are “endurance, patience, honest courage, and the love of children, white or black” (Brooks “Vision” 132). These are noted to be similar to the values of the human spirit as outlined in Faulkner’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech (Appendix A). Faulkner stated “maybe the Negro is the best. He does more with less than anybody else” (Lion 78-79).

Faulkner presents his Black characters by describing their role in society but he also emphasizes their personality characteristics in order to show distinct and radical differences among the individuals grouped as “Black.” “In one sense the Negroes bear the same relation to the plantation system as the women do to the clan. They are at the very basis of its structure and they have no individual identity. They are simply indistinguishable faces which can be bartered or sold at the white man’s will” (Vickery 289). But Faulkner makes clear delineations between a Dilsey and a Lucas Beauchamp, a Rider and a Ringo. Different characters appear to illustrate different phases in the Black man’s struggle to achieve equality. “The Black man only occasionally achieves humanity” (Harrington & Abadie 105) but there are also few white men that earn this attribute. Faulkner himself believed that the Negro would eventually achieve equal status with the whites but he felt that this would, of necessity, be a gradual process, perhaps taking place over many generations (Lion 221).

In Faulkner’s fiction the Black man acquires social position and status in his own
world through the white man with whom he is associated. For example Dilsey’s social status is provided from the fact she works for the Compsons. However, the position is not one of equality. “Though they may share the blood, and even the name, of Sartoris or Compson or McCaslin, a position in the hierarchy is denied them because of their color” (Vickery 289). However “most of the Negroes in Faulkner who have significant roles are of mixed blood” (Warren 263). Go Down Moses tells the story of the McCaslin family, both the white and the Black McCaslins. Faulkner explores the plight of the mulatto in depth in Light in August and in Absalom, Absalom! Loss of identity and alienation become the focus of concern for these individuals. “What Faulkner does is to make the character transcend his suffering, qua Negro, to emerge not as Negro but as man” (Warren 263).

We will begin by discussing Faulkner’s characters who are predominantly viewed as Black, namely: Dilsey, Lucas Beauchamp, and Rider. We will then conclude with a discussion of two of his mulatto characters: Joe Christmas and Charles Bon.

Dilsey

Dilsey is the Black, long-time servant of the Compson family as described in The Sound and the Fury. She is part of the plantation tradition, which she does not challenge. She has been described as “one of the great sympathetic characters of all fiction” (Waggoner 55).

Dilsey’s role in the Compson household goes far beyond that of the average servant. She brings order, organization, and control to the household. She is a strong maternal figure who provides as much mothering as she can to all the family members. She also endures the shortcomings of the various family members, such as Mrs. Compson’s whining, the cruelty of Jason, the narcissistic preoccupations of Quentin, the selfishness of Miss Quentin, and the bellowing and howling of Benjy. She exhibits, as Irving Howe has suggested, “a sense of honor toward every person in her orbit” (285). Dilsey never
judges any of the Compsons. “She holds the family together, not for the hope of reward, but just because it was the decent and proper thing to do” (FU 85). Dilsey cannot stop the family from disintegrating but she attempts to do so, at least slowing up the process.

Dilsey is reserved and dignified in style. She demonstrates the ability to endure and survives the outrage of slavery and the poverty of her position. She is not passive or humble, however, and she scolds and corrects family members when necessary. She exhibits loyalty and decency. She is capable of love and shows it. She sings and can experience happiness in a difficult situation, accepting the environment she has been placed in. In some ways she is stoic, fatalistic, but not pessimistic or despairing. “Her optimism has been dulled by hurt and disappointment” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 343). Dilsey expresses the ideal of passive endurance in regard to her life. “Yet in Dilsey the life of the instincts, including the sex drive, the life of the emotions, and the life of ideal values and of rationality are related meaningfully to one another” (Brooks FE 73). She has a daughter in Memphis and eventually plans to live with her upon the inevitable dissolution of the Compson family.

The basis of Dilsey’s strength of character and her inner joyousness is found in her religion. “Hers is a religion which involves discipline and self-sacrifice” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 37). Dilsey’s view of the world and mankind is “thoroughly Christian, simple and limited, as her theological expression of her faith would have to be” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 383). “Dilsey propounds no system, no code of behavior or belief. But in her religious views she expresses love for all people - high or low, smart or stupid, and black or white.” (Vickery 49). Dilsey herself values all human life. Through her religion Dilsey believes in the concept of eternity and she believes goodness will prevail in time, or in a realm outside of time. Thus she is not harassed by time, as is Quentin, and time is her best friend rather than her enemy.

Dilsey is compassionate, especially toward Benjy, but toward all people as well. “She is moved by the spectacle of human waste, of promise that has come to nothing, of love and human concern that have been spilled on the ground, and of potential goodness that did not fulfill itself” (Brooks FE 74). Dilsey is a realist, however. “She is entirely at home
in the erratic world, and has calculated accurately the proper balance of errors within it. She can adjust to time and history without permitting them to defeat her” (Hoffman 29). Dilsey possesses self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and “she is an embodiment of the truth of the heart” (Vickery 32). “Dilsey’s wholeness constitutes her holiness (whole and holy are related as words and come from the same root)” (Adams 31). “Dilsey is meant to represent the ethical norm, the realizing and acting out of one’s humanity” (Vickery 47). “It is little wonder that she is Faulkner’s favorite character along with Ratliff” (Lion 224).

Dilsey provides an ideal for the embodiment of the human spirit and is possibly Faulkner’s most completely developed character in this regard. Dilsey manifests a joy in living, she can sing and be happy irregardless of her situation in life. She shows compassion for all the people residing within her life-circle, attempts to assist and not judge them, and believes all people are equal in the eyes of her God. She endures in a manner she feels is consistent with her life’s purpose, despite slanderous remarks and bad treatment from others. She is not involved in an over-zealous search for personal possessions and money but is grateful for what she does possess. She is able to experience feelings and to give love.

Although realistic and adequate within herself, Dilsey has faith in a higher power and lives her life according to religious values as she understands them. She believes that good will triumph over evil at some time, in some place. She does care about others and attempts to communicate her own understanding and truths about the universe to her family and to all the people she encounters. Her own model of truth and behavior is what she will attempt to leave to future generations. Her life is an example of morally responsible, ethical behavior. Similar to the function of Benjy, one can gauge a character’s “worth” in The Sound and the Fury by their attitude toward Dilsey in that the “good” individuals will love and value her whereas the individuals of lesser character will despise and hate her.
Lucas Beauchamp

Lucas Beauchamp is a man of mixed blood as his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, was a white man who had sex with his Black slaves as well as with white women. Carothers thus fathered two lines of descendents -- one white and one considered Black although they were actually mulattos. Lucas Beauchamp is technically a mulatto but his skin is black and he lives as a black man. However Lucas has his own land on the plantation, which he can farm as long as he chooses, and money in the bank because of his inheritance from his grandfather. Lucas Beauchamp is presented in the novel Intruder in the Dust and also in the story “The Fire and the Hearth,” which comprises a large segment of Go Down Moses.

In Intruder in the Dust, for the first time in Faulkner’s work, a Black man is featured as the main protagonist. Lucas is no ordinary Black man, however. His manner of dress is described in elaborate detail: faded overalls or threadbare mohair trousers, a white, stiff-bosomed collarless shirt, a yellow vest, a heavy gold watch chain, a worn homemade beaver hat, and a gold toothpick. In both of the stories he is an older Negro man who seems to possess “sagacity and wisdom. His manner is dignified and commanding” (GDM 76). He is married to Molly, who is described as very small, withered, darker and older appearing than her husband.

Lucas Beauchamp possesses a sullen and hostile view of white folks. He does not socialize in the Black community, either, but is a loner, without friends. Lucas refuses to behave with the submissiveness demanded of his color in the South. He addresses white men as “Mister” but his attitude makes it clear that he is being sarcastic. He refuses to let Molly wear a head rag. He saves the life of Chick Mallison as a child but then refuses to let Chick pay for the meal that he has provided, and when Chick’s coins fall on the floor, Lucas orders someone else to pick them up. He will not take the role of the subservient Southern Negro. He lives in the country and goes to town once a year to pay his taxes.

Lucas Beauchamp has a large amount of personal pride. When he is wrongfully
accused of the murder of a white man, he can hardly bring himself to speak up and defend himself to the enemies of his race. When charged formally with the murder he mutters a rather unclear clue to Chick Mallison. Chick, who is still a child, is not yet a member of the adult white community, and, also, Chick “owes him.” Chick, still grateful to Lucas for saving his life, follows up on the clue and goes to dig up the body of the murdered man in order to prove that it was not Lucas’s gun that led to his demise. Chick and his two cohorts - an elderly lady, Mrs. Habersham, who was raised with Molly, and Alec Sander, a Negro boy who grew up with Chick - are successful in helping to solve the murder and absolve Lucas.

The significance of *Intruder in the Dust* has to do with “the problem raised by an individual’s repudiation of or dissociation from his tradition” (Vickery 136). Lucas has a different, more adequate self-concept than that of the typical plantation Negro and he demands acknowledgement of this from others. At the same time that he demands respect, he also refuses to let other people, white or black, into his world but rather remains opaque. “The final blow to Jefferson’s pride is that they are unable to ostracize Lucas, while at the same time they themselves are excluded from his world” (Vickery 136). “By accepting both his white and black blood as a matter of course, he establishes a personal identity, independent of race, and the world he creates for himself has a similar uniqueness. In so doing, he asserts his manhood and approaches, if not achieves, human status” (Vickery 136). Lucas values his freedom highly and does take a step out of his proud isolation to preserve it.

Lucas is always presented as a mysterious but intelligent and conniving individual who is motivated by power similar to Thomas Sutpen, Flem Snopes, and Old Corothers. In “The Fire and the Hearth” he becomes obsessed with finding buried gold but he wants the money as a symbol of power, not because he is poor (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 253). To his credit, he eventually abandons the search for gold because his family implores him to do so, both Molly and his daughter Natalie. He also concludes, however, that perhaps it is not his destiny to become rich in his later years.
Lucas is important because he poses a dilemma for the Southern tradition. “The South has room for both whites and Negroes, but it cannot tolerate that phenomenon represented by Lucas who is neither one nor the other though his origins are in both” (Vickery 138). By helping Lucas in a humane gesture, Chick, who wants to become a lawyer, is forced to make a conscious decision to break the law. Chick and his friends also defy and transcend the social norm, which illustrates the inadequacies of the old social and legal systems and the change and progression needed and happening in these very areas.

In the realm of the human spirit Lucas is also a complex character. He is impressive in his dignity, in his self-awareness, in his willingness to stand alone in his uniqueness and have no apologies. He is not manipulated by social pressures, norms, or opinions. He is carving a unique path despite the disapproval and discomfort from others. But to do this he must remain isolated and alone. Lucas is trying to be a human being, yet he does not cast his lot with humanity. He cares for members of his family, but he does not extend his caring outward, beyond the family circle. He is in such a position of isolation that he cannot ask for help and comes close to being lynched.

Lucas exemplifies the figure of change in society. When society is making a change or a shift, the earliest representatives of that change will encounter rejection, hostility, and perhaps threats of personal injury or death. In modern society currently, this phenomena might be illustrated by a member of the gay movement or those who advocate legalization of drugs. Society is a stable entity, resistant to change but change is inevitable. Lucas might be viewed as an early, closet Martin Luther King with the difference that Lucas did not pronounce his viewpoints but simply lived them. In the small town of Jefferson, however, living these views was making a statement and, in the process, attacking the current societal norms.

Lucas demonstrates the human spirit in that he demands his right to be free, to be who he is without strict adherence to previous tradition or to current social norms. He has vitality and strength. He may crave power for dubious personal reasons and he is not beyond manipulating others to obtain that power. He is important because he presents a
new image and new possible direction for people of the Black race so that they can consider becoming more than plantation Negroes. But Lucas is not clearly identified with either race; he is not identified with human concerns or with leaving a legacy to others. His motivations are primarily self-centered, but they may have effects beyond his intent.

Rider

Rider is featured in the short story “Pantaloons in Black,” a section within *Go Down Moses*. Rider is a Black man who loses his wife of six months at a young age, and he provides an example of a grief reaction that is outstanding in its poignancy and expression of anguish.

Rider is described as a large man (6’1”, 200 lbs.) who possesses enormous physical strength and energy. He is a simple and primitive man who is almost inarticulate. Rider never knew his parents but was raised by a compassionate and caring aunt. He sowed his “wild oats” and then noticed Mannie, making a deep commitment when he decided to marry her. About his former life he genuinely stated: “Ah’m thu wid all dat” (134).

Rider and Mannie rented a house from Carothers Edmonds. They were able to fix up the property because Rider made good money working at the sawmill. An assumption is made by the reader that they were happy (based on Rider’s reactions) and the reader never knows the cause of Mannie’s death, only that she is gone.

Rider’s reaction to his loss is illustrative of the process many people experience in attempting to assimilate the fact that someone they love is dead. Rider throws shovels of dirt on Mannie’s grave, goes to the sawmill when most men would have stayed home, and works in an almost superhuman way, moving the logs as though they were weightless. Then, very abruptly, he ceases working and walks off the job about noon. He tries to handle his loss by drinking liquor, getting drunk. When nothing works to soothe his feelings, he intentionally exposes a white man who has been running a crooked dice game for years. When the man takes out a gun, Rider slashes his throat with a razor.
Rider is jailed but breaks up the cell, again using superhuman strength. Many Negroes from a chain gang are ordered to subdue him and finally do, as he is all the while protesting that he is not escaping. He finally admits that he cannot stop or control his obsessive thoughts about Mannie. “Hit look lack Ah just cant quit thinking Look lack Ah just can’t quit” (154). He welcomes the lynching because it will end his obsession and he will perhaps join Mannie.

Prior to returning to the sawmill, after Mannie’s death Rider returns home for the night. While at home he sees a vision of Mannie standing in the kitchen door. He knows she is dead but he is so glad to see her, he is in awe. His only fear is that she will disappear and this does, in fact, happen. She begins to fade away. Rider attempts to call her apparition back by commanding her to sit down and eat her supper but there is no response. “The simulated gruffness of the familiar command will not work, nor will the imitation magic of his own attempt to eat. She will not join him.” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 255).

Thus in the grief reaction of Rider, Faulkner explores the human being's response to the loss of someone he holds dear. Rider utilizes compulsive activity, turning to alcohol, violence, and finally helplessness and humility. He experiences a vision of the dead person who may have come to say goodbye, but cannot remain. Rider feels deeply and passionately. As Brooks indicates, “Pantaloon in Black is a Hemingway story: the inarticulate man of action, tough and apparently hard-boiled, exhibits a depth of suffering that goes far past the conventional and sophisticated gestures of the literate man of feeling” (Yoknapatawpha 255).

In the end Rider destroys himself because he can no longer tolerate his obsessive thoughts and his emotional pain. Brooks raises the question “would Rider’s fulfilled love have remained true love, had he lived with his wife for 25 years, rather than the short time allotted to him, would the radiance of passion which still suffuses him at the time of his wife’s early death have persisted?” (Yoknapatawpha 207) The answer is probably yes. Rider’s feelings are very deep; he had abandoned all others and made a strong commitment. He did not turn toward other women as a temporary replacement for
Mannie. The fact that he had no parents perhaps led him to make a deeper commitment and a stronger dependency than most. Rider’s grief is that of a person who really loved, and that love would likely have endured or become even stronger with an additional 25 years. Rider finds no solace because he has made Mannie irreplaceable.

Rider’s aunt urges him to turn to God and his religion to obtain comfort for his loss. However, Rider cannot do this because he is angry at God whom he blames for taking Mannie. This is another typical human reaction but not necessarily a constructive one. Rider rejects what might be the only avenue of help open to him - the spiritual dimension.

Thus, in considering the human spirit, Rider is very human in his attempt to deal with the grief associated with the loss of a loved one. His characterization creates deep empathy in the reader, and identification occurs with the survivor of the loss and what he must feel. Rider is “open” enough in his thinking to experience the “wawkin episode,” the vision of Mannie, but he cannot transcend this to include spiritual growth, transformation, or acceptance. Rider exemplifies the man limited in his awareness to earthly solutions and explanations. He has learned religion but cannot tune in to his own spiritual being which might have enabled him to survive and go on. He experiences personal loss but cannot connect with humanity as a whole. Sadly, his very deep feeling response is misinterpreted by others as crazy or as specifically “Black behavior.” The community cannot understand him and so they reject rather than join forces with him to provide support.

Joe Christmas

Joe Christmas is one of the central characters in Faulkner’s novel Light in August. Joe has white skin but he also believes he may have Black blood. This creates a permanent identity crisis for him. Even the name Joe Christmas creates an identity problem. “It is a name worse than any name could be…it indicates he has no background, no roots, no name of his own. An abstraction trying to become a human being” (Kazan 151).
Joe is raised in an orphanage and the only mothering he ever receives is from a 12 year old girl who is then adopted, abandoning Joe again. “He has no memories of a mother or of being mothered and not even the sense of nature itself as a kind of fostering mother” (Brooks FE 174-75). Joe feels different from the other children because the old janitor watches him all the time. When he is caught observing the sexual activity of the dietician, she turns on him violently and tells others in the orphanage that he is Black. He knows then that his time in the orphanage is coming to an end.

Joe is taken to live with the McEacherns. Mr. McEachern is a religious fanatic who beats Joe to ensure compliance with his orders. Mrs. McEachern tries to befriend Joe but he does not trust her and rejects her offers of kindness.

Joe Christmas becomes a victim of others, almost as if he had the word imprinted on his forehead. He provokes racial violence from Negro and white alike. “His awareness of the Negro/White dichotomy makes him take up the role of antagonist in all situations. In the presence of Whites, he becomes Negro; among Negroes he feels himself to be white” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 69). “Joe Christmas is nothing but the man things are done to, the man who has no free will of his own, who is constantly seeking a moment of rest. He looks for an identity by deliberately provoking responses that will let him be someone …his passivity, his ability to lend himself to people and situations who will carry him for awhile is immense and pitiful” (Kazan 151). Christmas has arrogance, pride, and sometimes violence but all his life people attempt to force him to be what they insist he should be.

As Brooks points out, “the community is a strong force in the novel Light in August but it has no special representation in the novel” (Yoknapatawpha 53). Joe Christmas repels the community. He belongs to no community and is “a kind of modern Ismael who believes that every man’s hand is raised against him, who does not know who he is” (Brooks FE 174). He can be fiercely combative. Joe is a solitary, lonely man, “the outsider and the individualist” (Seyppel 54). Joe is described, not seen. “He is never seen full face but always as a silhouette, a dark shadow haunting others” (Kazan 151). The most noble feature of Joe Christmas is his insistence on searching for his identity to the
very end (Brooks FE 174). Likened to Oedipus, he has a spiritual problem, a restlessness of the soul. “As an individual he explores his own relation to the myth of the Negro, while as a part of society, he is identified with the myth” (Vickery 68). Joe Christmas’s identity can be extended even further. “He is an incarnation not only of the race problem in America but the condition of man. It is the search of the stranger, l’estranger, to become man” (Warren 162).

Joe Christmas not only has problems deciding whether he is Black or white but he also has severe conflicts in dealing with women and the softness and tenderness which they can represent. “Joe feels comfortable with the notion of justice but not with mercy or love” (Brooks FE 168). Joe has a relationship with a waitress/prostitute, Bobbie, and is hurt by her because he does not face the nature of their relationship and does not perceive her clearly. This relationship more or less sets the stage for the more definitive relationship with Joanna Burden, whom Joe eventually murders. “His antagonism toward women and the female principle causes him to reject anything that threatens his individualism or challenges his essential isolation” (Brooks FE 184-5).

For 15 years Joe Christmas travels the country, finally settling in Mississippi, breaking into a house for food, and meeting Joanna Burden. He obtains a job at the local mill and lives in a cabin on her property. They are instantly a “fatal attraction.” Joanna is the daughter of abolitionist parents who comes to Jefferson after the Civil War to educate and help the Blacks. She is excluded from the community because, despite her birth in Jefferson, she is considered a Northerner due to the nature of her beliefs and actions. “She is automatically aligned with the Negro and the Damned” (Vickery 68).

Both Joe and Joanna are obsessed with the myth of the Negro. Joe oscillates between repudiation and affirmation of his Black blood. “He is obsessed with the idea that he must choose, yet his every action emphasizes his inability to do so” (Vickery 68). Joanna believes that she has a mission which is to lift the shadow of the Black man to her level. She dwells on the adage which says: “you must struggle and then rise.” But she possesses guilt about rising unless she takes the Black man with her.

Prior to Joe’s emergence upon the scene, Joanna has been a prim spinster, repressed,
and almost manlike in her strength and directness. Once in the relationship with Joe, however, she becomes like a nymphomaniac, “trying to crowd a lifetime’s sexuality into a few months” (Brooks FE 178).

Joe and Joanna talk very little. Within their sexual relationship, each tries to force upon the other his conception of what a Negro is. “When they make love he forces his ‘Negro’ will upon her; she whispers ‘Nigger!, Nigger!’ in masochistic triumph” (Hoffman 71). Eventually Joe ceases to be the means of satisfying her sexual demands and comes to symbolize the sexual superstitions associated with Negro. In this last phase, “she is not having intercourse with a man but with an image of her own creation, with the idea of Negro for which she has given up her life” (Vickery 76).

Joanna, however, has long regarded sex as sinful and returns suddenly to the belief that she is a sinner and must stop what she is doing. Her instincts are again repressed and her religious obsessions reassert themselves. She also insists that Joe must repent, ignore his own uncertainty, admit his Black blood, his sinfulness, and his dependence for salvation on her and her God (Vickery 71). “Joanna returns to her puritanical evangelism. She becomes determinedly possessive or femininely motherly and arouses Joe’s hostility” (Brooks FE 79). “She tries to make him into the ‘proper kind’ of Negro” (Hoffman 71). Joe refuses to participate in this and Joanna becomes violent. “Ironically the transformation of Joe Christmas into a Negro which she does not accomplish in her life, is effected through her death” (Vickery 77).

Once Joanna is dead, the town’s representatives pursue Joe with the belief that a Black man has killed a white woman. They are outraged to the point that Percy Grimm feels justified in castrating Joe prior to his death by lynching. Before he is arrested, Joe, for the first time, notices and appreciates nature. He decides to stop running away and accept the end of his life (Brooks FE 85). He has become a fatalist and he must now pay for what he cannot undo. “Hope may be found in Light in August only by giving up the intellectual and emotional struggle for ultimate certainty” (Barth 137).

Joe Christmas is an unlikely representative of the human spirit because he questions
and denies this part of his identity, too. Faulkner states: “I think that was his tragedy - he didn’t know what he was, and so he was nothing. He deliberately evicted himself from the human race because he didn’t know what he was. The most tragic condition a man could find himself in - not to know what he is and to know that he will never know” (FU 72). In his deep distrust of all other human beings and his unwillingness to extend himself to them, Joe establishes a solitary and lonely existence. His continuing obsession with his racial identity issue holds him back from personal and spiritual growth i.e., he does not change but he simply gets older. Whenever he begins to feel positive, as when he thinks he might have a child, Joe quickly reverts to feelings of anger or pain that keep him a perpetual victim.

Joe can be admired in that, like Oedipus, he is relentless in his search for the answers concerning his identity. He demonstrates the traits of pride, ruthlessness, arrogance, coldness, and complete self-sufficiency that might be qualities of a modern tragic protagonist. But like Sutpen and Flem Snopes, he never demonstrates humility or hubris. Joe is restless upon the earth until just prior to his arrest. Only at that point does he begin to derive comfort from nature and a fatalistic sense that it is no longer important to resist the progression of events that he cannot control.

Joe Christmas is basically deficient in the qualities of the human spirit. He finds no competitive joy, or any other kind of joy, in life. He never attempts to help another human being. He shows no love or compassion for Joanna. He does not turn to other forces for help and he does not have a spiritual dimension within his personality. He will leave no legacy to the community, which he despises, and which will now kill him. Hoffman has described Joe as “an astonishing character, the grimmest and most obsessive in Faulkner’s work (69). Few people try to help Joe Christmas in life, but those who do are hurt, rejected, or brutally murdered by him. Understanding his life circumstances produces compassion in the reader, but it can be seen too that Joe never chose to rise above the racial obsession to develop even a rudimentary human spirit. He never cared about anyone, not even about himself.
Charles Bon

Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!* also has white skin and a heritage which includes some Black blood. He is, however, a more enigmatic and a more educated character than Joe Christmas and he is able to pass for white in a white society. Charles is the son of Thomas Sutpen and Eulalia Bon, but, whereas Sutpen has apparently provided financial support for Charles, some of the narrators speculate that he has in all other ways abandoned the child and his mother because they do not fit into his design. Once the mother’s racial heritage (Haitian, Creole, and “Black blood”) is discovered by Sutpen, he makes a decision to move on. Charles is raised by his mother alone and thus takes her surname.

Charles Bon is a sophisticated and charismatic individual who meets Sutpen’s son Henry at the University of Mississippi in Oxford. Bon is described as “handsome, elegant, and even catlike and too old to be where he was, too old not in years but in experience” (*AA* 76). He dresses in a slightly Frenchified cloak and hat, reclines in private in almost feminine garments. He keeps two horses at the university and is the envy of many of the undergraduates, including Henry. Henry is essentially seduced by Bon, looking upon him as some sort of exotic hero to be admired and emulated. Henry even begins to ape Bon in his speech and dress. Henry, in essence, has a crush on Bon, perhaps even develops a love for him, and communicates this love and admiration to his sister Judith through conversation and written communication.

Henry brings Bon home to visit on two holidays. During these visits, Judith too responds to Bon’s charm, and begins to dream of a relationship with him. Charles and Judith spend time together for only 12 days during a two-year period. Yet four years later they become engaged. Quentin speculates: “So it must have been Henry who seduced Judith, not Bon: seduced her along with himself” (*AA* 79). When Judith, receives a letter from Charles stating “we have waited long enough” (81), she is prepared to make a total commitment and begins to make a wedding dress.
Bon appears to know clearly what he is doing, appears to be in charge, but his motivation is not what it seems on the surface. Very likely, (although not certainly), Bon knows that Thomas Sutpen is his father and is seeking recognition and perhaps a relationship or at least answers about why his father rejected him. “His need is to be treated like a person, not a thing” (Barth 166). By pressing forward with his engagement to Judith, Bon “flushes his father out,” so to speak. Sutpen, however “continues his pattern and disregards the humanity of Bon” (Malin 24). Overtly showing no recognition, Sutpen apparently investigates Charles but never confronts him directly about his findings. Rather he informs Henry about Bon’s octoroon mistress and child in New Orleans. Quentin and Shreve postulate that he also told Henry that Bon’s mother was part Negro and it is the miscegenation, not the incest, which creates the larger problem. They continue to theorize that Henry declares Bon to be his brother and that Bon answers “No I’m not. I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me Henry” (AA 286).

Faulkner suggests that Bon probably knew who his father was (FU 79), as his mother likely told him. He may have been hunting his father for revenge for deserting his mother (FU 93). If this is the case, then his half-siblings, Henry and Judith, were just pawns in his design, his plan.

In death, Charles is discovered to be carrying a picture of the octoroon mistress and child rather than a picture of Judith. He apparently chooses to be identified with the Black woman rather than with the Sutpens who reject him, who judge him as “lesser” because of his Black blood. Another possibility is that this may have been Bon’s way of telling Judith that he was unworthy of her. Ironically, Bon’s son will marry a “black, apelike woman” as if to cement his identification as a Black. “Bon appeared to reject his mistress, the mother of his child, whereas Etienne, white enough to pass, clings to his Negroness” (Warren 263).

Charles Bon’s motivations remain unclear but seem somewhat “twisted” in that he, like his father Thomas Sutpen, seems to use others to obtain fulfillment of his own design
or wishes. If it is simple recognition from Sutpen that he desires, why does he not approach the man directly, as son to father? Why must Judith and Henry be involved, as innocent victims, unless Bon is tremendously jealous of them or he is contemplating some kind of blackmail, emotional or financial? Bon is sophisticated, worldly, and knows how to seduce others, especially naïve country people. Bon can be viewed as a neurotically hurting person, an angry man looking for revenge, a manipulator and game player, or a tragic, romantic figure. Rejection by his father certainly constituted a traumatic event. He does have racial issues and, like Joe Christmas, cannot overcome them to move on to a more productive life.

In the arena of the human spirit, then, Charles Bon seems as limited and immobilized as Joe Christmas. Even though he is trying to exist and function in a white world, his past is in the Black world and it cannot be hidden from anyone who really looks. He probably knows his father rejected his mother because of her Blackness and will probably do the same thing to him, but he cannot or will not stop striving for acceptance. He apparently really does not care about people any more than his father does, manipulating them for his own purposes. He proposes to marry Judith because “it is time to do so” rather than because he loves her. Through so strongly desiring acceptance from his father, he has in many ways become a clone of him. Bon is intelligent, sophisticated, charismatic but he does not use any of these qualities to help others. He seems very selfish and does not cast his lot with humanity. He explores ideas but does not develop a spiritual or humanistic side of his personality. He leaves little to his descendents except a desire to live completely differently from the way he did, to make opposite choices.

Section Summary

In summary, Faulkner shows respect and admiration for some of his Black characters such as Dilsey and Lucas Beauchamp. They not only endure but transcend their difficult circumstances. The mulattos, however, suffer the crushing identity problems, as they seem to fit nowhere. Through their loneliness and alienation Faulkner clearly portrays the dilemma of a human spirit that is different from the norm, cries out to be a member of
a group, but can never match up, can never be assimilated. The human spirit unaccepted in the world will find a way out of the world and both Joe Christmas and Charles Bon do. Sadly though, Dilsey would feel more comfortable moving into a new space than either of these men. All they know is that they do not like it here but they have no positive beliefs or ideas or behaviors to provide any basis for a conclusion that the next place will be better.
CHAPTER VI  THE POOR WHITES

The poor whites in Faulkner’s fiction “range from sturdy yeomen to poverty-stricken sharecroppers and on down to white trash” (Brooks FE 36). Faulkner tends to present the majority of his poor white characters in a sympathetic light, “seeing in them integrity, dignity, and a sense of values which is not all commensurate with their inadequacies in speaking or writing formal English” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 11). His term is thus not meant to be a “put down” but is primarily descriptive of the poor whites’ economic and social status. The majority of the poor whites are members of a community and are law abiding (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 23). However, Ruby and Lee Goodwin are notable outcasts and criminals. The poor whites have their place in the social structure. Yet, “the Negro attitude toward the poor white may be one of contempt” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 20).

The poor whites to be considered in this section are: the Bundren family, Lena Grove, and Wash Jones. Each will be assessed to see to what extent they possess the values associated with the human spirit.

The Bundren Family

“Addie Bundren, a farmer’s wife from the backwoods hills of Mississippi, has just died, and in order to respect her last wish, her family undertakes a long and perilous journey to carry her coffin to a distant graveyard at Jefferson” (Bleikasten 3). This is the story of the Bundren family as told in the novel As I Lay Dying. It appears simple but actually it is not. The story is told in stream of consciousness style involving 60 short sections apportioned among 15 characters, 7 of these being members of the Bundren family who receive the most attention. “One might argue that each of the Bundren children is making the journey alone, each shut up in his own consciousness and unable
to communicate with the others” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 158). “Each character is living in a private world whose nature is gauged in relation to Addie and to the actual events of the journey to Jefferson” (Vickery 50).

The Bundrens as a family exemplify the human spirit by joining forces as a group to provide respect to her as wife and mother by completing the journey to bury her in Jefferson. They demonstrate affirmative life energy, actions based upon honor, and endurance and persistence in the face of obstacles. Some members of the group engage in heroic actions during the course of the journey. Although the lives of the Bundren family members might be mundane throughout most of their lives, the journey provides “peak moments” for some individuals.

The Bundrens may possess separate identities but they are first and foremost a family. “Family is still important in Faulkner whether as a sustaining or suffocating force” (Brooks *FE* 3). They decide as a family unit to respect Addie’s last wish to be buried in Jefferson. To accomplish this feat, family members must make their individual needs subservient to the group cause. “The need to cooperate during the journey merely disguises the essential isolation of each of the Bundrens and postpones the inevitable conflict between them” (Vickery 50). The journey itself is preposterous with terrible pitfalls along the way and “they persist in it in obvious violation of common sense” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 156). There is “an intermingling of humor and horror” (Vickery 65).

The Bundrens as a group seem to be of low mentality. Wagner describes them as “poor and ungraceful. They are infected with amorality but they are able to carry a genuine act of traditional morality through to the end” (87). Faulkner provides a silhouette of each of the Bundrens, and we shall look at each individual family member separately before considering how they blend into the family group.
Addie Bundren

Addie Bundren, the mother, has long been the strength in the family, the center-point to which all the other family members relate individually and distinctly. Early in the novel Addie’s thoughts are expressed, including her philosophy of life. Later in the novel she is a body in a casket, the object of the transportation to Jefferson. “Addie as an element in the blood of her children dominates and shapes their complex psychological reactions. Obsessed by their own relationship to Addie, they can resolve that tension only when they have come to terms with her as a person and with what she signifies in her conscience” (Vickery 52).

Addie believes that words are irrelevant and only physical experience has reality and significance (Vickery 54). She has been deeply disappointed in her relationship with her husband Anse and feels he talks a lot but his words have no meaning. She has stopped trying to convert Anse to her way of thinking and has accepted the fact that she and Anse live in separate worlds. Addie has also lost the connection to the community. “The loss of community is at the same time a loss of communication. Language to her seems empty, drained, and ineffectual” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 149).

Addie performs a psychologically complex feat in that she asserts her identity in terms of her body. Two children, she claims, are hers alone and have no part of Anse. Actually one child is Anse’s biological son but the other child is the product of an extramarital affair. Addie claims the two children, Cash and Jewel, as her own because “she has chosen them for a relationship that is personal as well as maternal. There is an unspoken understanding between herself and Cash. There is the same understanding, although it is no longer peaceful, between herself and Jewel. In both cases the relationship is simple and direct” (Vickery 55). Both are quiet men who speak few words. “The two brothers who dare most and suffer most lack the wordiness that their mother despised” (Brooks 93).
Addie also insists that her dead body will die only on its own terms i.e., it won’t rest until it arrives in Jefferson (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 149).

Addie is dying but she has a fervent desire for life. Addie sees in Jewel “the sign of her sin, a sign of grace. Through sin Addie seeks to find and enact her own humanity” (Vickery 54). She makes one valiant attempt to try to “explore and encompass the potentialities of life in one intensely felt act” (Vickery 55). She can die peacefully because she has dared to live intensely, following her feelings, in spite of social pressures and conventions. Jewel becomes the symbol of her freedom and her rebellion.

Addie Bundren is brave and faces the fact that she is dying. She has been a manipulative person and, in setting the stage for the funeral journey, she is in essence asking each person to reflect upon and work out their own relationship with her and with each other. Addie is assertive and holds some masculine attitudes within her family and shows many traits Faulkner typically associates with characters such as Thomas Sutpen: imagination, energy, impatience, pride. “She is at once a mother in flesh and a father in spirit” (Bleikasten 84). She does not communicate lovingly but she commands respect. She does obtain love even though she may not always feel loved.” Whereas “Addie’s concern for deeds and the fierce energy she associates with the earth may disguise her idealism, it is idealism nevertheless, though of a passionate and devouring kind. What she has done is to transpose the spiritual into secular terms” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 153).

Anse Bundren

Anse, Addie’s husband, is in many ways her opposite. Whereas Addie distrusts words and values actions, Anse lives by words alone. His words are unsupported by action and are thus meaningless. He often reduces experience to a few worn-out clichés. Only if he promises formally, are his words to be trusted. Anse promised Addie he would bury her in Jefferson and he does do that. “Even such a fellow as Anse Bundren, in the grip of an idea, in terms of promise or code, can rise above the ordinary level” (Warren “WF” 105).
Generally Anse is passive and he does not seem able to formulate plans or initiate action. On the funeral journey he is lazy, avoids exertion, and manipulates others into acting for him. “His inertia is no weakness; it is a force which he manipulates cleverly to achieve his own ends” (Bleikasten 84). At Addie’s funeral he obviously enjoys the mourning because he is in a position of importance. He laments his loss but then is unwilling to purchase a shovel to dig the grave. “He is the only one of the Bundren’s completely unchanged by Addie’s death or the funeral journey” (Vickery 57). “It would appear that Addie never existed for him as a person, or an individual” (Vickery 52). “Anse resembles Flem Snopes in his coolness, his sheer persistence, his merciless knowledge of other human beings and how much they will put up with” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 154).

The final insult to Addie and to the Bundren children is when Anse returns from the store with a new wife whom he introduces as “the new Mrs. Bundren” (AILD 261). “Anse, having lost his wife would naturally need another one, so he got one. At one blow he not only replaced the family cook, he acquired a gramophone to give them all pleasure while they were resting” (Lion 254). He has not been touched by the death of his wife or by his son’s serious leg injury. He is moving on to future pleasures. Anse would probably qualify as a negative example of the human spirit, showing only a very minute amount of love and compassion.

Cash

Cash is the oldest of the Bundren children. Quiet by nature, he uses his carpentry skills to construct Addie’s coffin while she watches. “The construction of the coffin becomes an act of love, understood by Addie” (Vickery 57). Cash expresses his feelings through action and through his work. “He is a good carpenter, proud of his work, hard working, conscientious, methodical to the point of mania. His is a world of figures and measurements, a craftsman’s or a technician’s world” (Bleikasten 85). He is not verbal
and “he has no room for cultivation of imaginative or linguistic potentialities. Cash is action in search of a word” (Vickery 57). He is often a peacemaker and initially is remote from tensions and violence.

Cash does not remain static, however, but makes definite changes after his mother’s death and funeral. He twice breaks his leg while attempting to save Addie’s coffin from the river and “he is heroic in his suffering” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 143). Cash is patient and uncomplaining while coping with his pain. He grows and matures on the journey and develops more feeling and understanding. He also becomes more intuitive and has growing sympathy for Darl. However Cash cannot approve of the destruction of property precipitated by Darl because he respects property as a reward earned from work, and he values and respects his own work. Cash clearly loves his mother and does the best he can for her and for the transportation of her body. He agonizes and struggles but he also grows up and becomes a more complete human being.

Darl

Darl, the second son, is totally rejected by Addie, and she refers to him as “the ultimate and unforgivable outrage” in her feelings toward Anse. Darl is both intelligent and intuitive, creative like a novelist or poet, the most complex of the children but unfortunately he is “mad,” probably schizophrenic. If schizophrenia can be caused by a rejection from the mother, Darl would serve as an example, as he is totally denied a place in either Addie’s affections or in her world. At times he too feels he is not Addie’s son, or perhaps not anyone’s son, and he seems at times to doubt his very existence.

Darl is constantly trying to understand reality, probably because he has only a tenuous hold on it. He lives within his own mind for the most part and his connection with the external world is precarious. However, his intuition about others is remarkable. “He knows the secret thoughts and motives of others” (Vickery 59). “He may have this intuitive power because he lacks a strong identity himself. He can become anyone
because he is nothing himself” (Bleikasten 89). Darl knows that Jewel is the son of Addie’s affair and taunts him about it. He also understands that Jewel’s horse is a substitute for Addie.

Darl is critical of his siblings and his father and he does not believe in the purpose of the journey as the others do. He is “a critic of the action, who does not believe in honor and has the supreme lucidity of the mad” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 143). Much of the time Darl appears detached, calloused, and mean. “Darl is pure perception. In general, in spite of all his poetry, he is a rationalizing and deflating force, the anti-heroic intelligence” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 145). Sadly, Darl is intensely and painfully aware of his predicament, but he is helpless to change it. When Darl decides he has had enough of the ludicrous journey and sets the barn containing the coffin on fire, the decision of the Bundren family is unanimous that he should go to the mental hospital at Jackson. Addie’s rejection of Darl is now repeated by all the family members. Darl’s mental illness stifles his human spirit. He is so involved in trying to maintain his contact with reality that he cannot extend himself to others in any affirmative manner. Also his negativism and tendency to be critical of others are parts of his illness, and also serve to alienate Darl from positive and loving contacts. Darl has been isolated from others for a long time and will probably not really mind the environment at Jackson.

Jewel

Jewel, the child born from Addie’s affair, can be described as the “unreflective man of action. He is closest to his mother and shares her contempt for mere words and her dedication to deeds” (Brooks FE 81). He is not very articulate except when cursing “but it is Jewel who rushes into action each time there is a new barrier or catastrophe” (Vickery 55). “Jewel’s world is least accessible to public scrutiny since it consists of a welter of emotions, centering on Addie, which cannot be communicated” (Vickery 60). Jewel lacks Darl’s self-consciousness and acts without understanding of his own motives much of the
time. Brooks describes Jewel as “the least reflective member of the group - violent and even brutal - whose heroism is so pure and un-self conscious that he is not aware that it is heroism” (Yoknapatawpha 165). “For Jewel passion and action are everything and he feels no need for thoughts to mediate between them” (Bleikasten 84). “He is, however, instinctively brave” (Brooks FE 81).“Jewel overrides Cash’s caution with his own impetuous activity, laced with violence and fury. When the action is over Jewel’s fury subsides except for brief spasms of irritation. Jewel keeps the neighbors at a distance by his coldness and deliberate insults” (Vickery 60).

Jewel’s prize possession is a wild horse which he tames. He is possessive of the horse, and isolates it, along with himself, from all contact with others. No one but Jewel is allowed to feed it, sleep with it, or touch it. The relationship between Jewel and the horse is reflective of the underlying incestuous relationship he shares with his mother. “He imagines he and Addie defiantly and violently isolated from the world and its influence. Most of Jewel’s subsequent actions are, in effect, attempts to make this fantasy a reality and so to claim exclusive possession of Addie” (Vickery 60). Another significance of Jewel’s horse is to separate him from the rest of the Bundren family, i.e., no one else has a wild horse and no one else is without a father. “His sacrifice of the horse is the most heroic thing he does” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 62). “He sacrificed the only thing he ever loved for someone else’s good” (FU 109). “Jewel is in terms of Addie’s being; when Addie dies and is finally buried, Jewel’s is becomes was” (Hoffman 64). Without Addie, Jewel’s future is very uncertain. Jewel demonstrates the human spirit in his love and sacrifice for Addie but it is unclear whether he will be able to extend that spirit to others.
Dewey Dell

Dewey Dell, the only Bundren daughter, is the child Addie mentally gave to Anse to make up for the fact she took sole “parental ownership” of Jewel (AILD 176). Dewey Dell is just out of adolescence and holds a secret that she is pregnant. She might have confided in Addie and asked for help, but as Addie is dying she cannot approach her but seems only to worry, complain, and try on her own to figure out what to do. “For Dewey Dell everything comes too soon. Time, life, death, everything goes too quickly” (Bleikasten 94). “I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because in the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon” (AILD 120). She needs help and guidance but everyone she turns to betrays her e.g., Doc Peabody, the pharmacist. Dewey Dell is focusing on the immediate problem of what to do about the developing child, and she has no real time or energy to grieve for Addie and her loss. “Hers is a world trapped in flesh, she describes herself as ‘a little tub of guts’ and her whole universe is one mass of viscera” (Bleikasten 95). Until she can solve her biological dilemma, Dewey Dell cannot deal with her mother’s death. Since Addie gave Dewey Dell away to Anse, it is questionable whether she would have helped Dewey Dell in this situation. In any event, Dewey Dell is left alone with her problem and must use all her resources to help herself at this time. Dewey Dell is not mentally ill, but like Darl, her problems do interfere with her ability to express her human spirit at this time in her life.

Vardaman

Vardaman is the youngest of the Bundren children and is somewhere between ages 6 and 8. He is overwhelmed by his mother’s death and is trying to make some sense out of it. He is not an idiot, nor is he crazy, but he is simply a young child trying to understand.
As far as Addie was concerned, Vardaman was the child she gave Anse to replace Cash “the child she had robbed him of” (AILD 176). Vardaman is too young to comprehend the meaning of death and he feels confused by it. He tries to place the blame for his mother’s death on Dr. Peabody, who he surmises did not come quickly enough. A few hours before Addie’s death, Vardaman killed a fish and splashed blood on himself when cutting it up. Since these two acts occurred in close proximity, Vardaman identifies his mother with the fish and believes they could both be brought back to life. He also denies his mother’s presence in the death bed: “it was not her. It was not my mother. She went away when the other one laid down in her bed and drew the quilt up. She went away” (AILD 66). Vardaman also worries about how his mother will breathe in the casket. He utilizes a defense of magic denial to try to handle his mother’s absence and his own loss. He sees more than he can understand or formulate.

Vardaman is stressed, overwhelmed, and illogical, but he is engaged in the effort to understand and he is still capable of action. Vardaman, because of his young age, is helpless to do anything except to try to figure out his position among the remaining family members. “Jewel is my brother. Cash is my brother. Cash has a broken leg. We fixed Cash’s leg so it doesn’t hurt. Jewel is my brother too but he hasn’t got a broken leg.” (AILD 210). Vardaman will sincerely miss having a mother; but he had not yet developed an intense relationship with Addie as a person and may be able to obtain mothering from the new Mrs.Bundren.

**Human Spirit in the Bundren Family**

The human spirit manifests itself differently in the various members of the Bundren family. As a group they unite together to complete their common task. As individuals they differ in their motivations and eventual goals.

Addie Bundren is “a woman of furious intensity who is still unfulfilled, and now she is hopeless of finding any genuine fulfillment on this earth” (Brooks FE 82). This is an
all-too-frequent human predicament. To Addie’s credit she maintains her intensity, her life force, up until the end of her life. In her request for burial in Jefferson, she may have been insightful enough to do something to encourage the family to work out their differences in the interest of a common goal. If true, this encouragement would have been a positive legacy on her part. She allows Cash to make her casket, allows him to do something for her, which may have assisted his personal growth. Jewel is never in doubt about her feelings for him. Addie is unhappy in her situation but feels helpless to leave probably, in part, because she is poor. She handles her dying in a strong manner and provides a model for others in this regard. She negate God by having an affair with one of his ministers and by elevating Jewel to a higher position, but at the same time she tries to live honestly and to be fair in her dealings. She leads an isolated life, has no friends, ignores society, but she maintains a strong personal identity. Like Thomas Sutpen, and even Lucas Beauchamp, she does not cast her lot with humanity, but she is a strong force within herself.

Anse Bundren is more like Flem Snopes, using others for his own purposes. He is not trying to be rich but he wants to be at least comfortable with new teeth and a gramophone. He is a shallow, lazy man who does not possess many qualities associated with the human spirit. It is surprising and to his credit that he completes the journey, but then he does have ulterior motives.

Cash Bundren shows positive qualities of the human spirit through his love for his mother and his respect for the rights of others. When injured, he handles the pain maturely and with dignity. He demonstrates caring through his actions and eventually through an increase in sympathetic understanding of others e.g., Darl. He develops his human potential and will probably go on to have a reasonably happy life.

Darl Bundren, although intelligent and intuitive, does not possess many qualities associated with the human spirit. He is mentally ill, probably psychotic, but uses his intelligence in negative ways to criticize and goad others. Darl is close to being totally isolated from humanity and will finally obtain physical isolation when he goes to Jackson. He is similar to Quentin Compson in many of his self-conscious thoughts and
obsessions and, like Quentin, he is so mentally troubled he cannot help anyone else. He cannot relate to reality, let alone humanity. His life shows a tragic waste of potential, the kind of waste that would sadden Dilsey. Some of the fault for that lies with Addie, who rejected him.

Jewel Bundren demonstrates his human spirit through his love for his mother and his great sacrifice of his horse. However his love is a private and possessive love and he really does not care about anyone else and does not generalize his love to humanity as a whole, or even to his father or siblings. Jewel’s fate is actually in question once Addie is buried and gone forever. Jewel does have the capacity for heroic action and hopes to channel that in a positive direction. But we do not really know. Jewel has never had to search for, or work for, love, because he has been the spoiled or favorite child and we do not know whether he will “kick in” or simply fall apart.

Dewey Dell is involved in her own personal and private concerns and has no empathy or compassion for others at this time. She will eventually mature, but there is no indication that she is likely to grow in a more humanistic direction. She is a woman but does not seem to have identified with her mother to any extent. She does not turn to her father but she does not seem offended by him, either.

Vardaman, too, possesses an unknown future, as he is still young. He does use his mind and he tries to figure things out. He certainly will miss having a mother. His own type of personality and values, however, cannot be predicted at this time.

Lena Grove

Lena Grove is the counterpart and opposite of Joe Christmas in Light in August, and the novel shifts back and forth between the two characters. Lena is a young pregnant woman who comes to Yoknapatawpha County seeking the father of her unborn child who had promised her a future, and then disappeared. Lena may not be the brightest woman but she is a pleasant personality who is proud of the distance she has traveled and is
optimistic about the outcome of her search. The townspeople warm up to Lena and offer her help and assistance. “Though Lena is judged harshly (because of her pregnancy), she is consistently treated with kindness. Lena comes bearing life and she is searching for security, not respectability” (Vickery 80).

Lena and Joe Christmas are both strangers to Jefferson, but they interact with the community in opposing ways and achieve different results. “Lena offends the mores of society without challenging its very foundations as Joe Christmas does” (Vickery 80). It seems never to occur to Lena that society might disapprove of her, and if it does, she does not care. “Where Joe Christmas intensifies, she destroys the barriers between herself and others; where he forever threatens life with extinction, she becomes the means of its renewal and continuance” (Vickery 81). Lena gratefully accepts food from others, whereas Joe refuses food frequently because of his feelings about the person offering it.

In the course of her search for her child’s father, Lena meets Byron Bunch, a single and simple man who has been living a life of isolation consisting of work at the sawmill and weekly attendance at church. Byron has been isolated both from nature and from society. Upon meeting and falling in love with Lena, Byron is drawn back into the world of nature and caring and this, in turn, leads him to desire to help Joe Christmas. “He gained a self-respect, a dignity, and a courage which was lacking in his isolated safety and which gives promise of being a sufficient shield against whatever catastrophes he may encounter” (Vickery 82). Whereas formerly he was passive and believed in non-interference, now he can reach out to his friend Reverend Gail Hightower and implore that he try to help another man.

Lena and Byron are good, simple people. Lena possesses, and Byron develops, a sense of humor, and Byron’s recognition of the comic aspects of his own behavior help him to persevere and continue to try for a relationship with Lena, even when she rejects him. Lena, on her part, has gained security, knows where she is going, and can now joke about it. “She had a submission to her fate. It was her destiny to have a husband and children and she knew it so she went out and attended to it without asking help from anyone. She was the captain of her soul” (FU 97). “Together Byron and Lena find belief in life, in the
basic possibility for happiness and goodness” (FU 97). Lena knows she has a future with Byron but is in no hurry, no rush. Her baby is born at the same moment that Joe Christmas is lynched. Whereas Joe had no parents and no chance, Lena’s baby will have two loving parents, probably more than most children, and the world will benefit.

Lena Grove has a strong human spirit. When the father of her baby deserts her, she is not defeated but begins a long journey to find him. She has energy and optimism for her quest. She reaches out to other people in positive ways and gains their help and acceptance. She engenders good feeling wherever she goes. Upon meeting Byron Bunch, her loving and natural personality encourages his personal growth so that he moves from a position of isolation to one of commitment and caring for others. Lena is not sophisticated but she is seldom angry, maintains an upbeat mood, and perceives the good in her surroundings. Because she perceives other people as good, they tend to live up to her expectations. Lena may be a bit self-centered but she means no harm to anyone. She will be happy and satisfied in her life and will feel fulfilled, very different from Addie Bundren. She is not competitive but will be nurturing. She has strength in that she walks within nature and partakes of its power. She views herself as part of humanity and will help others whenever possible. Her legacy to the world will be to be a good wife and mother and to raise her children to be good people as well, in tune with nature and with themselves. She may never have a lot of money but she is rich in spirit.

Wash Jones

Wash Jones, in Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, can clearly claim membership in the category of “white trash.” He lives in an abandoned fishing camp, works as a handyman, and never enters Thomas Sutpen’s house by the front door until after the Civil War brings social changes. “Defeat has brought about a leveling of whites. Wash Jones, who never before would have dared, now freely crosses the threshold” (Lind 296).

“Wash defers to, waits upon, and has a naïve admiration for Thomas Sutpen” (Brooks
Yoknapatawpha 26). He admires Sutpen and prides himself on his total loyalty to this man. He is loyal because he views Sutpen as a great and good man. He also is loyal because he believes that Sutpen likes him and will treat him accordingly. Sutpen chooses Wash to drink and reminisce with because Wash is similar in background to Sutpen’s father and his own humble beginnings and because Sutpen needs and leans on Wash. Wash is aware of the power inherent in Sutpen’s dependency on him. “Weak, cowardly, compliant. He knows the longings of the poor white to rise above his class. He senses the derision of the Negroes and the other poor whites for his friendship with Sutpen” (Lind 292). Wash does not fight in the Civil War because he is “protecting Sutpen’s house.” Faulkner’s view is that “Wash Jones represents the man who survived the Civil War. The aristocrat in the columned house was ruined but Wash Jones survived it unchanged” (FU 75).

Wash Jones has a daughter, who is allegedly a prostitute, and he is raising his granddaughter, Milly. Wash faces the fact that neither he nor his daughter is going anywhere in life, but he harbors some hope for Milly when Sutpen begins to show an interest in her. “Wash Jones placed ultimate confidence in Sutpen’s moral character” (Barth 164). He begins to question his own judgment, however, and becomes angry over Sutpen’s callous remarks and his total abandonment of Milly when she gives birth to Sutpen’s baby and it proves to be a girl. Wash’s anger intensifies when he realizes he is not an equal in Sutpen’s eyes and he will never be regarded by him as anything but white trash. Wash kills Sutpen, the perpetrator of his own pain, the man he loved, admired, trusted, who was not trustworthy, the man who in the end was nothing himself but white trash in a big house with 100 square miles of property. In achieving the painful realization that Thomas Sutpen was not great or moral or good, “in his murder of Sutpen he achieves dignity and manhood” (Warren “WF” 105). Wash makes a serious mistake in judgment but is able to acknowledge this and take remedial action.

Wash Jones did not demonstrate much human spirit throughout his life. He is not ambitious, lacking the energy to move up and out of his poor white status. When he might have an opportunity, as in the war, he chooses to avoid the situation and stay
“safe.” He is depressed and defeated throughout his life. When a man of means, Thomas Sutpen, singles him out to drink and talk with, Wash elevates Sutpen to the level of a hero or a god. To the other members of his class and to the Blacks, Wash is an “ass kisser.”

Wash Jones is superior to Thomas Sutpen in one aspect: he loves and values his family. Wash is pleased when Sutpen wants Milly but never expects him to mistreat her. Once Sutpen becomes abusive toward Milly, Wash is forced to make a choice between Sutpen and Milly - and he chooses his granddaughter. The blood/family connection is stronger than his friendship with Sutpen. In choosing Milly and killing Sutpen, Wash demonstrates the human spirit in that he rejects a man who does not act honorably and has compassion for the pain of an innocent woman. He grows in spirit because he faces reality and takes action, both of these qualities being previously antithetical to his nature. Wash himself does have a moral code and a sense of honor. His idol has disappointed him and fallen. Wash Jones will leave the legacy that at least in the last moments of his life he loved someone more than himself. Like Flem Snopes, Sutpen is killed by one of his own kind, but both Mink and Wash are more honorable than the men they take out of the world.

Section Summary

In general the poor whites are valued and respected by Faulkner. They do not have much power to adjust or change their stations in life, but they are able to be happy, to hold a sense of humor, to enjoy life. The Bundrens, at least once in their life, are able to function as a cohesive group in order to honor a family member’s last request, enduring difficulties and hardships that involve self-sacrifice. Lena Grove and Byron Bunch are good and decent people who will continue to express caring for family and society. Wash Jones has the strength to face that a lifelong idol has feet of clay and to sacrifice his own comfortable life - and even his own life- for the granddaughter and his name. The poor
whites are not weak people. They can love their fellow men and can provide a legacy of a loving and compassionate family life, if they so desire.
The setting for the majority of Faulkner’s novels and short stories is Yoknapatawpha County. In his handling of some select issues, however, he has moved beyond the county and even beyond Mississippi. In this section we will discuss the human spirit in its relation to nature, war, machines, and its functioning following death.


Faulkner defines the worth of a man or woman by considering their relationship with nature. Much of the action in Faulkner’s novels is outdoors, specifically the outdoors of Mississippi. Furthermore he often describes local plants and animals. “In his work Faulkner portrays a loving contemplation of nature and often uses nature to reflect or generate a mood in man” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 29). However, he also expects man to struggle with nature. “Man’s attitude toward nature is a function of the health of his own nature. His necessary conflict with it provides the discipline out of which qualities such as humility and courage come. Man has to contend with nature and to prey upon it; only thus can he sustain life” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 270). Man’s attitude toward nature is not inherited or established through formal education, but it must be developed through an interaction in which a man comes of age, undergoes mythic rites, and develops a “correct attitude” toward the natural world.

“The worst villains in Faulkner are cut off from nature” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 61). “Evil for Faulkner involves a violation of nature and runs counter to the natural appetites and affections” (Brooks *Yoknapatawpha* 63). Faulkner’s women seem to have a natural affinity for nature, and if grounded, they are strong in their identities and in their placement in the world. Women such as Eula Varner, Lena Grove, Judith Sutpen, and
Dilsey are in touch with nature and with their own natures. Men such as Jason Compson, Flem Snopes, and Thomas Sutpen are cut off from their own natural instincts. “Those who have learned the right relationship to nature are set up against those who do not have it. The pure exploiters are, however, caught in a paradox. Though they may gain ownership and use of something in nature, they never really have it” (Warren “WF” 102). Faulkner makes it clear that the right attitude toward nature, and toward man, is respect and even love.

Isaac (Ike) McCaslin

Faulkner’s classic description of man in the wilderness is in his short story, “The Bear,” and other stories comprising the content of his novels Go Down Moses and The Big Woods. These books tell the story of Isaac McCaslin and his introduction to the wilderness as a boy of 12. As he matures, Isaac’s interaction with the wilderness takes on new dimensions, and his relationship to nature is evaluated at age 16, at age 21, and eventually in his old age. The relationship with the wilderness continues throughout Isaac’s life and impacts upon him as long as he lives.

Utley relates that the events in “The Bear” occur in the northwestern corner of Yoknapatawpha County, north of Jefferson, in a woods along the Tallahatchie River bottom. The land formerly belonged to Sutpen’s plantation and was taken over by Major deSpain through foreclosure. The Major turned a poor white shack into a hunting cabin and shortly after, each November, began taking two week hunting parties into the woods (5).

Ike is the youngest and newest member of the hunting party. He has a mentor, Sam Fathers, who is teaching him the ways of the wilderness. Sam is the son of an Indian chief and a Negro slave woman. He is a skilled hunter and he is wise about the attitude a man should possess toward nature. Sam teaches Ike in a slow and thorough manner, providing “experiences” when he believes Ike is ready to have them.
For years the object of the hunt has been a large, three-toed bear who has been given a human name of “Old Ben.” Old Ben is smart and crafty and for years has evaded the hunters and their dogs. He has suffered many close calls but has never been captured or killed. Sam Fathers maintains that the reason for this is that a dog has never lived that would be willing to risk his life against the bear. Sam teaches Ike to be aware of the bear and to track him in the wilderness. As long as he carries no gun and no modern implements, Ike can locate and even look at the bear. In the meantime, Ike has learned how to instinctively navigate and experience the wilderness setting and has become a woodsman. Ike knows he will not personally kill the bear but he remains intrigued by the hunt.

When Ike kills his first deer, Ben initiates him by smearing the blood on his face. A new dog is found, “Lion,” who is trained by Sam Fathers to be the long-awaited opponent for Old Ben. Lion is trained to have affection for no one and to trust no one, but he is trained to hunt and to kill. Years pass, and finally Lion does kill Old Ben, with help from Boon Hogganbeck. Lion is disemboweled in the process and dies soon after. Sam Fathers, too, falls to the ground, and Ike now intuitively knows Sam will die too, in spite of the positive prognosis given by the doctor. With the death of Old Ben, an era is over. There will always be hunters in the woods but it will not be the same. Coincidently, the wilderness, too, is changing, and a new era is also coming to the environment. Many of the trees are being cut down for industrial purposes. The wilderness is actually receding. The question of man’s attitude toward the wilderness, toward nature, becomes paramount. “When man loses his awe of nature through a purely efficient utilization of it, or when he ceases to love it and to carry on his confrontation with it in terms of some sort of code, then he not only risks destroying nature, but risks bestializing his own nature” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 270).

Faulkner would later comment on the symbolism in “The Bear.” “To me the wilderness was man’s past, that man had emerged from the bear was a symbol of the Old Forces, not evil forces, the old forces which in man’s youth were not evil, that they were in man’s blood, his inheritance, his instinctual impulses came from that old or ruthless
malevolence which was nature“ (Lion 115). Nature was portrayed as neither good nor evil but as “mind that spawns and produces, it doesn’t care what.” The bear was a symbol of “a natural force which man has got to face and not be afraid of, that force has certain rights which must be respected. This force must not be reduced by trickery, it must be reduced by a bravery comparably as strong as its power” (Lion 120). Lastly, “the little dog that wasn’t scared of the bear represented the indomitable spirit of man” (Utley 186).

In chapter four of “The Bear,” Isaac takes the position that land should not be owned by anyone, and he repudiates the land that is his inheritance, giving it to his cousin, Cass Edmonds. Through this decision he also declines social position and personal power. He takes the position that “he does not want to profit from this which is wrong and sinful” (Utley 93). “Isaac wants to be free; he feels that Sam Fathers has shown him the way to freedom; and though he never quite formulates this for himself, his divesting himself of his patrimony is an attempt to gain this cherished freedom” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 264).

Isaac chooses never to own property. “He owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man’s but all men’s” (Utley 104-05). He decides to work as a carpenter, consciously selecting the worldly vocation practiced by Jesus Christ. Isaac’s wife, who expected to live on the inherited plantation, turns upon him and denies him both sex and children. In spite of her manipulative pressures, Ike remains firm in his position. “Ike does, to all respectable people, become a no-count, who gives up his farm and becomes a poor menial, and spends his life passing on the lore of Sam Fathers second hand to youngsters” (Utley 187). “What Ike learned from Sam Fathers didn’t give him success but did give him serenity, what would pass for wisdom” (Utley 213).

In the short story “Delta Autumn,” Ike, who is now elderly and a widower, is confronted by a young Negro girl, a daughter of his Black cousin Tennie’s Jim, who has been seduced by his white nephew, Roth Edmonds. Through this young woman, Ike sees that although the problems between the races are still present, he can envision a future time when they will no longer exist. He has renounced his land in part because of racial injustices, the guilt of the Southern whites, but he continues to harbor racial prejudices.
He cannot help the young woman to any great extent. “In divesting himself of his legacy for the best of motives, he has thereby reduced his power to act” (Brooks Yoknapatawpha 273). As Ike faces himself on this issue, he transcends “not only the values of his people, his culture, but also those of the Hunt itself. The values of the Hunt had aided him to surmount the flaws of his immediate society, the South, and the wider world of man’s greed; the values of love, learned from a Negro girl, may help him at last to surmount the limits of the cloistered Hunt” (Utley 187).

Isaac McCaslin provides an example of the human spirit’s potential to develop an intuitive or psychic sense, as he learns to be in tune with the wilderness and even to accurately predict when Old Ben will make an appearance. The bear will never appear if Ike carries a gun. He also provides an example of a man who wishes to lead a life of morality. The renunciation of ownership of the land comes from a sincere wish to atone for the sins of his forefathers and for the wrongs that have been committed upon a group of people. In his humanistic concerns, Isaac is establishing a bond with both past and future generations. By this renunciation, some critics argue, Isaac defaults on his responsibilities to run the plantation, sells his marriage down the river, and chooses to have no progeny. “He fails to achieve a vision of reality in any way more profound or satisfying than Quentin or Bayard. He remains selfish, self-satisfied, and alone” (Utley 219). It is possible that Ike might have had no impact at all, however, had he followed the opposite path. “He fails to apply the qualities he learned under the tutelage of Sam Fathers, the fyce and Old Ben should have been asserted within the context of civilization, whereas he forever applies them solely to the Hunt” (Utley 212). He does try to pass the wisdom he has learned down to future generations, however.

Throughout his life Isaac remains in touch with nature and never intentionally hurts anyone. The renunciation may not bring freedom but it does make a statement, which is that a free man can choose this path if he wishes. One man’s statement cannot compensate for all the past injustices, but at least one man speaks out for what he believes is right. “The gesture of protest can become part of recorded time” (Utley 211). Isaac has the courage to follow his principles. He may not be a saint, nor is he necessarily
trying to be, but he believes in certain values and will not compromise them. He may have made the mistake of forgetting “love,” as the young Negro girl points out, but when confronted, he is able to admit this, transcend his ego and his pride, and to restore love back to its central placement.

Isaac chooses a path early in his life and remains consistently on that path throughout his life. He has a life purpose which is to pass the teachings of Sam Fathers down to future generations. He is willing to share what wisdom he has acquired with others. He refuses to engage in competitive society and chooses a simple and meditative life. He refuses to allow his wife or anyone else to deter him from what he considers his life purpose. Yet, even in his later years, he is willing to listen and learn from a very unlikely teacher, the young girl. Isaac makes one think of Thoreau, of all the transcendentalists, of monks, and gurus. He has selected a solitary path but he shares human and environmental concerns with a group of kindred souls, living and dead. He is intertwined with nature, has respect for it in all its manifestations, enjoys his time on earth, and has a very strong human spirit.

**The Human Spirit & War: “Turnabout”**

Although intrigued with the notion of war and with being on active duty, Faulkner did not write a lot about war. His short story “Turnabout” is an exception. “Turnabout is completely outside of the Yoknapatawpha saga” (Vickery 199). It relates the experiences of an American airman and a British sailor during World War II, and it focuses more upon the inner experiences and personalities of the men involved that it actually does upon the war.

H. S. Bogard is a 25-year-old captain in the American Air Force. He is intelligent but not brilliant; he is also cautious, thoughtful, and responsible. Bogard has a curiosity about people and a kindness toward them that his subordinates appear to lack.

Claude Hope is an 18 year old sailor in the British Navy. He is initially presented as
“girlish” in manner and appearance, drunken, jovial to the point of silly, and certainly not to be taken seriously. Hope spends his daytime hours on a small boat that at night is trapped beneath the wharf until the tide goes out. All night long Hope and his colleagues drink, carouse, and usually end up sleeping in the gutter.

Bogard asks Hope to accompany him on a bombing mission because he assumes Hope has not seen any war activity and might get a thrill out of the mission. Although Bogard’s colleagues make fun of this gesture, he insists on helping the boy by providing an exciting experience. He is surprised when Hope shows skill in firing the Lewis gun he is assigned to, and he is also surprised when Hope seems curious and interested but not afraid. Hope does show a curious habit of leaning out over the right wing of the plane after the bombs have been dropped and other aircraft have shot at them, but Bogard and the others assume he is sick and vomiting. At the end of the flight they discover that a bomb is hanging from the right wing and this was the basis of Hope’s concern. Hope apologizes for his questioning and commends the airmen for knowing their job.

The next morning Bogard accompanies Hope on the small, camouflaged boat, keeping his promise to do so amid derisive remarks from his colleagues. He is introduced to Ronnie, a quiet, somewhat sullen and stressed man. Ronnie and Claude play a game which involves shouting “Beaver” when a boat with a basket mast is spotted. Bogard is astounded at the speed of the little boat and the manner in which it rides the waves. As he studies the boat, he becomes aware that it carries a torpedo. The job of Claude and Ronnie is thus to blow up enemy ships. Once the torpedo is released, the boat must instantly switch direction to avoid the path of the torpedo. On this mission two boats are sighted, both firing at the small craft in which Bogard and the others are riding. The waters in which they ride are also full of mines. When the situation really impacts upon Bogard, coupled with the rapid speed and turns of the boat, he becomes ill. After one false start, they are successful in their mission and return home. Bogard learns that none of these boats have ever been captured, although some have failed to return.

With respect, Bogard sends a case of scotch to be delivered to Hope, wherever he is sleeping.
The story concludes with quotations from two newspapers. The first one concerns Hope. A torpedo ship containing Hope, Ronnie, and two crewmen failed to return from coast patrol duty. Bogard is the subject of the second clipping. He and his crew are cited for performing a very dangerous and successful bombing mission, destroying an ammunition depot behind enemy lines and demolishing the chateau which served as enemy headquarters. “They returned safely without loss of a man” (FR 572-73).

Both the protagonists in this story exemplify the enjoyment and development of the human spirit. Both are in bad and desperate situations, in active war zones. Neither complains nor laments about going home to safer territory. Both are serious about their work and attempt to do the best job possible. This is their defined purpose, at least at this time. Each man is kind to the other when he perceives sickness or weakness, whether it is a true picture or not. They both demonstrate competitive joy in sharing their domain with the other. With the competition there is development of respect and admiration.

Bogard is drawn into the relationship with Hope because of his qualities of intelligence, curiosity, kindness, openness to new experience, and honorability. He is curious about what the boats do, but he is also kind to a young boy whom he thinks has had no real war experiences, and he adopts the role of the boy’s teacher. Bogard goes beyond his men in kindness and empathy as they either would not bother with Hope or they would make fun of him. Bogard is also humble, does not feel he has all the answers, and can learn new things. Bogard does learn and grow from the relationship with Hope. While initially cautious, sober, and careful he learns to become daring, non-rational, and a risk-taker, succeeding in a mission that most men never would have undertaken, much less achieved. Had he failed, he would have been court-martialed. But he knew he would not fail. His friendship with Hope had inspired him toward death-defying courage. He transcended from being a good captain to a hero.

Hope initially appears to be the weaker man but his strength becomes apparent toward the end of the story. He demonstrates bravery and optimism in a very dangerous situation. He shows Bogard that one can use “play” as a tool in a dangerous situation, that joking and optimism are methods of coping. Underneath this attitude, however, one can also be
successful and precise. This is the legacy that Hope left to Bogard, a philosophy that Bogard can then utilize in completing his successful attack. Hope is one of the “sailors in ‘Turnabout’ who are not aware of their heroism, do not take themselves seriously and achieve their proper greatness only in death” (Seyppel 84).

The Human Spirit & Machines: Pylon

Faulkner and his three brothers were all licensed pilots and shared a “common and everlasting love” for airplanes (Falkner, iii). In Pylon Faulkner writes about man’s relationship to machines, specifically man’s relationship to airplanes. “The attempt to master the planes is the new world equivalent of man’s ageless struggle to dominate his environment and to assert, under whatever conditions, human dignity and values” (Vickery 148). In Pylon the planes seem to take on anthropomorphic characteristics. One plane is described as a “mad dog” and the planes can be rebellious and uncooperative because they can malfunction, explode, lose pieces, and kill. As one of the pilots suggests “they will kill you if you don’t watch them” (155). The planes seem to test the pilots’ ingenuity, and a successful flight requires patience, courage, and vigilance on the part of the operator. Both the wilderness and the plane “offer a test of man’s courage, of the will to endure and the skill to survive” (Vickery 148).

The central event of Pylon is an air show. Pilots and their crews are bringing their own planes into the airport hangar at New Valois, which seems to be a thinly disguised New Orleans. A reporter is assigned to cover the air show and to write about it both objectively and in a myth-creating manner. The reporter focuses on one group of five people, consisting of: Roger Shumann, the pilot, his wife Laverne, the parachute jumper, Jack, a mechanic named Jinks, and a six-year-old child, Jackie. This group is united by the fact they all work together as a team and they are united by the plane itself. “The pilots, jumpers, mechanics and their women have broken their ties with the old settled earth in order to form a new kind of society in which the unit is no longer the family but
is the group required to care for one plane. Each time the planes and their particular
planes converge on an airport, a larger social unit is temporarily created” (Vickery 149).

The group selected by the reporter is different and controversial in that Laverne,
although married to Shumann, simultaneously carries on an open affair with the jumper,
Jack, and the public is aware of this arrangement. The paternity of the six-year-old boy is
unknown and unclear to the public, although he carries Shumann’s name.

Shumann wins 30% of $325 in his first day at the air show, but his plane is
compromised. The next day’s show offers a bigger prize of $2000, and Shumann decides
to take a chance on a plane formerly judged to be unsafe. He takes the chance, partly
because the team needs money, but even more so because he has a compulsive need to
compete. “It ain’t for the money. It’s because they have got to do it . . . they can’t help
themselves” (300). Shumann knows he is a superior pilot but he also knows the plane
may not survive. He takes a calculated risk.

Shumann, the pilot, is the leader of the team. His father is a doctor who desires that
Roger follow in his footsteps, but Roger persistently pursues his career in aviation,
leaning on his father for financial support until he “makes it big.” So far Roger has not
been really successful, and his father has lost a home through continuing to support
Roger’s efforts. By competing in air shows Roger is at least making enough money to
support the team, but at times they live day-to-day. Six years ago Roger made the
decision to marry Laverne and to give Jackie his name and treat him as his son. Roger
understands Laverne and allows her to have what she needs without complaining. He
even listens to the Reporter’s fantasies about his wife without becoming angry. In the big
race, when his plane malfunctions, Shumann “looked down at the close peopled land and
the empty lake and made a choice before the tail group came completely free” (329).
Shumann knows he will die but makes the decision to save the spectators.

Laverne, Shumann’s wife, is an orphan who, we learn, was molested by an older
sister’s husband. When Shumann comes into her small town for a show, she takes a risk
and runs away with him, and from that point she leads a nomadic life. She finds herself
unable to be content with just one man and becomes intimately involved with Jack as
well as with Roger. Years before she told Shumann’s father that she had been born bad
and she could not help it or wasn’t going to try to help it. Following Roger’s death she
takes Jackie to Shumann’s father to raise, explaining that she is now pregnant again and
she is unable to care for both children. She walks off while Jackie is asleep.

The Reporter at first regards the aviators as aliens, “strange mechanical robots from
another world who provoke his curiosity” (Vickery 145). The Reporter, himself, is a
strange character. He is described as skeleton-thin with a cadaver face. He is unmarried,
seems never to have had parents, and cannot function too well at his job although he has
potential. His editor tells him “you have an instinct for events. Yet you never seem to
bring back anything but information. It’s not the living breath of news. Its dead before
you can get back here with it” (39). The Reporter becomes more and more fascinated
with the aviation team, inviting them to his house for the night, plying them with liquor,
and fantasizing wildly about sex with Laverne. Soon the Reporter shifts perspective and
begins to regard the group as alive and stable and his own world of New Valois as dull
and dead. He pines to become a member of the group but his hopes are shattered when
the group disintegrates after Shumann’s death. Laverne tells him to leave and vows never
to see him again. “His final shock is to discover that not the woman but the pilot had held
the little group together” (Vickery 151). The Reporter must remain in New Valois but he
is a changed man. “In effect he carries the wasteland with him but his recognition of this
fact is the first step to self-knowledge” (Vickery 146).

Jack receives little attention in this novel but he seems the most troubled by the three-
way affair, his inadequacies, and his own status of “tolerated intruder” (Vickery 153). He
is angry that the Reporter pays attention to Laverne. He says goodbye to Jackie without
much feeling. He now must make a new world with Laverne, however, and he cannot live
with the child who carries Shumann’s name and thus is a constant reminder. Jack and
Laverne will probably return to the traditional family situation, but Jack does not have the
earning potential of Shumann, nor his leadership qualities. He is insensitive and nasty
when he tells the Reporter “take a tip from me and stick to the kind of people you are
used to” (267).
Jackie, the six-year-old child, was born in a hangar in California but has already traveled across the country four times. He was born into the group and takes its arrangement for granted. His paternity is irrelevant, but he has learned to become angry when asked “who is your father?” Jackie has received loyalty, love, and self-sacrifice from the group members and has not been unhappy. The adjustment to living at his grandfather’s house will likely be difficult, because the grandfather is still grieving over his own child, Roger.

Of the group members, Roger Shumann most clearly shows the workings of the human spirit. Early in his life he discovers his purpose which is a career in competitive aviation. He has talent but encounters a series of accidents, plane malfunctions, and life responsibilities. In spite of his problems, however, he loves flying and clearly demonstrates competitive joy. Roger appeared on the way to achieving success and fame in his chosen field but then suffered the fatal accident.

Roger Shumann exhibits responsibility, caring, and empathy toward the members of his social unit. He tries to be fair to the Reporter, refusing to take all his money when he has the chance to do so, at a time when the group is experiencing financial problems. Roger heeds his father’s advice to accept Jackie as his son, legally and emotionally, and thus gives Jackie a name and a family. Roger’s fault is probably that he is too passive in some of his dealings and has become too desperate for money, but he shows character in his bravery, honesty, and fairness. Roger’s final contribution to humanity is when he flies his plane into a lake, knowing he will drown, rather than into a crowd of people where he might have had a chance, but others would certainly be hurt and killed. To his son he leaves the legacy of his heroism and an opportunity to grow up in the solid and stable home of his grandfather. He does not have a really happy life but it is an ethical life which is unselfish and admirable. Even with the proper attitude of respect, man may not survive but his heroism is to try to overcome the dangers and if he must die, to do so with dignity.
Only man of all the animals knows that he must die. How a man handles this knowledge, and what he believes will happen after death, will probably have an impact on how he chooses to live his life. Religious issues may come into play here, but the knowledge of the eventual occurrence of death belongs to the human spirit and is without religious affiliation. Some men choose to ignore the thought of death; some men worry so extremely that they develop a death phobia whereas others court death by risk-taking and engaging in death-defying behaviors. How one dies is also an issue. Death can come instantly, unplanned, with the individual unprepared. Death can come ever so slowly with a lingering illness. Death can be accidental or purposeful. One can have a warning or no warning at all. Regardless of the type of death, the force of the human spirit can help or hinder the individual in coping with his journey out of the world.

William Faulkner pondered the fate of the human spirit after it leaves this world. When his mother was ill and hospitalized he suggested “maybe each of us will become some sort of radio wave” (Falkner 189). Faulkner also made a strong statement about the artist’s immortality. “The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that 100 years later when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him is to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move. This is the artist’s way of scribbling ‘Kilroy was Here’ on the wall of the final and irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass” (Lion 253).

Faulkner himself engaged in death-defying behavior in his compulsive drinking. In addition, despite his multiple injuries riding horses, he always returned to the saddle.

William Faulkner did not deal with the theme of death in the majority of his characterizations, often focusing on excerpts from their lives but not the final chapter. He does tell the reader about the death circumstances of several of his major characters, such as: John Sartoris, Bayard Sartoris, Granny Millard, Thomas Sutpen, Flem Snopes,
Eula Varner Snopes, Quentin Compson, Joanna Burden, Addie Bundren, Roger Shumann, and Sam Fathers. These descriptions are given from an outside view of the characters, by observers, however, and he does not share with the reader the inner states, thoughts, or feelings of the individual as he or she passes through the process. An exception is the judge in “Beyond,” which I will discuss subsequently.

One facet of immortality that Faulkner portrays in his characters is a strong personality, a strong spirit, which makes such an impact on others that the individual is discussed, “felt,” referred to, by generations to come. The primary example of this is John Sartoris. John Sartoris built the railroads, fought heroically in the war, served the people, and took on an almost mythological dimension as one of the primary founders of Jefferson. In Sartoris, John’s spirit is “felt” after his death during a meeting between Bayard Sartoris and Old Man Falls. “Freed as he was of time and flesh, he was a far more palatable presence than either of the two old men” (19). Later, “John Sartoris seemed to loom still in the room, above and about his son, with his bearded, hawk-like face, so that as Old Bayard sat with his crossed feet propped against the corner of the cold hearth, holding the pipe in his hand, it seemed to him that he could hear his father’s breathing” (19). John’s spirit was attached to each man and also to other men who had contact with him. “He had passed beyond death and then returned” (19).

Thomas Sutpen was also a strong spirit who possessed intense energy. Even after his death men still discussed his affairs and tried to make sense of his life. His spirit was not as much “sensed” by others, but it continued to be an object of interest even after Sutpen was killed by Wash. In contrast, Flem Snopes was not a strong, lingering spirit. Following his death, society moved on and people quickly forgot him. He had achieved material possessions but was not a strong personality or spirit to be remembered. Roger Shumann performed a heroic action but soon after his team broke up, and the spectators would not long remember his name.

Mannie, in “Pantaloon in Black,” makes a brief appearance to Rider and their dog when they return to the house. When her apparition appears, the dog howls, and Rider sees her framed in the kitchen doorway, looking at him. He attempts to move toward her,
but as soon as he moves, she begins to fade. He attempts to retain her by sweet talk and imploring her to eat but to no avail - she fades completely away and does not return (136-137). The apparition appears to Rider because of the bond of love they shared. The apparition has the power to appear but not the power to stay. This episode mirrors the many episodes recorded in popular folklore in which the spirit comes to say goodbye to a loved one but cannot remain.

Faulkner’s most direct handling of the dying human spirit from within the individual is related in the short story “Beyond” (CS 781-798). In this story a 65-year-old judge has just died, does not recognize that he is dead, and experiences himself putting on a coat and leaving the house. He goes out among people, a crowd, and observes that the people are all passing through an entrance of some sort. He speaks to a man dressed for a wedding who is seeking his bride. The judge relates that he had a 10-year-old son who died following a fall from a horse and if he was looking for anyone, it would be for that son. He is told to “look for him here.” The judge then notices a friend, Mothershed, whom he thought was deceased. Mothershed tells the judge that he committed suicide because he wished to escape and avoid “the preachers,” meaning people who put their faith in religion. Mothershed also points the judge in the direction of a group of philosophers they both used to read and look to for answers, naming Ingersoll, Paine, Voltaire, and Montesquieu. The judge approaches Ingersoll and hopes Ingersoll will tell him whether or not there is a God, whether there is hope or there is nothing (CS 788). When his son died, the judge put his faith not in God, but in these rationalist philosophers. Ingersoll replies that he does not know the answer and the judge becomes angry. “Is Robert Ingersoll telling me that for 20 years I have leaned upon a reed no stronger than myself?” (CS 791).

The judge then encounters a woman carrying a child and a basket. Ingersoll tells the judge to follow the woman and to look into her face. The judge tells the woman about the search for his son and then shows her a picture of his son Howard on the pony. The woman and child tell the judge that they know Howard and that he comes by on the pony everyday, and the judge will meet him if he just waits. The judge then turns to his own
powers of rationalization. “The pony would have to be thirty years old. That pony died at eighteen, six years un-ridden, in my lot that was twelve years ago. So I had better get on” (CS 795).

The judge stops briefly at the cemetery, looking at Howard’s gravestone. He decides he does not believe in immortality, that “to lie beside him will be sufficient for me” (CS 796). He then returns home, re-enters his body in time for his funeral and feels satisfied and at peace. His last thought is: “gentlemen of the jury, you may proceed” (CS 798).

In this story Faulkner pits the rational agnostic man against a loving man, who may not understand what is happening, but is open to the possibility of re-uniting with another beloved person who has preceded him in death. Unless rational thought is suspended (which does not happen here), the reunion cannot occur. Faulkner avoids mention of any specific religious doctrine but does raise the question of the immortality of the human spirit. He once again dismisses the man who puts all his faith in reason, ignores love, and limits the human potential. Faulkner suggests that the human spirit may survive in some manner after the experience of death and that a loving heart might make this more likely to happen. For those who vacillate, like the judge, the grave is the end. For those who love deeply, like Rider, more may be possible.

Section Summary

In essence, as Faulkner enlarges his scope and moves beyond his “postage stamp of native soil,” beyond Yoknapatawpha, he illuminates the same issues, the same conflicts and dilemmas of the human spirit. It is not the environment that is the source of these complexities of humanity but rather the complexities that dwell within the human being, wherever he is. It is good that Faulkner stepped out of Yoknapatawpha to avoid localized reading of his issues. His truths are universal. The wilderness, war, airplane hangars, and death are all locations in which man finds himself and within which he must make the same choices, face the same dilemmas, and decide whether he casts his lot with humanity
or exists in isolation.
CHAPTER VIII  DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have attempted to define the attributes and characteristics of the human spirit and to analyze their presence or absence in the characters of William Faulkner. Faulkner’s characters mirror and reflect humanity as a whole because they contain both human strengths and flaws in varying amounts. During the analysis it became clear that not one of Faulkner’s characters is wholly good or wholly bad. “Everyone is capable of almost anything - heroism or cowardice, tenderness or cruelty” (Lion 32). Likewise, some characters rate highly on the continuum of the human spirit, whereas others rate low; but all of Faulkner’s people embody forces from the human spirit because they are, after all, human beings.

My selection of characters was informed by the underlying premise that any one of Faulkner’s characters could be selected for consideration in terms of their placement on the continuum of human spirit characteristics. I chose those characters to whom I was intuitively drawn and, in actuality, they seemed almost to select themselves. Reading Faulkner is like meeting people at a party - you meet some you admire and others you do not like. Faulkner’s characters “move and live” and become quite real in the reader’s imagination and memory.

Some characters, such as Gavin Stevens, Ratliff, and even Horace Benbow, were not discussed in depth. Although obviously supporting altruistic values relating to human societal progression, they seemed to the writer too bland, too compliant, and too complacent to create much interest. Also, as Hoffman as pointed out, “these men have erratic careers and often fumble their efforts to maintain moral principles” (101). It seemed much more interesting to try to take an unlikely individual, such as Thomas
Sutpen, and try to see how the human spirit was present in him and the form it would take.

One’s favorite Faulkner character probably tells a lot about a person. Faulkner’s own favorites are Dilsey and Ratliff, followed by Caddy (Lion 224). I would probably choose Rider, Eula, or Roger Shumann. Any character selected can be “defended” in terms of his membership in the society of the human race and the extent to which he donates part of himself to that society.

A particular characteristic of the human spirit does not have equal distribution within Faulkner’s population, and some characters illuminate one dimension of the human spirit more than others. The first characteristic discussed was the energy, the strength of the life force, or the “elan vital.” Characters possessing significant personal energy or force are John Sartoris, Thomas Sutpen, and Addie Bundren. When the spirit energy is high, other people are strongly influenced by that person, and the influence continues even after the high-energy individual is deceased. However, the presence of spirit energy does not mean that it will always be directed toward positive goals. Energy is illustrative of life but does not guarantee moral behavior or higher spirit functions. An individual can have high energy but still be an evil person, an enemy of humanity.

Some Faulkner characters show a strong burst of human spirit at one point in their lives, even if it never appears again. Characters fitting this category might be Old Bayard Sartoris, Jewel Bunden, and Roger Shumann. They seem to have the energy to come through once or twice, but the rest of their life is humdrum and perhaps selfish. At least they have one shining memory, whereas the real tragedy may be the man who has not even one significant moment, not even one powerful memory, who has never come through for anyone, and is totally selfish on all occasions.

Another group of Faulkner’s characters illustrates the human spirit through responsible, steadiness of being, through endurance and persistence in difficult situations. They do not “give up” but rather call upon their will power and persevere without any apparent reward. In this group we would find Dilsey, Judith, and Cash.

The competitive joy component of the human spirit is found in the sailors and airmen.
in “Turnabout” and in Roger Shumann’s passion for flying airplanes.

Those characters exhibiting the social dimension of the human spirit, as defined by Teske, might be Judith Sutpen, Roger Shumann, and Isaac McCaslin. They move beyond themselves to help others and thus to make an unselfish contribution to the human race. Isaac teaches others what he has learned, passing on wisdom to future generations. Lastly, characters engaged in the simple joy of living might be Lena Grove and Byron Bunch, as well as Aunt Jenny.

Personal development in which an individual transcends or moves beyond his initial adjustment, to rise in his understanding, can also be a part of the human spirit. A person who can face unpleasant personal traits or deeds, and then attempt to change them and do better, demonstrates a positive growth and creates an increase in the strength of the human spirit. Examples of this might be the Reporter in Pylon and Isaac McCaslin. It is never too late to learn and grow spiritually - perhaps even after death, as in the possibility offered the judge in “Beyond.”

Faulkner has consistently been concerned about the human spirit in his writings. His entire career has focused on this dimension of man’s being. He has developed characters who display the human spirit potently and has portrayed others with minimal human spirit. Yet the possession of this trait is a variable he always presents clearly. Suicide is the active wiping-out or the negation of the human spirit. “Numbness of spirit” is illustrated by those having difficulty coping with reality, such as Young Bayard.

Faulkner’s great theme has been “the human heart in conflict with itself” (Brooks FE 19). His heroes and heroines originate in any level of society, because what is important, finally, is their inner life and their internal conflicts. Morality assumes paramount importance here, as a man can be “good” only if he makes the correct moral choices. Faulkner speaks of a religious basis for man’s morality and suggests the function of religion is to force man to be a better human being than he would be if left to his own devices (Lion 246-47). Morality and religion will push man to extend beyond himself, to help humanity and not be selfish.

The good/evil dichotomy is also an important pattern for Faulkner. Man must
acknowledge and recognize the presence of evil in order to successfully defeat it. The evil can be within oneself, an evil nature, or it can be present in the environment. The greatest evil, for Faulkner, is alienation from the natural positive forces of life, such as a person’s lacking in feelings of love. Man must move beyond pure intellect and rational thinking to include love and become “human.” Evil thus becomes selfishness, destruction without caring, hurting others, indifference. Choosing not to care and not to love is evil. Man must overcome evil by struggle, discipline, and effort.

Faulkner places the greater burden of encountering and overcoming evil on men rather than on women. “Faulkner sees the role of men as active; man makes choices and lives up to the choices. He sees the role of women as characteristically fostering and sustaining…sending her man out into battle, including the ethical battle” (Brooks “Vision” 126). In our modern world, if Faulkner were writing today, he might not make this distinction because women go out into the world, encounter evil, and make choices too. However, as Brooks suggests, Faulkner in some ways indicates that women might deal with evil more easily, “that women have a secret rapport with evil that men do not have, that they are able to adjust to evil without being shattered by it, being by nature flexible and pliable” (Yoknapatawpha 27-8). Let it suffice to say that in our modern world, all people must acknowledge evil and choose a method with which to combat it. To ignore or deny its existence will weaken the individual and mitigate the development of a strong and positive human spirit.

To develop the human spirit, then, one must make moral choices. In addition, the choices must be supported by will power, discipline, and effort. As man struggles to do the best he can in the world, the struggle strengthens the human spirit. Faulkner expresses faith in man and in his ability to always prevail and endure over circumstances and over his own destiny. “The majority of your characters are trapped by fate. But there is always one person who survives, who triumphs over his fate…so many more go down than survive. But that’s all right. That they go down doesn’t matter. Its how they go under” (Lion 221). The human spirit develops through persistence in the face of terrible odds.
“Man’s immortality is that he is faced with a tragedy which he can’t beat and he still tries to do something with it. He still wishes, desires, wants to do better than he knows he can and occasionally he does do a little better than anybody expects of him. This man is immortal” (Lion 89).

Finally, love must be a part of the equation. Faulkner suggests that expressing authentic love is the essential condition for living a fully humane life. As Bowling notes: “without love no one will ever be a human being, properly speaking” (116). In Faulkner the opposite of love is not hate but it is doom, a key word appearing throughout Faulkner’s writings. “For doom, Faulkner implies, is the certain fate of any man who, ignoring love, pursues selfish ends” (Bowling 117). Faulkner conceives of love in terms of empathy, compassion, sacrifice, faith, patience, and endurance. “To him the greatest love is based not upon sensation but upon the spiritual affinity between man and his fellowmen, between man and nature, and among the members of a family” (Bowling 110). Thus a positive human spirit must include membership in the society of humanity, and there must exist caring about others - living, deceased, and unborn.

Therefore the current study produces the following conclusions:

1. From his earliest publications Faulkner has always investigated the human spirit. This was not a new theme emanating from his Nobel Prize acceptance speech.

2. For Faulkner, the presence of the human spirit is a human trait, found to a greater or lesser degree in all individuals. No man is completely devoid of human spirit or filled with human spirit. It is a matter of degree.

3. Social class in Faulkner’s characterizations is unrelated to the presence of the human spirit. There are forceful representatives of the human spirit in every stratum of society.
4. Faulkner’s work suggests the life-force or energy of the human spirit can be present in good or evil men. The other, more developed qualities - - patience, endurance, love, humanitarianism, concern with a social legacy - - occur only in men making moral choices and attempting to be “good.”

5. In Faulkner, love must take priority over rationalization in men conveying a strong human spirit. Love will lead men to extend their boundaries beyond personal and family situations and relate to all people in the world, and finally to all people of past and future generations.

In the words of Faulkner: “Man’s immortality is that he is faced with a tragedy which he can’t beat and he still tries to do something with it. He still wishes, desires, wants to do better than he knows he can and occasionally he does do a little better than anybody expects of him. This man is immortal.” (Lion 89).
APPENDIX A - NOBEL PRIZE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH
Stockholm, Sweden  December 10, 1950

I feel that this award was not made to me as a man, but to my work—a life’s work in
the agony and sweat of the human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to
create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So
this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the money
part of it commensurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like
to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I
might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish
and travail, among whom is already that one who will some day stand here where I am
standing.

Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now
that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only one
question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing
today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone
can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the
sweat.

He must learn them again. He must teach himself that the basest of all things is to be
afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for
anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which
any story is ephemeral and doomed—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion
and sacrifice. Until he does so, he labors under a curse. He writes not of love but of lust, of defeats in which nobody loses anything of value, of victories without hope and, worst of all, without pity or compassion. His griefs grieve on no universal bones, leaving no scars. He writes not of the heart but of the glands.

Until he learns these things, he will write as though he stood among and watched the end of man. I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny, inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet’s, the writer’s, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet’s voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.
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Crystal Greenawalt was born 11-11-49 in Phillipsburg, Pennsylvania. She grew up in Niagara Falls, New York and graduated from Niagara Wheatfield High School in 1969. She obtained an Associate of Arts degree from Niagara County Community College in 1983, a Bachelor of Arts with a major in English from the State University of New York at Buffalo in 1987, a Master of Arts in Humanities from the University of Buffalo in 1990, and a Ph.D. in Humanities from Florida State University in 2006, along with a certificate in American Studies.

Crystal married Dana Greenawalt in 1985 and is the mother of four children: Bertie, Jesse, Kezia, and Jacob.

Crystal authored a book, *The Goddess and the Owl* which was accepted for publication by Commonwealth Publishing in 1997 but was never printed because the company folded. She has written monthly theater and book reviews for the *Commonground* newspaper, Buffalo, New York. She co-edited *Room of Our Own*, an anthology of original works for female writers 1988-1990. She has published over 75 poems in various anthologies.

Crystal was a recipient of the President’s Choice Award in 1994. She received the VFW National Lifesaving Award for saving twelve people from a fire in March 1997. She was selected for inclusion in the 10th Anniversary Anthology of Award Winning Poets, JMW Publishing, Fall 1997. She received several blue ribbons from the National Poetry Competition, Redwood Acres Fair, 1998. She is a member of the Writer’s guild, the Audobon Society, and the Order of Eastern Star.

Crystal’s future plans are to continue writing books and articles, and she has an interest in teaching deaf children.