The critical search for William Faulkner a study of five novels

Judith M. Baines

THE CRITICAL SEARCH FOR WILLIAM FAULKNER.

A STUDY OF FIVE NOVELS

by

Judith M. Baines

A Thesis submitted to the University of Durham

for the Degree of Master of Arts

August 1973

"Two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of a critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it." (D.H. Lawrence).

"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." (Nobel Prize Speech).

"Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again, her feet began to clop-clop steadily again, and at once Ben hushed. Luster looked quickly back over his shoulder, then he drove on. The broken flower drooped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place." (The Sound and The Fury).

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

Absalom, Absalom!	William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!, 1971.
A Fable	William Faulkner, A Fable, 1965.
Light in August	William Faulkner, Light in August, 1968.
Soldier's Pay	William Faulkner, Soldier's Pay, 1967.
The Sound and The Fury	William Faulkner, The Sound and The Fury, 1966.
The Creative Will	W.H. Wright, The Creative Will: Studies in The Philosophy and The Syntax of Aesthetics, New York, 1916.
The Faulkner-Cowley File	M. Cowley, The Faulkner-Cowley File. Letters and Memories, 1944-1962, 1966.
Faulkner at Nagano	R.A. Jelliffe, Faulkner at Nagano, Tokyo, 1959.
Faulkner in the University	F.L. Gwynn and J.L. Blotner, ed. Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at The University of Virginia, 1957-1958, Virginia, 1959.
Faulkner ed.Warren	R.P. Warren, Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, New Jersey, 1966.
Jean Stein	Jean Stein, William Faulkner: An Interview, in William Faulkner: Three Decades, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.67-82.
Three Decades	F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery ed. William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, Michigan, 1960.
Two Decades	F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery ed. William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Michigan, 1954.
D.A.	Dissertation Abstracts.
M.F.S.	Modern Fiction Studies.
P.M.L.A.	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.

FOREWORD

When I first read Light in August I felt that Faulkner's work was going to stimulate and challenge me to reach that point of understanding where one becomes sensitive to the impulse behind the slightest movement of the writer's pen. Finding myself confused by The Sound and The Fury I willingly followed Faulkner's advice and read it again, and again, until familiarity with events and characters left me free to appreciate it fully. But Absalom, Absalom! resisted my efforts and I think it was during the time I spent wrestling with its obscurities and ambiguities, at first humbly, later impatiently, that I began to question Faulkner's quality. The more I read the more I felt that the rhetorical flood carried few rafts of solid meaning and that for some reason I was being subjected to a sort of hard-sell. This impression strengthened into conviction as I read A Fable, and persisted in varying degrees during a re-reading of all the books, with the notable exception of The Sound and The Fury.

I suppose I recognised that what had been an initial expectation of Jamesian authority in Faulkner was, in a sense, a reflection of my own critical insufficiency, a sign of my desire to be led surely towards an impeccable goal by the confident hand of the master. This awareness roused me to make a new approach to Faulkner. I determined that I would pursue him, not with my early assumption of his genius, but with more detachment, equally prepared, so far as I was capable, to discover either a more subtle or original point of view than I had previously recognised, or a weakness which might explain my sense of the hollowness of his work.

I tried to maintain my impartiality by turning from the books, and my rather emotive response to them, and reviewing an extensive selection of critical opinion. The exercise was of two-fold value: it provided

perspective as I examined a range of critical interpretations and responses, and it enabled me to identify an area in Faulkner's work which seemed to be a common source of critical confusion. More than this, I felt that the very diversity and style of the criticism reflected in itself some quality in Faulkner's work which might be essential to a full understanding of him.

My examination of Faulkner's theoretical statements, his 'aesthetics', proved similarly useful. His non-fictional comments showed an inconsistency which could be described as a gap between a public and private self, a hiatus which might be mirrored in the fiction. I now felt that I was somewhat more adequately equipped to begin my independent search for the source of this inconsistency, or, to put it differently, for Faulkner's fundamental point of view. His theoretical points of view, various and contradictory though they were, had been relatively simple to define, but his fictional stance could be veiled in ironies and technical illusions. However, it was essential that I should penetrate the opacity and my later chapters are investigations of authorial stance, attempting to distinguish a final, reliable authorial organization in each of the five books.

I have made claim to a degree of objectivity in my critical approach to Faulkner. It would be unrealistic of me not to acknowledge certain prejudices which I cannot (or will not!) discard. Chief among these is my understanding of authorial responsibility and its indivisible association with moral responsibility, in which I am at one with Wayne Booth when he writes,

> in fiction the concept of writing well must include the successful ordering of your reader's view of a fictional world. The "well-made phrase" in fiction must be much more than "beautiful"; it must serve larger ends, and the artist has a moral obligation contained, as an essential part of his aesthetic obligation to "write well", to do all that is possible in any given instance to realize his world as he intends it. From this standpoint there is a moral dimension in the author's choice of impersonal, non-committal techniques.[1]

It was from this standpoint that I began my search for Faulkner. I was prepared to search exhaustively. But if I penetrated his ambiguous obscurities and found that instead of "realiz(ing) his world as he intend(ed) it" they served to conceal a fundamental and unwanted uncertainty, I was also prepared to condemn. Final commitment seems to me essentially part of both critic's and writer's responsibility.

---

1. Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, 1961, p.386-388. (Myitalics).

CHAPTER I

A REVIEW OF THE CRITICISM

In his introduction to William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, F.J. Hoffman summarizes the history of Faulkner criticism. Taking the essay by G.M. O'Donnell[1] as the first important consideration of Faulkner's work, Hoffman disposes of all its pejorative criticism, ignoring all but O'Donnell's tracing of the theme of the Sartoris-Snopes opposition development. Since O'Donnell had raised many of what have become important contemporary difficulties over Faulkner's inconsistencies, including the problem of tension and conflict between past and present time which is felt by critics to lead Faulkner into a position of reactionary stasis,[2] this is a misrepresenting simplification.

Hoffman develops his approach by reference to the esays of Cowley[3] and Warren,[4] approving of their attention to Faulkner's larger significance, "less handicapped by the limited perspective which a too narrowly conceived thesis caused in O'Donnell's case".[5] This apparent desire for unprejudiced and comprehensive criticism becomes suspect when we read "Other important insights into Faulkner's work and worth, some of them found in brief reviews, marked the growing maturity of Faulkner's critical reception. Kay Boyle had early recognised Faulkner's genius and had insisted that it be seen in terms of the entire work:[6]

---

1. G.M. O'Donnell, 'Faulkner's Mythology', first printed in Kenyon Review, (Summer 1939), reprinted in Three Decades, p.82-93.

2. 'as a Sartoris artist in a Snopes world, he is constantly subject to opposition that tends to force him into the same kind of reactionary formalization of tradition that betrayed Narcissa Benbow as a character. When, because of the opposition and his reaction to it, Mr. Faulkner writes as a formal traditionalist rather than as a vital traditionalist, he writes allegory. Allegory might be defined, indeed, as formalized - and therefore dead - myth.' ibid. p.88.

3. M. Cowley, 'Introduction to the Portable Faulkner', in Three Decades, p.94-104.

4. R.P. Warren, 'William Faulkner', in Three Decades, p.109-124

5. F.J. Hoffman, 'William Faulkner: An Introduction', in Three Decades, p.11.

6. Ibid. p.13.

Hoffman's bias is revealed in his assumption of Faulkner's genius; his only doubt lies in the capability of the critic to appreciate it. It is difficult to determine the extent of the influence this sort of approach has had on critics and readers, but it is certain that a great body of critics follows the tradition of respectful elucidation, considering any failure to unravel complexities, obscurities, paradoxes as temporary, and looks forward with confidence to the time when Faulkner's genius will be fully revealed.

Among the most distinguished of these committed literary detectives are Cleanth Brooks and Hoffman's collaborator Olga Vickery. Their integrity enables them to maintain reasonably unbiased examination of particular novels, despite their basic assumption of Faulkner's greatness. In lesser scholars this is not the case. Released from the need to make a comprehensive judgement, and authorized by the example of Hoffman and Brooks to concern themselves only to reveal the ways in which Faulkner's genius works, and not, first to question whether it exists, such critics indulge themselves in riddle-solving interpretation. Since no assessment of success or failure is required the most partial observations can provide evidence for themes which are claimed to inform Faulkner's work. Extreme examples of this type of criticism are to be found in G.M. Smart's dictionary of words used by Faulkner which bear religious connotations, a list assembled as evidence of Faulkner's Christian orthodoxy,[1] R.M. Slabey's[2] and W.J. Sowder's[3] existentialist

---

1. G.M. Smart, Religious Elements in Faulkner's Early Novels: A Selective Concordance, Miami, 1965.

2. R.M. Slabey, 'As I Lay Dying as an Existential Novel', Bucknell Review, Vol.11 (1963), p.12-23. 'Joe Christmas, Faulkner's Marginal Man', Phylon, Vol.21 (1960), p.266-277. 'William Faulkner: The Wasteland Phase', D.A., Vol.22 (1961), p.1632.

3. W.J. Sowder, 'Lucas Beauchamp as Existentionalist Hero', College English, Vol.25 (1963), p.115-127. 'Col. Thomas Sutpen as Existentionalist Hero, American Literature, Vol.33 (1961-1962), p.485-499.

interpretations and L.E. Bowling's series of "Themes".[1] This unrestrained critical approach depends less on what the novels offer than on the particular bias of the critic. The discipline of synthesizing the results of analysis and relating them coherently to the total work is abandoned. Such freedom has proved attractive enough to ensnare the majority of Faulkner's commentators.

It was F.R. Leavis, in 1933, who first wrote explicitly of the discrepancy between Faulkner's content and his style:

> Early in Light in August it should have become plain to the reader that Faulkner's technique is an expression of - or a disguise for - an uncertainty about what he is trying to do... This pervasive uncertainty of method goes down to a critical and radical uncertainty.[2]

This preoccupation with the disparity between Faulkner's subject and style more comprehensive than the thematic analysis documented by Hoffman, was to develop into a more valuable and perceptive area of Faulkner criticism. The findings differ. In most is discovered a damaging inconsistency, but a noteworthy sympathetic minority contain convincing arguments for Faulkner's coherence.

The earliest sympathisers concentrate upon defending Faulkner's style against imputations of obscurity, uncontrolledness, confusion.[3] Warren Beck argues for an appreciative acceptance of the style:

> What is stylistically most remarkable in his work is the synthesis he has effected between the subtleties of modern narrative techniques and the resources of language employed in the traditionally poetic or interpretative vein.[4]

---

1. L.E. Bowling, 'Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation', Georgia Review, Vol.18 (1964), p.50-66. 'Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence', Kenyon Review, Vol.20 (1958), p.466-487. 'Faulkner: The Theme of Pride in The Sound and The Fury', MFS, Vol.21 (1965), p.129-139.
2. F.R. Leavis, 'Dostoevsky or Dickens?', Scrutiny, Vol.2 (1933-134),p.92.
3. C. Fadiman, 'Faulkner, Extra Special, Double-Distilled', first published in The New Yorker, 1936, reprinted in Faulkner, ed. R.P. Warren, p.62-64.
4. W. Beck, 'William Faulkner's Style', first published in American Prefaces (1941), reprinted in Three Decades, p.156.

But Beck's failure to relate the style to its function limits his case. Florence Leaver finds profundities in Faulkner's verbal and stylistic innovations and considers his hyperbole a necessary adjunct to his "mythic thinking". "All these practices help to create a sense of wonder, without which no myth remains myth."[1]

The notion of myth-making as an answer to charges of disproportionate stylistic devices is used by Ilse Dusoir Lind in her article on Absalom, Absalom! :

> Events of modern history, here viewed as classic tragedy are elevated through conscious artistry to the status of a new myth.[2]

Richard Coanda justifies Faulkner's rhetoric with his own: "Reader and writer soar in the grasp of an awful vision",[3] and J.H. Justus enlarges the concept from myth to epic to accommodate all the possibilities of Absalom, Absalom!.[4] Unifying Faulkner's apparent inconsistencies by means of an umbrella category is a common exercise. Straumann justifies his opinion of A Fable as "the most significant work of an epic cast in English since the Second World War" belonging "among those rare works to which the standard of a century may unhesitatingly be applied"[5] by attributing to it a technique he calls "symbolic mimesis",[6] which is to be understood as a simultaneous working of the novel on realistic and symbolic levels.

---

1. F. Leaver, 'Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power', first published in the South Atlantic Quarterly (1958), reprinted in Three Decades, p.209.
2. I.D. Lind, 'The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!', P.M.L.A., Vol.70 (1955), p.887.
3. R. Coanda, 'Absalom, Absalom!: The Edge of Infinity', Renascence, Vol.11 (1958), p.9.
4. J.H. Justus, 'The Epic Design of Absalom, Absalom', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol.4 (1962), p.157-176.
5. H. Straumann, 'An American Interpretation of Existence: Faulkner's A Fable', in Three Decades, p.349-372.
6. Ibid. p.372.

Probably L.E. Bowling's interpretation of The Sound and The Fury offers an example of the most common claim for unity between Faulkner's style and his content:

> The disorder, disintegration, and absence of perspective in the lives of the Compsons is intended to be symbolic and representative of a whole social order, or perhaps it would be better to say a whole social disorder.[1]

W.R. Poirier writes similarly about Absalom,Absalom!:

> In Rosa Coldfield's soliloquy, Faulkner has dramatically fused literary with social disorders.[2]

In the same article Poirier expresses another popular approach to the problem:

> The form of the novel itself insists that the act of placing Sutpen in the understandable context of human society and history is a continually necessary act, a never-ending responsibility and an act of humanistic faith.[3]

Thus critics who wish to show there is no inconsistency between Faulkner's ideas and his expression of them, tend to credit an incoherence in form with being a formal device, an active part of his meaning,and can usually succeed in making a case for consistency.

The limitations of these approaches is identified by Slatoff in an early draft[4] of his book Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner. He too finds a unity in Faulkner's work, but one which he considers limiting, contained by "the choice not to choose".[5] He examines Faulkner's use of the oxymoron, revealing a pattern of deliberately opposed themes, and concludes that the informing impulse is "an active quest for failure".[6] Slatoff sees Faulkner's artistic presentation of

---

1. L.E. Bowling, 'The Techniques of The Sound and The Fury', in Two Decades, p.179.
2. W.R. Poirier, 'Strange Gods' in Jefferson, Mississippi: Analysis of Absalom,Absalom!, Sewanee Review, Vol.53 (1945), reprinted in Two Decades, p.235.
3. Ibid. p.243.
4. W.J. Slatoff, 'The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner's Rhetoric', in Three Decades, p.173-198.
5. Ibid. p.198.
6. Ibid. p.184.

disorder as a result of a quality in his temperament,

> his tendency to avoid commitment. It is this ... which most troubles me, from a human as well as an aesthetic point of view. For, surely, if there are to be any distinctions in art and life between respohsibility and irresponsibility, indeed, any distinctions at all, we must insist that man can and must make choices. In both the form and content of Faulkner's works there is often the assertion or implication that man does not need to make choices.[1]

Norman Podhoretz also writes sceptically about this unifying concept of inevitable failure, "the notion that nothing can be explained is a half-truth which, in my opinion, has limited Faulkner's range."[2] Of all the cases made out for consistency and unity of purpose in the novels, Slatoff's is the most successful. By locating the problem not in disunity, but in the quality of the unity, he has opened up new areas for investigation.

For those critics who, like Leavis, feel the lack of any synthesis in Faulkner's writing, Alfred Kazin states the case:

> The problem that faces every student of Faulkner's writing is its lack of a centre, the gap between his power and its source, that curious abstract magnificence ... which holds his books together, yet seems to arise from debasement or perplexity or a calculating terror. It is the gap between the deliberation of his effects, the intensity of his every conception, and the besetting and depressing looseness, the almost sick passivity, of his basic meaning and purpose.[3]

Or again,

> For what one always feels in even Faulkner's greatest moments is not a lack or falsity of achievement; it is a power almost grotesque in its lack of relation to the situation or characters; it is a greatness moving in a void.[4]

---

1. W.J. Slatoff, 'The Edge of Order: The Pattern of Faulkner's Rhetoric, in Three Decades, p.198.
2. N. Podhoretz, 'Doings and Undoings: The 50's and After in American Writing', 1965, p.17.
3. A. Kazin, 'On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature, 1943, p.457.
4. Ibid. p.459.

Kazin explains Faulkner's rhetoric as the compensation for, and the result of

> the agony inherent in any effort to transcend some basic confusion by force of will alone.[1]

(The confusion referred to is Faulkner's ambivalent attitude to the South).

The problem of this gap is analysed more particularly by Richard Chase in his article on Light in August. Though he appreciates Faulkner's attempt to dramatize the rigid codes which inhibit man's individuality, he still feels that the novel

> seems to indicate that (Faulkner) can fail us exactly at that level of existence where subtle complications of human behaviour have to be established. Faulkner works inwards from the extremities, from the mechanics to the ecstasy of life.[2]

Yet ten years later he seems won by what Kazin called Faulkner's "abstract magnificence":

> The many-sided genius of Faulkner - loose, uneven and wasteful as his way of writing sometimes is - has performed so far the greatest feat of 20th century American fiction. At the heart of that accomplishment one observes taking place, with rich amplification and ever fresh discovery, the characteristic process of the American novelist by which he brings to the novel the perennial poetry of romance.[3]

Irving Howe repeats the attempt to deal with the paradox of the inconsistent, flawed, yet compelling quality of Faulkner's writing. He ruthlessly exposes flaw after flaw in the novels and yet concludes each chapter with extracts from his favourite passages, admitting his failure

---

1. A. Kazin, 'On Native Grounds. An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature, 1943, p.465.
2. R. Chase, 'The Stone and the Crucifixion: Faulkner's Light in August' in Two Decades, p.216.
3. R. Chase, The American Novel and its Tradition, 1958, p.236.

to find any better way of defining Faulkner's elusive strength:

> Absalom, Absalom! seems the work of a man overwhelmed by his perceptions; no, a man who has overwhelmed himself by his perceptions.[1]

Howe is echoing Kazin's feeling that Faulkner's power is self-engendered, a whipping up of stylistic expression to a pitch where it can exist temporarily independent of any creative urge. The limited life of such self-induced hysteria is obvious. Writing of the latter novels Howe says

> Faulkner seems to be emerging from his creative trance, that is in his more recent books something has been lost of the old energy, the blazing infatuation with a world of his own making.[2]

Yet despite this suggestion of literary perversity Howe claims genius for Faulkner, calling him "the most impressive living American novelist".[3] Many critics are won, albeit unwillingly, to admit similar admiration in the face of all pejorative evidence. Leslie Fiedler writes typically:

> Why he is such a supereminently good 'bad' writer, surmounting excesses of maudlin feeling and absurd indulgence in over ripe rhetoric, is a mystery. We can only cite the astonishing richness of invention and specification, the ability to realize characters and tensions with a power to coerce our credence that has nothing to do with resemblance to 'real' life as the technical standards we had fondly supposed would be demanded of any first-rate fiction in our time.[4]

However, not all critics find themselves compelled to admire. D.H. Stewart, reconsidering Absalom, Absalom! writes:

> The disparity between the historical symbolic pretensions of Absalom and the crabbed vision of reality which Faulkner's methods lead to and justify

---

1. I. Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, New York, 1962, p.73.
2. Ibid. p.104.
3. Ibid. p.295.
4. L.A. Fiedler, No! in Thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature, 1963, p.118.

> is disturbing to the critic who doubts a past as splendid or a future as bleak as Absalom indicates.[1]

And Martin Green is more explicit in his definition of the gap, emphatically restating what Kazin had suggested twenty-three years earlier:

> Faulkner himself offers us this rhetoric in vacuo; he applies it so regularly and inappropriately that we are made conscious of it as a thing in itself, and this consciousness becomes another way of alienating the author from his language, of dissipating meaning. It declares him not responsible, not answerable to the reader, either for fully rendering the thing described, or for the feeling about it he is expressing: he has arbitrarily invented the scene and now arbitrarily imposes a significance upon it.[2]

In this self-supported rhetoric Green sees the sort of invitation to irresponsibility on the part of the critics that I ascribed to a freedom from the need to make final judgements on Faulkner's total success or failure. The two approaches are similar; Green's attributes blame to Faulkner, mine to the critical tradition of assuming his greatness. Both depend on an absence of authority or discipline which gives a dangerously open invitation to the critic to 're-write' according to his own prejudices. Green explains it:

> This significance, these feelings, cannot be taken simply as the author's because they are attributed to a character. This constitutes the original invitation to "interpret", so enthusiastically taken up by Faulkner critics..... There are no strings attached. It is like playing tennis with the net down. Because there are no meanings already there to trip you up - no meanings inherent both in the events and the language, and the whole shape of the book. This evasion of responsibility by the novelist has invited invasion by the critics; it is precisely

---

1. D.H. Stewart, 'Absalom Reconsidered', University of Toronto Quarterly, Vol.30 (1960-1961), p.43.

2. M. Green, Reappraisals: Some Commonsense Readings in American Literature, 1963, p.174.

> what is wrong with Faulkner which has aroused so much interpretative enthusiasm; bad writing in him has produced bad writing in them.[1]

Green's attack is more specific than Kazin's. He sees Faulkner's evasion as a conscious, aesthetically immoral act, while Kazin felt Faulkner's helpless emotional involvement.

Deciding just how responsible the author is for his form, or how critically aware he is of its implications, is another popular critical pursuit. On the one side there are critics like Kazin who feel Faulkner is inextricably caught up in tangled emotional webs which determine his writing. On the other side critics like Green and Stewart accuse him of pretentiousness and imply that his style is a conscious and affected compensation for lack of intellectual strength and purpose. A large number of critics occupy themselves with this problem of the disproportion between Faulkner's intellectual and emotional strength, some considering him consciously to be compensating for his weakness and therefore responsible, others considering him unware of his own confusion.

Repeatedly critics remark that "Faulkner's insights are a matter of emotion rather than rational deduction"[2] or note "the superior weight of dramatic and poetic over merely intellectual realization in his work".[3] William Van O'Connor considers that

> Faulkner has almost none of Huxley's talent for the novel of ideas, either for sustained intellectualizing or for playing off idea against idea.[4]

---

1. M. Green, Reappraisals: some common sense readings in American Literature, 1963, p.174.
2. W.L. Miner, The World of William Faulkner, New York, 1952, p.132.
3. R.W. Flint, 'Faulkner as Elegist', Hudson Review, Vol.8 (1954-1955), p.247.
4. W.V. O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, Minnesota, 1954, p.31.

But O'Connor does not accuse him of concealing the lack, instead he popularizes the concept of "untutored genius" to draw together the inconsistencies in his appreciation of Faulkner's work. Rather patronizingly he pronounces "an essential simplicity of mind is a part of his genius".[1] Norman Podhoretz is less generous:

> as far as Yoknapotawpha is concerned, the Enlightenment might just as well have never been.[2]

He pinpoints the compulsion behind Faulkner's disproportionate emotionalism as

> not ideas, not a wish to understand the world, only the wish to feel deeply and to transcribe what he felt and saw .... (This) will also affect his capacity to distinguish between emotion which refers to something outside and feeling which is created by the will to feel.[3]

Earlier, in a review of A Fable in 1954, Podhoretz had written,

> We are confronted here with Faulkner's impulse to escape the complexity of a world he has no patience with, a world he cannot understand,[4]

and had suggested that Faulkner's mode of escape was emotionalism, thus A Fable was "a self-generated paroxysm"[5] produced to compensate for an intellectual lack.

A different, and less demanding way of approaching Faulkner is the analysis of his work as a structure of polarities. Value judgements are not essential. The critic can explore thematic oppositions and paradoxes

---

1. W.V. O'Connor, William Faulkner, Pamphlets on American Writers No.3, Minnesota, 1959, p.38.
2. N. Podhoretz, Doings and Undoings: The 50's and After in American Writing, 1965, p.15.
3. Ibid. p.17.
4. N. Podhoretz, 'William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith', in Faulkner, ed Warren, p.249.
5. Ibid. p.246.

without comment on their resolution or dramatic integration. It is only necessary to decide which, of many possibilities, are the major poles supporting and informing the work. Thus the critic's interpretation depends entirely on his choice of themes, and it is not surprising that this approach produces widely varying responses.

This has proved a popular, and at its best, productive method, perhaps best represented by Ursula Brumm who considers that Faulkner's basic thematic opposition is between the forces of wilderness and those of civilization. She sees the feeling Faulkner has for the values of the wilderness as part of the unique American experience, linking him to such writers as Mark Twain and Fennimore Cooper, and resulting in the lone hero:

> Leatherstocking as well as Sam Fathers had to be and remain solitary to serve their symbolic function. To start a family, to provide and procreate, would have severed their bonds to the wilderness and involved them in all the activities bearing the burden and taint of civilization, Sterile in their solitariness, they are representatives of a dying giant; the wilderness.[1]

The same antithesis is noted by K.E. Richardson, and supplementing it with that of "sexual irresponsibility" as opposed to "mother-love", and Snopesism as opposed to "men of faith and love", he draws it in to his theme of "Force and Faith".[2] He, too, understands the wilderness as a symbol or agent of flexibility and expresses the basic opposition as one of creative and destructive forces; "The creative opposite of destructive inflexibility is embodied in a life that processes an adaptability to change".[3]

---

1. U. Brumm, 'Wilderness and Civilization: A Note on William Faulkner', Partisan Review, Vol.22 (1955), p.343.
2. See his later book Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner, The Hague, 1967.
3. K.E. Richardson, 'Quest for Faith: A Study of Destructive and Creative Force in the Novels of William Faulkner', D.A., Vol.23 (1963), p.3384.

Barbara Cross analyses The Sound and The Fury in similar terms as a conflict between the rigid Compson will and the flexible life-cycle,[1] but the earliest exposition is Irving Malin's in which the theme of rigidity is seen to be informing all Faulkner's characters and causing them to adopt individual "designs" (such as Calvinism, racialism, class consciousness) as protection against the opposing force of disorganized freedom.[2] This accommodating definition of Faulkner's polarity has been filled in by critics who note innumerable particular oppositions[3] but the logical development of this thesis is Walter Statoff's theory of Faulkner's "quest for failure". In it he concerns himself less with the quality of the antitheses (though he catalogues them comprehensively) than with their quantity, concluding that it is the technique of antithetical arrangement itself that is significant. He sees Faulkner's "compulsive desire to leave things unresolved and indeterminate",[4] as a deliberate quest for failure in order to prolong the vitalizing struggle:

> if one belives, as Faulkner does, in the crucial importance of endless trying, this failure can become not only a proof that enough has been tried, but a need and a quest.5

Unlike most critics in this area, Slatoff has not contented himself with defining themes. He has moved on to examine the use of the method itself,

---

1. B.M. Cross, 'The Sound and The Fury: The Pattern of Sacrifice', Arizona Quarterly, Vol.16 (1960), p.5-16.
2. I. Malin, William Faulkner: An Interpretation, Stamford, 1957.
3. e.g. The individual spirit opposed to alien forces, see C.G. Wall, 'Faulkner's Rhetoric', D.A., Vol.25 (1965), p.5947; and intuitive experience as opposed to rational formulation, see R.R. Fazia, 'The Fury and the Design: Realms of Being and Knowing in Four Novels of William Faulkner', D.A., Vol.25 (1964), p.1910.
4. W.J. Slatoff, Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner, Cornell, 1960, p.259.
5. Ibid. p.265.

and to relate it to the total aesthetic achievement. In doing this he is drawn to pronounce upon the kind of dilemma he feels Faulkner is caught in by such apparent artistic and emotional instability.

The critical alternatives to Slatoff's conclusion depend on stopping short of an assessment of the quantitive effect of paradox and concentrating instead on the area between the poles, the area charged by their tension, and describing how Faulkner creates a condition in which contradictory forces co-exist. One might take as an example the opposing natures of Jason and Quentin Compson in The Sound and The Fury. Here Faulkner juxtaposes the realism of the one and the romanticism of the other in an atmosphere of maintained tension rather than competitive confrontation. Faulkner's oxymoronic imagination and technique lends itself to either interpretation. Either he is exposing irresolvable paradoxes for the display of man's enobling, fated struggle, in which case the paradoxes exist as backcloth to the action and must be perpetuated - in this way Slatoff's sense of Faulkner's need to fail is justified - or he is doing something more subtle by creating a state of co-existence in tension. This could be seen as the creation of a fictional, imposed order, one which is extended by the active participation it demands from the reader. Several critics have looked for evidence of this in Faulkner's work, and have claimed to discover it in thematic polar organization, but its abstraction tends to resist attempts to analyse it. Like Faulkner's style this observed reality is created in vacuo and asserts itself impregnably.

As early as 1929, this quality was noticed by Evelyn Scott. Of The Sound and The Fury she writes

> It is the conquest of nature by art. His pessimism as to fact, and his acceptance of all the morally inimical possibilities of humanity in defeat, is unwavering. The result is, nonetheless, the reassertion of humanity in defeat that is, in the subjective sense, a triumph. ... Here is beauty sprung from the perfect realization of what a more limiting morality would describe as ugliness.[1]

Campbell and Foster analyse the sense of aesthetic reality gained from "The dramatic tension between the tragic flaw and the deterministic concepts of human tragedy",[2] and see its expression in a technique they describe as "the sustained elevation of realism".[3] But J.J. Mayoux discards the term "realism", substituting "real" in his essay 'The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner',[4] and attempts to define his sense of Faulkner's "reality". Rejecting the notion of photographic recreation he concludes that

> the power of Faulkner comes from his being a man for whom finally nothing exists beyond the interior world. In art, but in philosophy as well (for this uncouth artist is a philosopher, though perhaps without his knowing it), he is an idealist, for whom as for Berkeley esse est percipi, for whom all takes place in the consciousness and between consciousness.[5]
>
> In Faulkner we are before the dream of a reality. This is not to reduce but to define the authenticity of his feverish and barbaric vision.[6]

---

1. E. Scott, 'On William Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', first published in New York, 1929, reprinted in Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Sound and The Fury, ed. M.H. Cowan, New Jersey, 1968, p.26.
2. H.M. Campbell and R.E. Foster, William Faulkner: A Critical Approach, Oklahome, 1951, p.178.
3. Ibid. p.175.
4. J.J. Mayoux, 'The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner', in Three Decades, p.156-173.
5. Ibid. p.172.
6. Ibid. p.173.

The solipsistic inferences of this line of thought have led critics to compare Faulkner with French writers. D.H. Stewart describes the egocentric nature of Faulkner's characters: "they have the power to order the world in their own image, i.e. they are complete solipsists",[1] and John Simon compares this position with that of the French writer who

> treads an uneasy balance between total collapse before the plenitude of externals and complete withdrawal into ultimate solipsism.[2]

Maintaining this precarious balance, achieving this subjective reality, must depend on the power of the artist to create coherence, to impose order on disparate experiences, and Faulkner's success is particularly noted by critics of Absalom, Absalom!. In 1945 Richard Poirier considers the structure of Absalom, Absalom! as an active part of its meaning.[3] He develops his theory to link Faulkner to James and Thoreau by their shared faith "in writing as an act of power, an act by which reality is seized and dominated".[4] R.M. Slabey repeats "the novel asserts the value of the poetic imagination"[5] and D.M. Kartiganer is working in the same vein when he writes:

> The most vital truth of Absalom, Absalom! is that the possibility of value depends entirely on the ability of the human imagination to create it.[6]

---

1. D.H. Stewart, 'William Faulkner and Mikhail Sholohov: A Comparative Study of Two Representatives of the Regional Conscience, Their Affinities and Meanings', D.A., Vol.19 (1959), p.3309.
2. J.M. Simon, 'The Glance of the Idiot. A Thematic Study of Faulkner and Modern French Fiction', D.A., Vol.25 (1964), p.1220.
3. W.R. Poirier, 'Strange Gods in Jefferson, Mississippi: Analysis of Absalom, Absalom!, in Two Decades, p.217-243.
4. W.R. Poirier, A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature, 1967, p.83.
5. R.M. Slabey, 'Faulkner's "Wasteland": Vision in Absalom, Absalom!', Mississippi Quarterly, Vol.16 (1961), p.159.
6. D.M. Kartiganer, 'Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!: The Discovery of Values', American Literature, Vol.37 (1965-1966), p.301.

James Guetti's ingenious interpretation of the novel in terms of linguistic failure, shows the tension held precariously between a compelling urge to create metaphor, and the actual creation of simile, the whole expressed in the narrative method.[1] And C.F. Hovde extends the discussion to all Faulkner's work; calling him "a myth-making democrat in the tradition of Melville, Whitman and Wolfe,"[2] whose "view of art as a pattern imposed by mind upon the world's diversity (occasionally becomes) an imaginative triumph over the human condition".[3] This is much the same as Evelyn Scott's comment thirty-five years earlier.

This well-supported view of Faulkner's technique of opposition, as an organization designed to support a fictive reality, attributes to the author a critical awareness and control which contrasts strongly with Slatoff's theories. Extending its subtleties still further, some critics consider that the method consciously demands, for its fulfilment, the creative participation of the reader. The degree of responsibility thus to be assumed by the reader, and relinquished by the writer, is discussed by Claude Magn y as a possible explanation of Faulkner's obscurity:

> He wants us to become, as it were, the authors of what we read (and to give us) our share of responsibility in the creation or recreation of the work.[4]

---

1. J.C. Guetti, 'The Limits of Metaphor', Cornell, 1967, p.105.
2. C.F. Hovde, 'Faulkner's Democratic Rhetoric', South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol.63 (1964), p.539.
3. Ibid. p.540.
4. C.E. Magn y, 'Faulkner on Theological Inversion', in Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.74.

Many critics consider such characteristic obscurity as a technique compelling the reader to experience the limitations and confusions of the character. R. Poirier, writing about "The Bear", says

> Faulkner's style makes the reader's experience analogous to the hero's. The style requires that the reader divests himself of most conventional assumptions.[1]

These critics make out a case for Faulkner's obscurity as a means to a uniquely creative end, extending the form to include the reader's participation, just as the critics I have been discussing previously find in the antithetical structure which Slatoff considered limiting, the support for a taut aesthetic vision.

But the "dream ofareality",[2] however vital, is necessarily static when held in Faulkner's sort of tension, and consideration of the problems of time and change have interested many important critics. The method defined by Mayoux and Guetti implicitly admits the stasis of which so many critics accuse Faulkner. Sartre, whose essay became a starting point for discussion, considers that Faulknerian man is " a creature deprived of potentiality and explained only by what he was".[3] He accuses Faulkner of "decapitating" time:

> The other characteristic of Faulkner's present is <u>suspension</u>. I use this word, for lack of a better one, to indicate a kind of arrested motion in time. In Faulkner, there is never any progression, nothing which can come from the future...Faulkner appears to arrest the motion at the very heart of things; moments erupt and freeze, then fade, recede and diminish, still motionless.[4]

This argument develops several ways. Some critics agree with Maxwell

---

1. R. Poirier, <u>A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature</u>, 1967, p.81.
2. J.J. Mayoux, 'The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner'; in <u>Three Decades</u>, p.173.
3. J.P. Sartre, 'Time in Faulkner: <u>The Sound and The Fury</u>' in <u>Three Decades</u>, p.231.
4. Ibid. p.227.

Geismar in seeing Faulkner trapped in the stasis of the Southern myth, unable to give maturity to his characters who

> have curious frigidity of adult emotions (and are) lost in their past, in their childhood affections.[1]
>
> And we may say that Faulkner's characters never grow up because there is no world for them to grow up into.[2]

This reactionary dilemma, according to W. Rossky, is dramatized into a recurring myth of descent "from the innocent Eden of childhood into the Fall of adulthood".[3]

Other critics interpret Faulkner's representation of time and motion differently. Olga Vickery examines two concepts of time in his work, the cyclical and the linear, and finds "evidence of man's capacity for assuming responsibility for all events, all people and all time",[4] which is her definition of cyclical time, an imaginative faculty opposed to memory and mechanical linear time. Her terms are taken up by many critics and extended by V.T. Hornbach who considers that Faulkner exhibits a third sense of time, less restricting than either the linear or cyclical sense, which is demonstrated by Ike McCaslin who, in "The Bear", "achieves a break from cyclical time ... into the moral freedom of Christian-existential time".[5]

---

1. M. Geismar, Writers in Crisis: The American Novel Between Two Wars, Boston, 1942, p.152.
2. Ibid. p.181.
3. W. Rossky, 'Faulkner: The Image of the Child in The Mansion', Mississippi Quarterly, Vol.15,(1961-1962), p.17.
4. O.W. Vickery, 'Faulkner and the Contours of Time', Georgia Review, Vol.12 (1958), p.201.
5. V.T. Hornbach, 'William Faulkner and the Terror of History: Myth and History and Moral Freedom in the Yoknapatawpha Cycle', D.A., Vol.25 (1964), p.476.

These critics are moving away from the idea of paralysis in Faulkner's work, and towards the fluid, existentialist interpretation given by Warren Beck among others. Dealing with the Snopes trilogy Beck writes of Faulkner's

> presentation of this existential reality, this sustained sense of being in the process of becoming what it instantly is in terms of a response at once subjective and effective, yet never resting in itself or its result, since it is constituted in a continuum both psychological and external, from which it derives and to which it contributes, becoming the past to create a further present yet still to flow in upon it and be itself modified by modifying. 1

The influence of Bergson on Faulkner is well noted by Warren Beck and leads naturally to Carvel Collins' article on "Bergsonian Dynamism in the Writings of William Faulkner" in which he finds more evidence for flow and movement than rigidity and stasis:

> Both Faulkner and Bergson consider change the universal principle of reality, and life itself as a ceaseless flow of reality.[2]

And, reaching a view completely opposed to that of Sartre, whose thesis drew him to conclude that the determined stasis of Faulkner's characters deprived them of any exercise of free will, we have G.L. Friend writing "In Faulkner, man is always existentially free to create himself".[3] The desire to discover large vision in Faulkner's work has led most recent critics away from Sartre's reading and so it is interesting to find Eric Mottram writing in 1968 of Faulkner's inability to accept "creative change" or

---

1. W. Beck, 'Faulkner in The Mansion', Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol.36 (1960), p.288.
2. D.A., Vol.23 (1963), p.2521.
3. G.L. Friend, 'Levels of Maturity: The Theme of Striving in the Novels of William Faulkner', D.A., Vol.25 (1965), p.6623.

> to see what has passed as anything but an inevitability, part of a predictive grid thrown over the future and sterilizing it into a reproduction of the past.[1]

Mottram considers that the early poems "acknowledge the paralysis, at the personal level" and culminate in novels like Absalom, Absalom!, Light in August and Go Down Moses which employ

> a way of describing events and bodies in time by referring them to each other. As art it is amoral stasis. As morality it is deadly. As prophetic information it is a reactionary container assuming all events and bodies are there originally and finally as the types of all other events and bodies to come.[2]

A large body of critics deal with this problem of stasis more simply in terms of determinism. Problems of time, motion and individuality which engaged the previous group of critics are discarded in favour of the clearer dilemma of a crippling sense of fate. As with all other areas of interest, critics are divided between those who see Faulkner compulsively driven by subconscious involvement, and those who see him in full control of his personality and art. The former group explain him as struggling vainly against inexorable fate and diverting his fury into portrayal of obsessed characters. Among others W.R. Moses comments on this extremism:

> Though Faulkner's characters may be morally very good or bad, spiritually very splendid or base, they are doomed to certain types of experience, certain ways of undergoing the common human fate - ways determined not by any statistical human average but simply by the qualities of Faulkner's vision.[3]

Faulkner's persistent concern with sin and guilt causes some difficulty to critics who consider him a deterministic novelist. The

---

1. E. Mottram, 'Mississippi Faulkner's Glorious Mosaic of Impotence and Madness', Journal of American Studies, Vol.2 (1968), p.126.
2. Ibid. p.129.
3. W.R. Moses, 'The Limits of Yoknapatawpha Country', Georgia Review, Vol.16 (1962), p.297.

dependence of sin on a Christian, or undetermined environment is plain. C.H. Nilon moves around this ambiguity by qualifying the fatalistic nature of Faulkner's vision and crediting him with greater awareness by pointing to the initial existence of free will in the novels, in order to accommodate sin, describing its loss only after sin is committed, and then emphasising the predetermined nature of the the ensuing chain of events, deriving predictably from the institution of slavery and the condition of the Negro.[1]

Critics agreeing with the view expressed by Rabi that "In Faulkner's world the struggle is intrinsically absurd, because the universe itself is absurd"[2] cannot concern themselves with Christian implications, except to point out inconsistencies in Faulkner's thinking. Absurdity renders the individual struggle futile and means that

> In Faulkner, there is no hope. Though the Redeemer has come he has left no traces.[3]

This sense of fatalism varies from that noted by Wigfall Green as early as 1932. He writes:

> Fate hovers above his characters as it does in Saxon literature, and always 'wyrd bi ful araed.[4]

And a year later Andre Malraux, one of the group of French critics who paid earliest attention to Faulkner, describes the structural organization outlined by Slatoff:

---

1. C.H. Nilon, Faulkner and the Negro, New York, 1965.
2. Rabi, 'Faulkner and the Exiled Generation', in Two Decades, p.134.
3. Ibid. p.135.
4. A. Wigfall Green, 'William Faulkner at Home', in Two Decades, p.46.

> I should not be surprised if he often thought out his scenes before imagining his characters, if the work were, in his eyes, not a story whose unfolding determined tragic situations, but contrarily that the plot was created from the dramatic opposition or crushing of unknown characters and imagination merely served to bring forth characters for the preconceived situation.[1]

Malraux considers that Faulkner's power comes from "the creation of the one thing that could engulf (him)" which is "the irreparable". He finds in the novel no values, no psychology,

> But there is the figure of Destiny - A intense obsession crushes each of his characters and in no case do the characters succeed in exorcising it.[2]

Light in August is the novel most frequently examined for evidence of Faulkner's deterministic thinking. It is felt to show most clearly the "preconceived situation" noted by Malraux, and the limited action of the characters. Alfred Kazin remarks on

> this curious effect of immobility in Faulkner's characters as they run (as if they were held up in the air by wires) .... There is no free action for anyone; everyone is carried, as Lena Grove was carried to Jefferson in a whole succession of farm wagons, by the fate that was and so shall be.[3]

The accumulation of evidence of paralysis in Faulkner's art, whether caused by a reactionary traditionalism, the tension of a polar imagination, or a pessimistic determinism, is a challenge to the group of critics who examine and find development and resolution in the total work. Their evidence for resolution depends mainly on a sense of community imparted by the novels, and for development they concentrate on Faulkner's movement from private to public consciousness. Andrew Lytle,

---

1. A. Malraux, 'A Preface for Faulkner's Sanctuary', in Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.273.
2. Ibid. p.273.
3. A. Kazin, 'The Stillness of Light in August', in Three Decades, p.263.

in 1949, introduces the unifying idea of community with his consideration of Faulknerian man as

> the representative of the homogeneous society. His symbol is the fire and the hearth. He maintains the right relationships between the sexes, preserving to each his natural function; guards the blood's purity; is ultimately responsible for order in his household and therefore in the state; attends to his business, does not intrude or allow intrusion. He punishes and rewards towards this end and is the trustee for the earth out of which life comes and by which it is maintained. He, not Freedom, which history has shown no man can stand, is the realizable image for society.[1]

This definition of Faulkner's idea of man's role leads to the movement seen by many critics from the private role to the fully responsible, public one. Olga Vickery discusses the development in her analysis of The Sound and The Fury,[2] and M. Backman writes in his article, "The Pilgrimage of William Faulkner":

> From the preoccupation with the alienated self Faulkner moves towards a growing concern for mankind and a metamorphosed destructive guilt into moral conscience.[3]

This approach demands the discovery of a character capable of supporting such moral responsibiluty. R.L. Berner attempts the task:

> Beginning with Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner's work shows an increasing concern with the theme of responsibility: in his later work he seems to be attempting to create a character who can consciously "prevail" without being destroyed.[4]

And W. Rossky develops the approach to include the emergence of

> a hero who can recognise the absurdity and yet can live in it, or else a hero who sees meaning in an ostensibly chaotic world.[5]

---

1. A. Lytle, 'Regeneration for the Man', in Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.235.
2. O. Vickery, 'The Sound and The Fury: A Study in Perspective', P.M.L.A., Vol.69 (1954), 1017-1037.
3. M.A. Backman, D.A., Vol.21 (1960), p.194.
4. R.L. Berner, 'The Theme of Responsibility in the Later Fiction of William Faulkner', D.A., Vol.21 (1960), p.1561.
5. W. Rossky, 'As I Lay Dying: The Insane World', Texas Studies in Language and Literature, Vol.14 (1962), p.95.

He traces the growth of such a character through Dilsey, Byron, Ratcliff and Ike, to the runner in A Fable.

William and Doris Donnelly plot a very neat and optimistic development in Faulkner's work which reveals him discovering personal "peace" through growing belief "in the capacity of the individual to love and prevail".[1] This interpretation has its supporters, but is not so frequently voiced as is C. Doyle's belief that

> Faulkner's career as a writer is an impressive example of the transformation of the aesthetic consciousness into the moral consciousness.[2]

Faulkner's progress from artist to propagandist is the development generally held accountable for his failing power as a novelist. Joseph Gold's thesis traces a movement in the novels from "metaphor to discourse", concluding that the artist becomes "the moralist (who) does not trust art to get very far or help man very much".[3]

Many critics see Faulkner's development as a decline dating from the 1929-1932 period as the flaws inherent even in those books are nourished by fame, lack of artistic restraint and intrusive moralizing. But Cleanth Brooks resists such implications and rests his case firmly upon the sense of community developed throughout the Yoknapatawpha novels:

> The society of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha has its location in time as well as space ... It embodies a style of life. Most of all it is bound together by unspoken assumptions - that is to say it is a true community. Its members are related to each other not

---

1. W. and D. Donnelly, 'William Faulkner: In Search of Peace', The Personalist, Vol.44 (1963), p.498.
2. C. Doyle, 'The Moral World of Faulkner', Renascence, Vol.19 (1966), p.12.
3. J. Gold, William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism: From Metaphor to Discourse, Oklahoma, 1967, p.200.

> merely by function but by common loves, hates and fears,

and as such Brooks considers it is

> an excellent mirror of the perennial triumph and defeats of the human spirit.[1]

The image of the mirror suggests Brooks' own approach to Faulkner. His criticism focuses on the areas of reflection and clarification, avoiding those complications of resolution and judgement which, while drawing many critics into rigid, partial interpretations, can result in the most illuminating approaches to Faulkner.

The aspect of Faulkner's work which seems to lead most critics into interpretative excesses is his host of Christian references.[2] The ambiguous inconsistent religious views deduced from the novels make nonsense of criticism which attempts to categorize them. Faulkner has been variously labelled a humanist, a nihilist, an existentialist, a Stoic, and H. Hyatt Waggoner virtually represents him as an Anglican cleric after first conceding, more realistically, the tension in the "tortured and ambig ous mixture of religious denial and affirmation".[3] The theme of theological tension is carried to extremes in John Hunt's book[4] which goes to tortuous lengths to reveal tensions between the Stoic and Christian philosophies at the heart of Faulkner's work. Peter Swiggart[5] also bases his interpretation on a thematic opposition between

---

1. C. Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Yale, 1963, p.368.
2. See for example, W.H.F. Lamont, 'The Chronology of Light in August', Vol.3 (1957-1958), p.360-361; and G.M. Smart, Religious Elements in Faulkner's Early Novels: A Selective Concordance, Miami, 1965.
3. H.H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World, Kentucky, 1966, p.3.
4. J. Hunt, Art in Theological Tension, Syracuse, 1965.
5. P. Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels, Texas, 1962.

puritan and non-puritan positions (in Malin's terms rigidity and freedom, or the designer and the non-rational primitive). S.L. Elkin defines the ambiguity in Faulkner's concept of God which causes the spiritual tension:

> It is the malevolent God who ultimately provides the apocalyptic milieu of Faulkner's great tragic novels, who is the irreligious force behind a humanistically religious novelist.[1]

Joseph Gold resorts to paradox to define Faulkner's position:

> a humanist who is motivated by faith... a religious man without a religion and a humanist without a rational dialect ic.[2]
>
> Christ is really a humanitarian everyman,

expressing Faulkner's affirmative vision, which writes Gold, "defies analysis".[3]

The impossibility of clarifying Faulkner's intellectual position is reaffirmed by R. Coughan after his efforts to extract some kind of dialect ic:

> Thus the land itself, the living earth, is hero, God and protagonist in Faulkner's work as a whole. "People don't own land", one of his characters says, "Its the land that owns people." If Faulkner has a philosophy, this may be its distillation; although it is less a philosophy than a mystique, a religious revelation. As such it is beyond definition and beyond criticism.[4]

The spiritual presence of the land in Faulkner's work is discussed by Hugh Holman in his analysis of Light in August. Byron, he writes,

---

1. S.L. Elkin, 'Religious Themes and Symbolism in the Novels of William Faulkner', D.A., Vol.22 (1961), 3359.
2. J. Gold, William Faulkner. A Study in Humanism. From Metaphor to Discourse, Oklahoma, 1967, p.183.
3. Ibid. p.156.
4. R. Coughan, The Private World of William Faulkner, New York, 1953, p.91.

> symbolizes the loving service of this natural order which the mass of mankind renders. Together (Byron and Lena) form a religious symbol of a stable order.[1]

And Cleanth Brooks also considers Faulkner's image of land and nature is his touchstone for good and evil:

> Evil, for Faulkner then, involves a violation of nature and runs counter to the natural appetites and affections.[2]

Elsewhere, Brooks describes man's need for initiation into evil, and consequently the value of suffering as a central theme in Faulkner's work. Emphasis on suffering and violence is often attributed to the subconscious pull of Faulkner's Calvinistic heritage, but in her article "The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August" Ilse Dusoir Lind shows him fully in control of a comprehensive vision:

> The vastness of Faulkner's conception here is suggested by the irony that Christmas, martyred by the austerity of a faith rooted in the Old Testament, becomes a symbol of the suffering endured by Christ in the New. The Judaeo-Christian religious tradition, therefore, is seen as embodying in its very origins the will to extreme self-suppression and the need to crucify.[3]

A. Berland, however, also writing about Calvinism in Light in August, has a lower estimate of Faulkner's aesthetic grasp:

> The novel exhibits Faulkner's unconscious but continuing adherence to Calvinism as an attitude, a limiting frame to vision, an emotional set.[4]

---

1. H. Holman, 'The Unity of Faulkner's Light in August', P.M.L.A., Vol.73 (1958), p.164.
2. C. Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Yale, 1963, p.29.
3. I.D. Lind, 'The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August', New England Quarterly, Vol.30 (1957), p.326.
4. A. Berland, 'Light in August:The Calvinism of William Faulkner', M.F.S., Vol.8 (1962), p.159.

Berland considers this conditioning accounts for Faulkner's "violent, tortured, doom-ridden, apocalyptic" style and "the note of fatality, of predetermination".[1] This is to develop Kazin's sense of Faulkner's characters being moved by wires to a theory of Faulkner himself being moved by the predetermined set of his Calvinistic vision.

From the views of these representative commentators it is clear how varied the response is to Faulkner's religious expression. It ranges from those who find him in total control of a unified vision, either ironic or orthodox, to those who believe him to be responding subconsciously to the conflicting forces of his cultural inheritance; there are critics to register every phase. It is plain that here, as in all the other areas, the confusion is not temporary. After twenty years of intensive critical attention it is pointless to suppose that a unified under standing of his work will emerge. It is more helpful to consider that the contradictions arise from some quality in his work which resigns final interpretative control to the critic, whose work becomes less a revelation of Faulkner than of himself. I am not referring to the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the novels, these are more readily analysed, but to a certain absence of authorial responsibility, often achieved through the technique of the fictional narrator, which removes the finally informing organization, the meaningful structure, leaving only disparate relationships whose total significance is then left to depend on the bias of the reader.

The nature of this withdrawal is to be the concern of my thesis, and it has been in an attempt to define the problem that my efforts have been

---

1. A. Berland, 'Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner', M.F.S., Vol.8 (1962), p.167.

concentrated in this chapter. I have brought together not exhaustive, but extensive representative opinion from every critical point of view in order to draw attention to a single, fundamental problem, and to determine a common denominator which can be held finally accountable for the incoherence of the fiction and the diversity of the interpretations. A lack of authorial commitment would produce just such effects on those I have indicated, accounting for textual incoherence and critical dogmatism and contradiction alike, and I think that, looking back, it may be seen that every critic I have mentioned is ultimately affected by this problem.

My intention is not only to ascertain the fact of a withdrawal, which I shall do by referring to five of the more "difficult" books, but also to examine the technique by which it is achieved and, further, its raison d'etre. The degree to which Faulkner's anonymity is a deliberate and successful device to further a fictional effect is clearly an important part of my enquiry. Just how far it is a conscious technique employed to encourage the creative association of the reader with the work I shall judge as my thesis develops. It may prove to have less orderly roots.

CHAPTER II

FAULKNER AS CRITIC AND THEORIST

In December, 1931, Phil Stone sent a point-by-point criticism to Louis Cochran of an article Cochran had written on Faulkner. Point 20 read

> You have left out of your article all mention of The Creative Will by Willard Huntington Wright, the S.S. Van Dine of popular detective fiction. I think this is a serious omission because the aesthetic theories set forth in that book, strained through my own mind, constitutes one of the most important influences in Bill's whole literary career. If people who read him would simply read Wright's book they would see what he is driving at from a literary standpoint.[1]

It is generally agreed that Stone had considerable influence on Faulkner during his formative years, acting as his tutor, guiding his reading, discussing literary theories with him,[2] and if we are to establish Faulkner's own aesthetic point of view we cannot disregard this advice. A brief summary of Wright's book will be helpful in highlighting the more insistent themes which may have influenced Faulkner.

---

1. ed. J.W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green, William Faulkner of Oxford, Louisiana, 1965, p.228.

2. see M. Millgate, Faulkner, Writers and Critics, 1961, p.6-7; J. Faulkner, My Brother Bill, 1964, p.130,153; M. Cowley, The Faulkner-Cowley File, p.153.

P. Stone: There was no one but me with whom W.F. could discuss his literary plans and hopes and his technical trials and aspirations and you may be sure I kept his feet upon the ground. Nay, I stood upon his feet to keep them on the ground. Day after day for years - and his most formative years at that - he had drilled into him the obvious truths that the world owed no man anything; that true greatness was in creating great things and not in pretending them; that the only road to literary success was by sure, patient, hard, intelligent work; that you reached the throne if you deserved it and not otherwise. Most of all was drilled into him through that great weapon ridicule the idea of avoiding the contemporary literary cliques with their febrile, twittering barrenness, the idea of literature growing from its own natural soil, and the dread of the easy but bottomless pit of surface technical cleverness. Such surroundings (Oxford) were most important in the formative development of a writer who has almost no conceit but very little humility - possibly not enough humility to ever become truly great.

Oxford Magazine, 1934, p.7-8.

Wright reveals his classical bias through his emphasis on the importance of form, balance, rhythm and academic discipline. He defines art as

> the restatement of life -a glimpse, brought into small focus, of the creative laws of nature. It reveals the universal will, the machinery, as it were of the human drama.[1]
>
> Every great work of art is a statement of the plastic unity of existence.[2]

From this latter definition he develops his use of the term "unity" and "plastic", and extended discussions of these two terms form the major themes of his book.

He examines "unity" variously as poise, form, rhythm and symmetry. In one section on poise he describes a position not uncharacteristic of Faulkner:

> Poise implies the negative as well as the affirmative, the female as well as the male. It is not static balance, as is symmetry, but symmetry galvanised into a perpetual cycle of movement. It embodies all the laws of nature for it states the eternal placements and displacements, the fluctuations and compensations of materiality. If the work of art containing poise moves, there is always the foil of the static. If the work glows, there is the relative agent of shadow. If the work has harmony, there is the counter-balance of discord.[3]

He considers "formal conception" the "secret of all great art",[4] and claims that

> a work of art if only perfect in so far as it affects us as a unity - that is, as an ordered and related whole,[5]

and

> genius is the ability to divine and give expression to the forces which underlie and co-ordinate this material.[6]

---

1. The Creative Will, p.86.
2. Ibid. p.181.
3. Ibid. p. 21 and 22
4. Ibid. p.42.
5. Ibid. p.54.
6. Ibid. p.181.

He insists on the necessity of tradition to the developing talent, stating

> All the genuine modern painters, composers and writers are, in the profounder definition of the word, traditional. They abide by the inherent classicism of art.[1]

Consequently he declares the need for academic discipline:

> The true artist needs, above all else, self-control. All his faculties must be under strict obedience. Only slavish minds are suppressed by discipline. The purely instinctive and inspirational genius is a myth.[2]

This dominant theme of order and unity in art moves parallel with the theme developed from his use of the term "plastic". Art must achieve its unity in terms of movement, fluidity. He describes two types of composition:

> The former is, to some extent, static and more primary, being merely the perfect conjunction of many parts into one full and united climax of ensemble effect; whereas the latter, though final and complete, evokes, by means of its wholly natural method of gestation, an emotion of continuous movement toward a climax which has already been reached. While perfectly ordered, it is conceived as an eternal becoming, like life itself; its beginning and end are synchoronous.[3]

And again, in more Bergsonian terms:

> One must remember that art, like life, is never final, but ever in a state of becoming.[4]

These are concepts which many critics claim to have found in Faulkner's work, and this evidence suggests that they may have been quite deliberately assimilated into his critical theory.

---

1. The Creative Will, p.208.
2. Ibid. p.219.
3. Ibid. p.99.
4. Ibid. p.287.

There are other points in Wright's book which suggest links with Faulkner - the use of the noun "verities",[1] the rejection of "art communities",[2] and the ideas in the section "In Defence of Complex Art", but these are minor echoes and cannot beclaimed as proof of the book's influence on Faulkner. But the two main themes of order and motion in art which I have outlined bear more striking resemblances to Faulkner's work and should, I think, be borne in mind as I examine other evidence of his aesthetics.

Three major preoccupations emerge from Faulkner's own discussion of his work, firstly with the perpetual failure of the artist to achieve perfection, secondly with the Yoknapatawpha Country as his personal cosmos, and thirdly with time as a fluid element. Since he affects to reject the role of a professional writer, preferring that of the farmer who writes in his spare time, claims to ignore all critics,[3] and is noticeably unforthcoming on subjects of artistic technique, one is left with the choice of either taking him at his word as a simple man, W. Van O'Connor's "untutored genius", or bearing in mind his defensive habit of evasion and making what one reasonably can of the available material. The second alternative offers at least the possibility of a fuller insight into Faulkner's aims and achievements, and I intend to select evidence of these three more consistent themes as they appear in his conversations, and consider their relevance to his work and their debt to preceding influences.

The first theme I located in Wright's book was that of classical discipline in art. Faulkner makes very little reference to this, perhaps the nearest he comes to admitting its necessity is in the "formula" he

---

1. The Creative Will, p.28.
2. Ibid. p.205.
3. Jean Stein, p.79.

offers Jean Stein for a good novelist, "99% talent, 99% discipline, 99% work".[1] But the second theme, of plasticity in art, captured motion, preoccupies him continually. In 1956 he defines it:

> The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred 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.[2]

In 1957 he speaks more specifically of his concept of time:

> That time is, and if there's no such thing as was then there is no such thing as will be. That time is not a fixed condition, time is in a way the sum of the combined intelligences of all men who breathe at that moment.[3]

and in 1959 he claims familiarity with Bergson:

> I agree pretty much with Bergson's theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future and that is an eternity. In my opinion time can be shaped quite a bit by the artist; after all, man is never time's slave.[4]

These pronouncements are consistent both with the theories he may have absorbed from The Creative Will and with his fiction as interpreted by Warren Beck in Man in Motion. There seems little doubt that Faulkner held theoretically, and, according to considerable critical opinion, executed artistically, a fully articulated concept of motion in art.

Faulkner describes the connection between his concept of time and change, and the second recurring theme of his interviews, Yoknapatawpha as his microcosmic world:

---

1. Jean Stein, p.68.
2. Ibid. p.80.
3. Faulkner in the University, p.139.
4. L. Bouvard, 'Conversation with William Faulkner', M.F.S., Vol.5 (1959), p.362.

> 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 that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a gold mine of other people, so I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too. The fact that I have moved my characters around in time successfully, at least in my own estimation, proves to me my own theory that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as _was_ - only _is_. If _was_ existed, there would be no grief or sorrow. I like to think of the world I created as being a kind of keystone in the universe; that, small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away the universe itself would collapse.[1]

At Nagano he explains his reductive method:

> I was still trying to reduce my own experience of the world into one compact thing which could be picked up and held in the hands at one time.[2]

These statements may be considered support for the accusations of arbitrariness, inflated egotism, art in vacuo, made by so many of the critics I have previously discussed.

The quest for failure which provides the central theme of Slatoff's thesis is repeatedly referred to by Faulkner. This is the third area dealt with in the interviews and one which provokes most ambiguous comment. Faulkner tells Jean Stein that he and all his contemporaties

> failed to match our dream of perfection. So I rate us on the basis of our splendid failure to do the impossible... Once he (the writer) did it, once he matched the work to the image, the dream, nothing would remain but to cut his throat, jump off the other side of that pinnacle of perfection into suicide.[3]

He uses the same image in the address delivered on the occasion of his receiving the National Book Award for fiction in 1955, this time adding

---

1. Jean Stein, p.82.
2. _Faulkner at Nagano_, p.81.
3. Jean Stein, p.67 & 68.

> Maybe its just as well that we are doomed to fail, since as long as we do fail and the hand continues to hold blood, we will try again.[1]

Frequently he illustrates this notion of splendid failure by reference to Hemingway's achievements:

> I thought that he found out early what he could do and he stayed inside of that. He never did try to get outside the boundary of what he really could do and risk failure. He did what he really could do marvellously well, first rate, but to me that is not success but failure ... failure to me is best. To try something you can't do, because its too much, but still to try it and fail, then try again. That to me is success. [2]

These ideas are not in themselves perverse. In terms of the myth of Sisyphus they have supported the visions of great writers,[3] but it could be argued that Faulkner's phrasing here reveals an over emphasis on the inevitability of failure so that it appears less a result of too high an aspiration than a goal in itself. He is almost reduced to the nonsensical position of defending bad writing as evidence of lofty intentions. Faulkner carries this ambiguous belief in failure as a characteristic of success beyond thematic concerns, into stylistic and structural areas. Again considering Hemingway he says,

> His style is a perfect style in the sense that it suits exactly what he wants to do with it. He can control it, it never falters. So if a style can be perfect it seems to me it must be the style that the man can use exactly and never fail or falter with, which I think Hemingway does.[4]

He contrasts this static perfection, obviously to its disadvantage, with his own style:

---

1. J.B. Meriwether ed; William Faulkner: Essays, Speeches and Public Letters, 1967, p.143.
2. Faulkner at Nagano, p.3-4
3. Strangely enough, Faulkner rejects the myth, claiming greater optimism. See Bouvard, p.362.
4. Faulkner at Nagano, p.89

> any language, if it is not changing will not last long. That is, the only alternative to change and progress is death.1

This is acceptable but his extension of the theory to justify what others have called stylistic flaws shows the dangers of his misplaced emphasis:

> We (Wolfe, Dos Passos and himself) tried to crowd, and cram everything, all experience, into each paragraph, to get the whole complete nuance of the moment's experience, of all the recaptured light rays, into each paragraph. Thats why its clumsy and hard to read. Its not that we deliberately tried to make it clumsy, we just couldn't help it. 2

He uses similar expediency to make a virtue of the inconsistencies in his appendix to The Sound and The Fury; writing to Cowley he refuses to iron them out, saying

> The inconsistencies in the appendix prove to me that the book is still alive after 15 years, and being still alive is growing, changing. 3

Faulkner's pride in the loftiness of his own aspirations seems to run the danger of producing in him an addiction to failure, in which flaws and inconsistencies, as symptoms of that failure, become his signs of success. This paradox develops into a dichotomy between his concept of creative inspiration and technique. He shows himself suspicious of formal discipline "when ever my imagination and the bounds of the pattern conflicted, it was the pattern that bulged..."[4] He appears to value the spontaneous creative impulse more highly than the disciplined stylistic control, and to feel it possible to separate the two. One senses a self-congratulatory note in his words, an approval of the artistic energy which bursts the bonds of the "pattern". He is impatient with all questions about technique, disposing of Jean Stein's with

---

1. Faulkner in the University, p.151.
2. Faulkner at Nagano, p.37.
3. The Faulkner-Cowley File, p.90.
4. Faulkner in the University, p.51.

> Let the writer take up surgery or bricklaying if he is interested in technique. There is no mechanical way to get the writing done, no short cut. The young writer would be a fool to follow a theory. Teach yourself by your own mistakes; people learn only by error. The good artist believes that nobody is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity. No matter how much he admires the old writer he wants to best him. 1

Allowing for his misunderstanding of the interviewer's use of the word technique, it is still apparent that Faulkner had some naive do-it-yourself theories which led him into conflict and confusion. Half-jokingly he describes the way in which the character of Darl took "control":

> I couldn't always understand why he did things, but he did insist on doing things, and when we would quarrel about it he always won, because at that time he was alive, he was under his own power. 2

Despite the humour one senses a paternal pride in the notion that his characters had sufficient impetus to "outstrip" their creator. He frequently reveals this disparity between his concept of creative impulse and its stylistic expression, as if he considered them mutually antagonistic forces. Jean Stein obviously felt this and asked him, "Then would you deny the validity of technique?" "By no means", Faulkner replied, "Sometimes technique charges in and takes command of the dream before the writer himself can get his hands on it".[3] 'Technique' is definitely the antagonist in Faulkner's thinking, always failing the magnificent vision, always cramping and inhibiting the soaring spirit with prosaic 'brick-laying' considerations. It is not an easily defensible position and might well be cited by those critics who find a similar lack of co-ordination and resolution between technique and content in his fiction.

---

1. Jean Stein, p.72.
2. Faulkner in the University, p.263-264.
3. Jean Stein, p.72

The problem I shall be concerned with investigating, the degree to which the withdrawl of the implied author in Faulkner's work is devised to produce a relativist structure, is not directly referred to in any of his interviews. Wright's book rejected absolutes, in life or art:

> Art, like life, must ever be an infinite search for the intractable. Its forms, like the eternal readjustment and equilibria of life, are but an approximation to stability ... This is why understanding must ever be relative.1

Certainly Faulkner goes along with the first proposition , but it is less certain that he consciously applied an aesthetic theory of relativity, and extremely uncertain that he rejected the concept of absolutes. There is of course the famous description of the structure of Absalom, Absalom! as thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird,[2] which might appear to argue a relativist technique, but the image was offered by the questioner, and only accepted with characteristic courtesy by Faulkner, and in any case it does not invalidate a theory of final, absolute 'truth', which would be compounded of the thirteen ways of looking. In 'A Word to Young Writers' he describes how once the writer's characters existed in

> a moil and seethe of mankind which accepted and believed in and functioned accordingly, not to angles, but to moral principles; where truth was not where you were standing when you looked at it but was an unalterable quality or thing which could and would knock your brains out if you did not accept it or at least respect it.
>
> While today the young writer's characters must function not in individuality but in isolation, not to pursue in myriad company the anguishes and hopes of all human hearts in a world of a few simple comprehensible truths and moral principles, but to exist alone inside a vacuum of facts which he did not choose and cannot cope with and cannot escape from like a fly inside an inverted tumbler.3

---

1. The Creative Will, p.65.
2. Faulkner in the University, p.273-274.
3. Ibid., p.244.

Clearly Faulkner includes himself in the earlier group, whose positive approach opposes a relativist philosophy. In his review of Hemingway's The Old Man and The Sea,[1] he shows himself similarly attracted towards resolution:

> His best. Time may show it to be the best single piece of any of us, I mean his and my contemporaries. This time, he discovered a God, a Creator. Until now, his men and women had made themselves out of their own clay; their victories and defeats were at the hands of each other, just to prove to themselves or one another how tough they could be. But this time he wrote about pity: about something somewhere that made them all: the old man who had to catch this fish and then lose it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks which had to rob the old man of his fish; made them and loved them all and pitied them all. It's all right.2

Faulkner's apparent enthusiasm for the totality of Hemingway's vision, for the rigid, authorial control of the characters, suggests the likelihood of his desire for similar resolution and techniques in his own work.

This reduces the value of a completely relativist approach, that structural realism which by definition must efface its implied author in its attempt to imitate pure, unselected experience. From the evidence of his statements Faulkner's intention seems to be one which demands final control of his characters in so far as he must select the truth which is to be their goal. They may 'take over' from him on their way, but their destination, like that of Hemingway's Old Man, is predetermined. Techniques of juxtaposition and interrelation may operate to a limited degree, as with the thirteen ways of looking, each character's point of view is relatively defined, but the field of vision is determined. Similarly the encouragement to the reader to participate actively, which some critics felt was an integral part of Faulkner's method, must be

---

1. Essays, Speeches and Public Letters, ed. J.B. Meriwether, 1967, p.193.
2. First published in Shenandoah, 1952.

limited to a range within the ultimate control of the author. The reader is free to make his own approach, but, like the characters, his final understanding is determined. The imperious "Read it four times"[1] offered by Faulkner to readers failing to understand him after three readings, holds a tone consistent with an intention of including the reader in creative effort and also with a confidence that a final vision will be displayed. The repeated claims of failure refer, not to his vision, but to its artistic expression. His declared creed is simple and optimistic and rests in a complete faith in man, in his will to freedom, and the "virtues of the human heart ... courage, honor, pride, compassion, pity".[2] It finds its clearest and, some have suggested, its most successful expression in the Nobel Prize Speech.

This evidence leads us to assume that Faulkner's artistic desire was to place characters

> into a moil and seethe of simple human beings whose very existence was an affirmation of an incurable and indomitable optimism,3

and thus to express his belief that man will 'prevail'. The expression of such a dogmatic vision involves explicit authorial control - a too reticent authorial presence would fail to produce the strength of resolution essential to this view. That Faulkner felt the necessity, and acknowledged it, is apparent in his statement to Jean Stein:

> I created a cosmos of my own. I can move these people around like God, not only in space, but in time too.4

There is no hint, either in what we can deduce of his critical intention, or in the demands of his vision, of the relativist method which some

---

1. Jean Stein, p.76.
2. Faulkner in the University, p.133.
3. Essays, Speeches and Public Letters, ed. J.B. Meriwether, 1967, p.163.
4. Jean Stein, p.82.

critics claim accounts for the absence of authorial responsibility in his books. It is not possible, from these public pronouncements, to support the view that Faulkner deliberately adopted a technique of withdrawal, in order to achieve a degree of realism. On the contrary, his declared method, however fluid he claimed it to be in the process, leads finally to a total control, an absolute vision, a sublimation of "the actual into the apocryphal".[1] We cannot avoid noticing a discrepancy between this intention and its execution in the novels.

At its simplest, Faulkner's dilemma seems to have been between his publicly professed optimism or positivism and his fictionally expressed pessimism or relativism. Very rarely do we find the non-fictional rhetoric reduced to

> life is a phenomenon but not a novelty, the same frantic steeple-chase towards nothing everywhere and man stinks the same stink no matter where in time.[2]

There is emphasis on technical failure, on artistic failure, but always counterbalanced by a fervent, optimistic humanism. He reserves the pessimistic vision for his novels.

It seems possible that Faulkner was aware of some inconsistency in his position. The rising pitch of his rhetoric in his later works has been cited as evidence of this, and his obsessive desire for privacy could stem from a similar lack of confidence. His dealing with Malcolm Cowley shown him excessively anxious for personal anonymity. A projected magazine biography was abhorrent to him:

> I will want to blue pencil everything which even intimates that something breathing and moving got behind the typewriter which produced the books.[3]

---

1. Jean Stein, p.82.
2. The Faulkner Cowley File, p.15.
3. Ibid., p.121-122.

This is not the 'literary' concern of the author that his reader shall not confuse him with his implied author or his narrator. This is a highly emotional attitude, and even allowing for the Southerner's developed sense of privacy Faulkner's reticence is over-defensive. It suggests his own suspicion of a lack of consistency between man and writer; a fear that he may betray his books if he is linked too closely with them. His university interviews are obviously given with a sense of duty, and during them Faulkner adopts the pose, quite consciously I suspect, of one who really knows less about the subject than his audience,[1] but is courteously willing to make himself agreeable.

In fact, he was publicly disclaiming responsibility for his work. Not from the omniscient heights of a teacher who wishes his pupils to learn independence, but from the position of a man who is less simple than he defensively claims, and far more confused by the creations of his imagination than he cares to admit. "I wish I had had enough sense to see ahead 30 years ago and, like some of the Elizabethans, not signed them."[2] As far as intellectual and emotional responsibility is concerned, this is probably quite sincere.

The personal dilemma bears an interesting relation to the problem of Faulkner's authorial stance. It could be suggested that his public evasiveness is carried into his fiction and that the defensive posturing he practises in public is also evident in his novels, in both cases revealing a lack of confidence and authoritative control. More surely, it can be said that Faulkner's public appearances in no way further an understanding of his private, fictive revelations, but only produce a surer sense of the gap between the two.

---

1. Which is probably the case. His answers often reveal his inability even to remember the texts, but because of his pose, one cannot be sure.

2. The Faulkner-Cowley File, p.126.

CHAPTER III

SOLDIER'S PAY

My purpose in the chapters which follow is to examine Faulkner's dramatization of his authorial point of view in order to demonstrate how a fundamental lack of control is revealed through the inconsistencies between the theme which the structure appears to impose, and the textural effect. I shall take this gap to be an indication of the kind of divergence I described in the previous chapter where Faulkner's public words contradicted his fiction, but beyond this I shall be obliged to analyse the difference between the two effects and relate my conclusions to the central problem of authorial stance.

I do not intend to examine every novel. Clearly some lend themselves more readily to this approach than others. The Snopes' trilogy, for instance, with its picaresque structure and relaxed, tall-tale style of narration, is less dependent on the direction of an authoritative point of view than, say, Absalom, Absalom![1] On the whole it will be the technically ambitious works I shall consider; the ones in which Faulkner the stylistic innovator dominates Faulkner the story-teller. These include those novels which employ fictional narrators in a manner which seems to obscure the authorial position. It is these novels, too, which have provoked the most contradictory responses from the critics, and I hope to show the reason for this by examining them in the order in which they were written, and finally to develop my thesis to the point where the 'colossal failure'[2] of A Fable will become predictable in the light of the flaws in Soldier's Pay.

Soldier's Pay merits attention in this context for three reasons. The relative lack of sophistication of Faulkner's first novel permits

---

1. I am aware of critical opinion which considers that the unreliability of the narrator is consistent with the theme of the trilogy, but apart from my reservations about this theory I would distinguish between the narrator's role in the Snopes' novels and his role in the works I propose to examine.

2. Robert Penn Warren, Introduction to Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.17.

ready access to the authorial organization and provides a simpler version of unwanted ambiguities that later produce a more complex effect. Secondly, in it are prefigured many of the literary techniques which Faulkner was to employ, more expertly, in his later work. And thirdly, it betrays in a discrepancy between signalled or indicated purport[1] and achieved effect, the characteristic confusion which I shall argue is to be found at the heart of almost all Faulkner's major novels. The book provides an embryonic expression of Faulkner's confused philosophies and technical uncertainties and for this reason I intend to examine it in some detail.

Soldier's Pay announces itself as a symmetrical arrangement of paradox from its title onwards. It seems to promise to demonstrate that the disparity between the hoped for and the actual 'pay' is ironic. Comment on the banality of such irony is not called for at this point, nor shall I discuss the moral implications of the apparently uncritical presentation of the contradictory conditions. I shall examine the novel in the terms its structure implies, that is as an impartial, uncommitted representation of this ironic opposition.

It is as though Soldier's Pay were telling us "That is what we expect from life. That is what we experience." We shall find Faulkner making no attempt to provide a conjunction between two balanced statements or to lead us through one experience into a dramatic revelation of the other, as is the case in the irony of Henry James, where, for instance, Isabel Archer's expectation of freedom, in which the reader is invited to share, is ironically shown to be a romantic delusion by the final, severely limited definition of human freedom. Jane Austen too, in Pride and

---

1. I use this term in the sense defined by Alan Rodway. 'Purport: the apparent intention of a work as it reveals itself to the reader from the title onwards. This concept is required not only for evaluation but even for description.' (The Truths of Fiction, 1970, p.123).

Prejudice invites her readers to satirize social mores from Elizabeth Bennett's compelling point of view, thus providing them with the total experience of prejudice and only then awakening them to the full irony of the dependence society owes to those very conventions it scorns. Nor is Faulkner apparently offering to resolve the two positions within a comprehensive framework thus finally indicating an authorial point of view. The intention which he appears to signal, through his structural organization, is the presentation of two ironically contradictory modes of existence. It is as if the irony involved depends only on a convincing realization of both the possible and the actual outcome, as if our recognizing the anticlimax implied by mere juxtaposition were all that concerned him. A novel employing such a strategy would be by no means unacceptable but the illusion must exactly balance the reality if the proposed notion of man caught inextricably between the two conditions is to make its full aesthetic appeal. If, however, the balance is displaced, and the emphasis placed too heavily on pessimistic actuality, then this poised effect is nullified. Instead of requiring the reader intellectually to accommodate an antithetical pair of propositions, it would demand the more limited emotional response of pity for the plight of inevitably doomed Man. The irony would degenerate into pathos.

Before commenting on the degree of success with which Faulkner maintains [illegible] through the stylistic texture of his novel the structure of oppositions he introduces, it is necessary to demonstrate the presence of this symmetrical, oxymoronic organization from which I deduce the ironic purport. For Soldier's Pay exhibits emphatic structural juxtapositions which raise and promise to satisfy an expectation of the poised distribution of emphasis I have identified.

Briefly, the novel is organized to display a group of highly paradoxical characters by means of a series of contrasted disjunctive episodes. Chief of these characters is the Soldier himself, Donald Mahon, who figures in the narrative's present as a living corpse. There is the scholarly Januarius Jones in whom intellectual classicism conflicts with pagan sensuality; Dr. Mahon, the Christian priest whose high altar is his rose garden; Cecily Saunders, as spiritually trivial as she is physically attractive, and Emmy whose plain looks belie a loving nature. Joe Gilligan and Margaret Powers complete the group, the former impotent to express his powerful feelings, the latter fully articulate but emotionally bankrupt.

Each chapter is clipped into several sections in which either scene or point of view is changed. Chapter 3, for instance, makes fourteen transitions. Faulkner uses the abrupt juxtaposition repeatedly, apparently to produce pregnant contrast between one situation and another. It is a clumsy device, but it is consistent with the purport of simple paradoxical irony and with the necessity, for such an implied intention, of the appearance of authorial impartiality. The illusion of authorial absence is thinly established by these ostensibly self-explanatory scene shifts. There are many examples of this. Chapter 8, for instance, is chopped into six sections within its first five pages.

The effect of this technique is amplified by other devices both in the way of promoting the notion of ironic paradox and of developing a sense of authorial absence. Notable among these is Faulkner's first attempt at direct access to representative consciousness, the interior dialogue which he is to develop to such advantage in The Sound and The Fury. Here it occurs in Chapter 7 in a section entitled 'Voices' and offers us with little finesse the ironically disparate thoughts of The Town and other major characters:

George Farr:

> It isn't true, Cecily, darling, sweetheart. You can't, you can't
> After your body prone and narrow as a pool dividing ...

The Town:

> I hear that boy of Mahon's, that hurt fellow, and that
> girl of Saunders's are going to get married. My wife said
> they never would, but I said all the time .....

Mrs Burney:

> Men don't know. They should of looked out for him better.
> Saying he never wanted for nothing ...

George Farr:

> Cecily, Cecily ... Is this death?

The Town:

> There's that soldier that came with Mahon. I guess that
> woman will take him now. But maybe she don't have to.
> He might have been saving time himself.
> Well, wouldn't you, if you was him?

Sergeant Madden:

> Powers. Powers ... A man's face spitted like a moth on
> a lance of flame. Powers ... Rotten luck for her.

Mrs. Burney:

> Dewey, my boy ... 1.

Elsewhere, similar technique allows us to penetrate two levels of consciousness simultaneously, revealing the public expression to be totally at odds with the private concern:

> I come to see how your boy is getting along, what with
> everything. (Dewey, my boy).
>
> (I miss you like the devil, Dick. Someone to sleep with?
> I don't know. Oh, Dick, Dick. You left no mark on me,
> nothing. Kiss me through my hair, Dick, with all your
> ugly body, and let's don't ever see each other again,
> ever ... No, we won't, dear, ugly Dick.)

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.264-265.

> (Yes, that was Donald. He is dead). He is much better, thank you. Give him a few weeks' rest and he will be well again.
>
> "I am so glad, so glad," she answered, pitying him, envying him. (My son died, a hero: Mrs. Worthington, Mrs. Saunders, chat with me about nothing at all). "Poor boy, don't he remember his friends at all?"
>
> "Yes, yes." (This was Donald, my son). "Donald, don't you remember Mrs. Burney? She is Dewey's mother, you know."
>
> (... but not forever. I wish you all the luck and love in the world. Wish me luck, dear Dick ...).
>
> Donald Mahon, hearing voices: "Carry on, Joe." 1

Then, too, the symmetry of the plot is supported by thematic antitheses which present the various love affairs as a kaleidoscope of contrast and contradiction. Donald and Emmy are presented as the idealized lovers, translated by memory into a kind of aesthetic perfection. Their idyll is ironically contrasted with the furtive affair between George and Cecily, with Jones' lustful pursuit of Emmy, with Donald's meaningless marriage, and with Joe's frustrated attempts to communicate his love to Margaret.

This is a brief summary only. It is presented as evidence for the presence in the novel of rather simple antithetical patternings which give rise to expectation of paradox and impartial ironic stance to which I have referred. Moreover, underlying the whole work, and offering the basic thematic irony, is the pagan-Christian contradiction between an anti-spiritual life of physical satisfaction and a specifically Christian milieu which necessarily implies an interpretation of 'pay' in terms of spiritual reward. Unlike the obtrusively regular management of the devices I have previously outlined, this paradox runs riot through the work. Faulkner appears to make no effort here, as he has done elsewhere,

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.182.

to balance or oppose. Instead he contents himself with establishing his Christian representative in name only, the pantheistic rector, Dr. Mahon, and then abandons him to the pagan elements which in fact come to dominate the book. The Christian reward for the soldier appears to rest wholly in the material comforts and human affections which surround his dying. The effect of this, far from achieving a balanced statement of the contradictory nature of experience, opposing optimistic expectation and disillusionary actuality in equal proportions, is to lend Soldier's Pay the character of a pagan tableau, presided over by a mild Jove[1] and organized around a crushed faun, personified as "Soldier". The combination of structural and textural effects seems designed to promote a feeling of regret for the human situation in which man finds himself called upon to uphold loftier motives and ideals than he in fact possesses. This is a feebler contradiction than the apparent intention of ironic contrast implied by organization of sharply antithetical plot and the poised balance of thematic elements. Faulkner raised expectation of a specifically Christian milieu through the association with Donald Mahon's home and father, and subsequently introduced suggestions of pagan myth, as if it were merely his intention to imply the presence of the former alongside the lingering heritage of the latter. This would be consistent with the polarity noted elsewhere in plot and characterization. But mere initial prominent positioning of the Christian element cannot balance the later continuing pagan emphases. The clear, though interrupted impression, is that of a conventional elegiac regret at the manner in which the freer pagan world is trapped regressively by the demands of orthodox morality.

This bias is fundamental to the ongoing theme of the novel and contributes towards displacement of the aesthetic balance. The static

---

1. "Shadows moved as the sun moved, a branch dappled the rector's brow: a laurelled Jove." Soldier's Pay, p.54.

mechanized polarity is outweighed by the dynamic pervasive presence of the repeated pagan imagery. The vital poise between the idealized expectation of the soldier's pay, in Christian terms of moral reward[1] and the actual non-payment is undermined by Faulkner's purely mechanical means of establishing the former through a patently contrived structure to provide only a feeble contrast with the vitality of imagery which promotes in the texture a sense of the pessimistic reality of the latter. In order to achieve the equilibrium and to support the reader's optimistic expectation strongly enough to create a dramatic reversal to what Faulkner gives us as depressing actuality, the symbol of the church spire must be established and preserved in more than these visual terms:

> The grass was good. A myriad bees vacillated between clover and apple bloom, apple bloom and clover, and from the Gothic mass of the church the spire rose, a prayer imperishable in bronze, immaculate in its illusion of slow ruin across motionless young clouds.
>
> "My one sincere parishioner," murmured the divine. Sunlight was a windy golden plume about his bald head, and Januarius Jones' face was a round mirror before which fauns and nymphs might have wantoned when the world was young.
>
> "Parishioner, did I say?" It is more than that: It is by such as this that man may approach nearest to God. And how few will believe this! How few, how few! [2]

This is a conscious preparation of the antithesis between the idealistic and the natural man, but the antithesis is not maintained in practice, and the spire and its votary are virtually sacrificed to the incoherence and vitality of pagan anarchy.

---

1. The expectation of the soldier's pay being made in these terms is inescapably aroused by the environment in which Faulker places him. The significance of his Anglican father and rectory home is underlined by repeated mention of his favourite seat in the spire-shadowed garden.

2. Soldier's Pay, p.52.

This is one way in which the signalled intention is overthrown. It may be argued that Faulkner is deliberately dramatizing the frailty of Christian idealism, showing that it may be so outdistanced by the vitality of the atheist, outshone by the beauty of the rose, excelled by an extra-marital relationship, and that its enforcement results only in feeble advocates, unvisited altars, loveless marriages and even finally in a crippling of the free spirit.

This would be in line with much literature of the post-war period when modern idealism was seen as the direct route to death, and cynicism was the order of the day.[1] We shall perhaps come to see that this anti-romantic theme is an important part of the novel's total effect, but my argument is suggesting that such an eventual meaning would be so far inconsistent with the structure of oppositons as to represent a failure of the signalled purport. The incoherence resulting could hardly be supported as an aesthetic goal.

H.E. Richardson had argued against this view of Soldier's Pay as nihilistic,[2] and while disagreeing with him on other grounds, I readily

---

1. Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms is probably the best work of this kind.

2. H.E. Richardson in William Faulkner: The Journey to Self-Discovery, Missouri, 1969, argues that Faulkner's use of pagan imagery shows clear evidence of the influence of French Symbolists and Romantics. He claims Faulkner's absorption of their techniques is conscious and positive. "Thus much of the symbolism one finds in Soldier's Pay goes beyond the skilfully employed technical devices of the decadents: of synthesis, refined images and expressions subject to elaborately free association, and mere shallow, suggestive symbols such as faun and worm. The tower partakes of the artist's unconscious dimensions, of what is indeed an affirmative association closely related to local color (e.g. the Negro church) and having little to do with decadence from either a historical or stylistic view. This is simply to recognise, as in his early poems such as 'Cathay' and The Marble Faun, that Faulkner's unconscious power as a writer dominated the absorbing technique of the moment - here that of the decadents, which he obviously employed and which has so often and erroneously been associated with a Weltanschaung of negativism." p.151.

agree that there are elements in the book which appear to contradict a purely negative reading. Indeed my argument depends upon our recognizing them.

The symbol of the spire is one, for "a prayer imperishable in bronze" is a strong claim, and while notably lacking support from other references it nevertheless demands attention. I have already discussed the structural and thematic juxtapositioning which purports to offer a balanced view of life in which both positive and negative positions are maintained. Similarly one might concede that the ending of the novel, which I shall discuss later, attempts to establish an optimistic faith in the power of the human spirit to balance a dramatized awareness of man's feet of clay. My contention is not that the work lacks elements of optimisim but that it fails adequately to weight them and gives undue emphasis to pessimistic indications. My case does not rest on the absence of optimistic symbolic elements, but on their being unassimilated into a balanced scheme of juxtaposed opposition. So that finally I would disagree with Richardson when he defends Soldier's Pay against charges of negativism, not because I feel that there are no positive elements in the book, but because I find that despite their inclusion not only is the eventual theme not optimistic but there is a final failure even to establish convincingly the optimistic pole of a structural dialectic. This seems to me to reflect a more complex pessimism than would be produced by a complete absence of positive elements. It is this failure, this departure from the signalled purport of the work, this abandoning of balance for an indulgence in elegiac regret which seems to reflect a weakness in Faulkner's psychological wholeness. It is perhaps this weakness that accounts for the failure of authorial detachment, the fault which I am imputing to the novel's stance.

I must turn now to a closer examination of the way in which the bias reveals itself. Primarily the balance is destroyed by sheer quantative emphasis on defeatist incident and character. It is indeed a case of "how few will believe". Joe and Margaret probably offer the strongest evidence for the presence of a Christian spirit in mankind, but their powers of action are impaired, Margaret's by her emotional bankruptcy (a result of the impact on her of war and death) and Joe's by his lack of education. United in compassion for Donald Mahon they compensate for each other's weaknesses and work selflessly together to promote his comfort. But Faulkner allows them no permanent relationship and after Donald's death Margaret is inexorably carried away by the train, "the arrogant steel thing" while Joe stands helplessly by "weeping with anger and despair"[1] at his failure to find words to win her.

The idyll of Donald and Emmy also appears to support the optimistic, idealistic aspect of Faulkner's dialectic. Sylvan setting, moonlight, silvered naked bodies, plainly indicate his elevation of this affair to a mythic level, a mating of the gods. But its momentary perfection is achieved at the price of impermanence, and it lives only in Emmy's poignant memories. The retrospective account lends past-tense melancholy, while the simultaneous knowledge of Donald's plight heightens the pathos.

At no time does Faulkner establish a positive, vital relationship with which to oppose the empty, inglorious relationships he juxtaposes. Yet our expectations of such a relationship was undoubtedly aroused by the reference to the early Donald as "thin-faced, with the serenity of a wild thing - the passionate serene alertness of a faun",[2] clearly commenting on the mindless shell now presented to us. Certainly the image of Donald as faun holds a suggestion of vulnerability, a natural victim.

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.314,315.
2. Soldier's Pay, p.77.

But Faulkner shows us that at the time of their love affair Donald's spirit was still youthfully free from the fetters of social and moral obligation, and we expect him to be vividly displayed in his confident independence if only through the medium of Emmy's memories, so that we may appreciate the subsequent destruction, feel the shock of ironic discontinuity, rather than this palely lyrical pathos. The fact that we do not experience this contrast despite our invited expectation, reflects Faulkner's technical failure to bring the scene to life[1] and perhaps indicates further a lack of conviction in the subject itself, the potential strength of the individual. Such lack of confidence, whether technical or philosophical, results in mere poignancy in the portrayal of the one ideal relationship, when the purported theme requires positive force. Donald's characterization is enfeebled. He is robbed of the independence and strength required by the role which appeared to have been established for him, as the protagonist of a nobler humanity. Even at this peak of youth and freedom Emmy's melancholy narration substitutes a sense of decline and doom for the expected association with vigour and hope:

> Then I waked up. It was getting dawn and I was cramped and wet and cold, and he was gone ... But I knew he would come back. And so he did, with some blackberries. We ate 'em and watched it getting light in the east. Then when the blackberries were gone I could feel the cold, wet grass under me again and see the sky all yellow and chilly behind his head. 2

The premonitory tone deprives the reader of the paradox which the crude structuring of other elements in the novel has promised him, so that his expectation of ironically detached objectivity, his anticipation of a soldier's pay, is disappointed as the feeble hero fades gently and unprotestingly away.

---

1. Soldier's Pay, Chapter III, Section 8, p.118;125.
2. Soldier's Pay, p.124.

The introduction of a professional Christian initially arouses unavoidable associated ideas of man's ultimate triumph or reward. Yet after Mahon's initial profession of faith, given, as with the image of the spire, in terms too emphatic to ignore yet too cursory to support any real credence, we are to see him engaged far more dramatically and memorably in pagan adoration of his flower garden than in any more positive Christian act:

> The garden was worth seeing. An avenue of roses bordered a gravelled path which passed from sunlight beneath two overarching oaks. Beyond the oaks, against a wall of poplars in a restless formal row were columns of a Greek temple, yet the poplars themselves in a slim, vague green were poised and vain as girls in a frieze. Against a privet hedge would soon be lilies like nuns in a cloister and blue hyacinths swung soundless bells, dreaming of Lesbos. Upon a lattice wall wistaria would soon burn in slow inverted lilac flame, and following it they came lastly upon a single rose bush. The branches were huge and knotted with age, heavy and dark as a bronze pedestal, crowned with pale impermanent gold. The divine's hands lingered upon it with soft passion.
>
> "Now, this," he said, "is my son and my daughter, the wife of my bosom and the bread of my belly: it is my right hand and my left hand ..." [1]

The effect is to disintegrate the Christian role, but without the crisp force of satire, rather in a regretful, inconclusive way, leaving remnants to float disturbingly around the novel and interrupt its cynical purport with the occasional confusing shred of Christian reference. It almost seems as if Faulkner felt that the very terminology was sufficiently established in its traditional referential framework to stand alone and be relied upon to summon up the necessary connotation in the mind of the reader, thus maintaining an effective balance between orthodox Christianity and modern paganism.

The end of the novel finds Faulkner attempting an evocation of man's need for "a Oneness with Something, somewhere".[2]

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.55.
2. Soldier's Pay, p.326.

Presumably this urge is seen by Faulkner as the force behind the dogma which preserves the falling spire in spite of appearances, and is evoked to contradict our impression of the Soldier's hopelessly determined plight. It is a belated offering to the Christian side of the Christian-Pagan opposition. Faulkner slips out of the net of Christian orthodoxy by attributing to the rector a form of simplistic humanism in the reconciliation scene with Joe:

> "Circumstance moves in marvellous ways, Joe." "I thought you'd a said God, reverend." "God is circumstance, Joe. God is in this life. We know nothing about the next. That will take care of itself in good time. 'The Kingdom of God is in man's own heart,' the Book says." 1

Joe, as the inarticulate protagonist of a more idealistic faith voices an unsophisticated protest. "Ain't that a kind of funny doctrine for a parson to get off?" but Faulkner gives him nothing more substantial to affirm and any optimism pronounced or dramatized is limited to a stoicism forged in human sympathy - here existing between the rector and Joe. God - introduced conventionally by the rector "God bless you, Joe" appears on examination to be no more than a synonym for circumstance; Christian love is seen as a temporary agreement of mutual support.

So Faulkner leads his two spiritual incompetents past the negro church, to which he abruptly attributes all man's capacity for aspiration,[2] mysticism and faith:

> The singing drew nearer and nearer; at last, crouching among a clump of trees beside the road, they saw the shabby church with its canting travesty of a spire. Within it was a soft glow of kerosene serving only to make the darkness and the heat thicker, making thicker the imminence of sex

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.324.

2. Until now the negro spiritual experience has been entirely unrepresented.

> after harsh labour along the mooned land; and from it welled the crooning submerged passion of the dark race. It was nothing, it was everything; then it swelled to an ecstasy, taking the white man's words as readily as it took his remote God and made a personal Father of him.
>
> Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. All the longing of mankind for a Oneness with Something, somewhere. Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus ... The rector and Gilligan stood side by side in the dusty road. The road went on under the moon, vaguely dissolving without perspective. Worn-out red-gutted fields were now alternate splashes of soft black and silver; trees had each a silver nimbus, save those moonward from them, which were sharp as bronze.
>
> Feed Thy Sheep, O Jesus. The voices rose full and soft. There was no organ: no organ was needed as above the harmonic passion of bass and baritone soared a clear soprano of women's voices like a flight of gold and heavenly birds. 1

This passage seems to suggest that, intellectually, man cannot support his idealism; intellectually, he must either be a contented pagan or a pessimistic Christian; only emotionally can he achieve this mystic optimism and only the negro is intellectually naive enough to succeed. This is an unheralded notion; no preparations have signalled this sudden impassioned claim for the human spirit, nor indicated that it would be upheld by the negro protagonist. Both in tone and image it is inconsistent with that has gone before, but in its juxtaposition with the falling tones of

> They stood together in the dust, the rector in his shapeless black, and Gilligan in his new hard serge, listening, seeing the shabby church become beautiful with mellow longing, passionate and sad. Then the singing died, fading away along the mooned land inevitable with tomorrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation; and they turned townward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes. 2

it is appropriate to the structural purport which promotes the paradoxical statement of dream and reality.

---

1. Soldier's Pay, p.325-326.
2. Soldier's Pay, p.326.

This sort of emphatic antithesis is to be found, offering itself as meaning, at the end of many of Faulkner's novels.[1] In this case its arrangement is consistent with the organization of the novel, and its irresolution does not contradict the structural purport. What does contradict it is the failure of the increasing pitch of affirmative exclamation to establish any convincing, positive value, any optimistic platform, from which the subsequent fall to tones of stoic realism could produce effective contrast. The excessive strain towards the crescendo is carried into the diminuendo in equally exaggerated tones as it strives ineffectively to produce the implied antithetical effect. The emotional pitch of the evocation of the negro spirituality, invalidated by its thematic and stylistic incongruity, precariously raised the tone to unprecented heights in order to achieve an anti-climatic fall to the image of the earthbound condition of the white man's spirit. The incantatory rhetoric causes this ultimate paradox to ring with a profundity to which it has no claim in the context of the novel; it is a stylistic effect, lacking thematic roots in the total achievement, and as such it fails to achieve the proposed irony by demonstrably failing to produce an adequately founded, optimistic opposition to the pessimistic reality, for all that it supports the structural purport by making the attempt. This final passage epitomizes the central confusion displayed throughout the novel between Faulkner's oxymoronic structure and uniformly pessimistic vision. To the last he is appearing to make intermittent efforts to retrieve the balance and establish the polarity. This final effort, in its patent desparation, points up most clearly a sense of lost purpose.

---

1. I shall comment on the occurrence of this effect in The Sound and The Fury, Light in August, Absalom, Absalom! and A Fable in the appropriate chapters.

This is our evidence for assuming that a case is being made, and unwittingly lost, for the existence of a positive, permanent value in human experience. The existence of a negative point of view is too emphatically dramatized to require much critical definition. A brief outline of the major technical devices will show with what disproportionate weight the position has been established. A powerful contribution to this effect is made by the manipulation of coincidental meetings and journeyings around a central focus which is dominated by the dying figure of Donald. Our field of vision is progressively narrowed as he assumes increasing clarity with the imminent approach of the fatal climax. After his death the motif is reversed, characters disperse, scenes fade. This concentration upon death as the focus of activity necessarily casts a nihilistic shade over the work. My summary gives this development the appearance of organized plotting, seeming to contradict my assertion that the plot displays anithetical patternings. But an appreciation of the entire dependence of the effect upon the undue emphasis of only one aspect of the soldier's implied nature, places it in clear opposition to the ironic purport I have deduced. There is no contradictory organic movement; the effect of the structural juxtaposition is made by comparison, static and mechanised, and can offer no real resistance to the forceful organic flow. Neither is the sense of pagan life sufficiently well organized as to oppose the deathwards movement with any vital opposition. Cosmic indifference adds its weight to the impression. The plight of Donald is made more poignant as the developing season moves in inverse direction to his slow death. Faulkner seems to be borrowing echoes from 'The Waste Land' by his insistence on the April garden where Donald sits dying. The representatives of cynicism, self-

interest, aetheism, outclass the protagonist of an optimistic view of life both numerically and in the vitality of their dramatization. Januarius Jones pursues his nymphs with a comic energy unrivalled by the young Donald's lyrical experiences. Cecily's trivial femininity is treated in enthusiastic, if cliché-ridden, detail. George's egocentric sufferings in his infatuation for Cecily are given more fully than Joe's clearly fine feelings for Margaret, and the self-centred, materialistic, ignoble voices of the Town are given numerous, stylistically original, treatments. So that not only is Faulkner placing the quantitative emphasis on the depressing qualities of these characters, but he is compounding the stress by representing them with more energy and originality than he displayed in his treatment of his protagonists of hope.

Three more instances of thematic pessimism will conclude my indication of its disproportionate representation. We are told that Donald's last desperate hold on life is motivated by a desire to fulfil his life in marriage to a girl whomwe see to be worthless. We are shown that his rank is, despite all his disastrous experiences, an object of envy for the young Julian Lowe. We are invited to see that Joe Gilligan can only express his profound concern for Donald in the pathetically inadequate action of reading aloud a book which neither of them can understand. It is unnecessary to provide more examples, numerous as they are. These few will suffice to represent the heaping of defeatist incident and characterization in the novel.

Through a rather emphatic antithetical structure Faulkner signalled his intention of representing two positions of sufficiently equal importance to maintain each other in mutual opposition. On the mechanical

level of mere plot he proceeds fairly consistently along these lines but stylistic vitality and image combine to contradict the sought for paradox and submerge it beneath a single mood of elegiac fatalism. The closing paragraphs clearly demonstrate these warring techniques, which result in a disruptive disparity between the purport as carried in plot structure and the achieved effect of Soldier's Pay. I have already indicated where the heart of the problem may lie, when I discussed Faulkner's apparent inability to endow his Soldier with the heroic proportions demanded by one proposition of the irony. It could be that in organizing a novel to demonstrate two views of reality, Faulkner was over-estimating his own ability to create an optimistic metaphor and that this, a psychological limitation, is revealed in his failure to fulfil the demands of his organization. It could also be, as I suggested previously, that he was content to allow a merely referential technique to work for him in establishing a case for Christian validity. In that case, too, his commitment to pessimism betrays itself in its blinding him to the fact that such a technique requires a far more consistent application if it is to avoid the danger of over reliance on the reader's appropriate response.

These are hypotheses which I shall test against the next novel I propose to examine.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

The difficulty which the reader has met in Soldier's Pay appears to be absent in The Sound and The Fury. If we can establish that it is the absence of conflict between authorial direction, conveyed in plot structure or thematic oppositions and verbal texture or imagery, which accounts for this, Faulkner's best novel, then the argument of the previous chapter will be reinforced.

The structural symmetry of Soldier's Pay revealed intention obtrusively, but other formal elements placed thematic emphases elsewhere so that the eventual theme was less clear than that signalled by the balanced structural organization. To put it in another way, there appear to be an inconsistency between the structural symmetry and other formal elements.

I intend to show, by referring to succeeding novels, how although Faulkner overcame this early fault of the obtrusively displayed purport, the basic contradiction, sensed by the reader as a thematic uncertainty, and discovered by the critic to stem from the contrary implications of the structural organization and the stylistic qualifications, remains at the heart of his work.

If we assume that Faulkner felt some dissatisfaction with the way in which his first two novels[1] offered their author to the attack of the critics with such facility, and was searching for a technique which would relieve him of the responsibility to display a distinct point of view, then The Sound and The Fury seems a less remarkable successor to Soldier's Pay and Mosquitoes than it otherwise would. For The Sound and The Fury appears to present the perfect technical solution to Faulkner's difficulty. By openly delegating apparent authorial responsibility

---

1. Mosquitoes is open to much the same criticism as Soldier's Pay. It would be superfluous to discuss both.

to his fictional narrators he is able to preserve a distant, objective authorial stance. This practice reduces the risk of his readers' discovering a contradiction between the purport as it may be deduced from the structural organization, and the eventual theme as it emerges from the fully clothed achievement. In The Sound and The Fury the fictional 'authors' can be considered 'responsible' for their own sections in a way which defies any attempt to define Faulkner's omniscient authorial stance. Such an attempt must always be referred back to the fictional narrator, who is seen to be wholly answerable for the organization, and validated by it as it is by him - an impregnable co-existence.

Whether or not the technique was adopted as a strategy to relieve Faulkner from the need to reveal too obtrusively an authorial stance, in The Sound and The Fury the employment of fictional narrators contributes towards the making of a great novel. How far such success is a result of a deliberate decision on Faulkner's part, and how far a combination of fortunate chance circumstances, may legitimately be questioned, not as far as an appreciation of this novel is concerned - here the fortuity of creative factors is irrelevant in the face of the achieved fact of success - but in an examination of a developing authorial poise which we may expect to be maintained unless its partial dependence upon a unique set of largely chance circumstances is made clear.

From this point of view it is significant that Faulkner is using the technique for the first time. He is experiencing with the force of novelty all the restrictions imposed by the need to keep within the physical, emotional and mental boundaries of each narrator. Moreover, he is observing these restrictions scrupulously. In later books his familiarity with the narrator technique seems to breed neglect of the duties of consistent characterization. He abuses the technique by attributing to them improbable perceptions and implausible dialogue.

By the time he writes A Fable he is sufficiently careless of the need to preserve a harmony between the idea and the mode of its presentation as to attribute the following speech to Marthe, who as an uneducated peasant girl is clearly incapable of such vocabulary or philosophy. She confronts the Parisian general with her knowledge of his relationship with her brothers:

> Yes, the doom was his but at least I was its handmaiden: to bring you this. I must bring you the reason for its need too; to bring you this I must bring with me into your orbit the very object which would constitute and make imperative that need. Worse: by bringing it into your orbit, I myself created the need which the token, the last desperate cast remaining to me, would be incapable of discharging.
>
> A curse and doom which in time was to corrupt the very kindly circumambience which harboured us because already you are trying to ask how we managed to reach Western Europe, and I will tell you. It was not us. It was the village. No: it was all of us together: a confederation. France: a word a name a designation significant yet foundationless like the ones for grace or Tuesday or quarantine, esoteric and infrequent not just to us but to ignorant and kindly people among whom we had found orphaned and homeless haven. 1

No such familiarity is apparent in The Sound and The Fury. Here the technique is employed with a respect for the dramatic credibility of each narrator which produces the secondary advantageous effect of displaying an admirable ability to establish his characters through dialogue. These are minor advantages. His greatest advantage is the apparent absence of authorial direction which lends a sense of objectivity so patently missing in Soldier's Pay, where the implied author's ironic stance is belied by the heavily pessimistic emphases of the plot movement. Added to this, the theme of The Sound and The Fury, (to which I shall refer in more detail later) is particularly suited to Faulkner's talents at this stage in his life. He had written out his youthful cynicism in

---

1. A Fable, p.263-264.

Soldier's Pay and Mosquitoes, and was not yet oppressed by the responsibility of a public image committed to the impossible sentiments of the Nobel Prize Speech. He had recognized his subject in his "own little postage stamp of native soil"[1], and was treating it moreover with the originality of a first response, unhampered by the clogging legacy of recapitulation which succeeding novels would inherit.

Faulkner was a novelist with only one tale to tell; a tale of man paradoxically trapped yet protected in a cultural pattern of his own making which he can exchange for one equally limited, but can never discard for the limitless possibilities of unpatterned, total experience. The Sound and The Fury[2] gains from being his first expression of this mature vision. It might have been expected that his later novels would benefit from the novelist's experience, but Faulkner's later novels are bedevilled by the urge, referred to in an earlier chapter and frequently remarked by the critics, to make every word resound with significance and thus to compensate by a tonal emphasis for his seeming inability to alter or develop his ultimate understanding of how things are. I shall substantiate this point during my discussion of Light in August, Absalom, Absalom! and A Fable in the following chapters.

In this first expression he is content to present the primary, unforced vision of stoic pessimism, which, for all that it may not be philosophically ambitious, aesthetically is fully achieved.

The effect of these accumulated factors - the particular stage Faulkner had reached in his emotional and intellectual development, the experiment with a new technique, freedom from the commitment to the Nobel

---

1. Jean Stein, p.82.

2. Faulkner gave The Sound and The Fury the working title Twilight. See Man Working, 1919-1962. William Faulkner. A Catalogue of the William Faulkner Collection at The University of Virginia, ed. L.R. Massey, Virginia, 1968, p.36.
Both titles imply a pessimistically shadowed theme.

Prize winner's image and the first fresh employment of a continuing theme was to enable Faulkner to escape from his cynical authorial posturing we remarked in Soldier's Pay and to emerge as the artist capable of a coherent and satisfying statement of the irony of the human condition.

It is not my intention to imply that the success of The Sound and The Fury depends entirely on a set of happy coincidences. As I have emphasized, this enquiry is confined to a continuing study of Faulkner's authorial position and does not seek to add to or detract from the appreciation of this particular novel. But I am claiming that The Sound and The Fury was an unrepeatable achievement, occurring at a point on the graph of Faulkner's artistic development where the growth of his vision intersects with the rising level of his technical accomplishment.

It is Faulkner's own sureness of direction, the consistent authorial stance he assumes and maintains, which give this novel its power and conviction. Although he has removed his direct authorial presence behind his narrators, the omniscient author is to be detected as a unifying force in the effect of the total structural organization which is seen to be at one with the individual effects of its component parts. The pathos of Benjy's section, the despair of Quentin's, the calculating rationalism of Jason's and the humanity of Dilsey's,[1] are juxtaposed to offer a comprehensive range of responses to a common problem, the Southerner's reaction to the dissolution of his cultural pattern, and to provide an authoritative comment upon its nature. Faulkner's comment is in the ironic

---

1. The characteristic Faulknerian symbolism is not absent from The Sound and The Fury. Benjy's age, the Easter week chronology, even perhaps Miss Quentin's room, found empty on Easter morning, all betray his artistically unfortunate enthusiasm for Christian symbolism. However, in this novel alone, the references are sufficiently casual to allow his vision an uninterrupted dramatization, and it is quite clearly the humanity of Dilsey which is emphasized rather than any more spiritual and improbable quality.

movement from Benjy's fragmented, illogical experience in which natural affection provides the only connecting force and is seen to be hopelessly inadequate, through Quentin's even more destructive sensitivity to his society's condition, past the moderating influence of Dilsey's viable blend of love and realism, to the concluding irony, confirming the fact that it is Jason's vicious and consequently effective rationalism, dramatized in his own section and influential throughout the book, which finally enables him to restore order - the new order of materialism.

> With a backhanded blow he hurled Luster aside and caught the reins and sawed Queenie about and doubled the reins back and slashed her across the hips. He cut her again and again, into a plunging gallop, while Ben's hoarse agony roared about them, and swung her about to the right of the monument. Then he struck Luster over the head with his fist.
>
> "Don't you know any better than to take him to the left?" he said. He reached back and struck Ben, breaking the flower stalk again. "Shut up!" he said, "Shut up!" He jerked Queenie back and jumped down. "Get to hell on home with him. If you ever cross that gate with him again, I'll kill you!"
>
> "Yes, suh!" Luster said. He took the reins and hit Queenie with the end of them. "Git up! Git up, dar! Benjy, fer God's sake!"
>
> Ben's voice roared and roared. Queenie moved again, her feet began to clop-clop steadily again, and at once Ben hushed. Luster looked quickly back over his shoulder, then he drove on. The broken flower dropped over Ben's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place. 1

The irony is plain. Destructive to the individual freedom through each cultural order may be, and doomed from its conception by its partial and fallible nature, still the cycle of renewal will inevitably recur, since the alternative to the inflexible pragmatism Jason proposes as a replacement for the decadent values of the old South held by his parents, is the ever-changing, all-inclusive ocean of indecision in which Quentin drowns.

---

1. The Sound and The Fury, p.320-321.

This irony is achieved by authorial restraint. Too much sympathy for Quentin would weaken the point Faulkner is making about his impotence. Too much elaboration of Jason's villainy would detract from the direct economy of his section which mirrors the nature of his success. Too heavy emphasis on Dilsey's Christianity would raise confusing expectation of a possible alternative to Jason's new culture. And a less dispassionate dramatization of Benjy's mind would lead to pathos and a muddying of the reader's clear perception of his section as one balanced part of a whole.

By maintaining the essential balance between the impact of these four narrators, Faulkner is able to display, in their juxtaposition, his ironic point of view.

The ironic stance of The Sound and The Fury is not achieved in any succeeding novel. It assumes precisely the position which best enables Faulkner to order, control and comment upon his material. His treatment of the ostensibly uncomplicated character of Gerald Bland reveals its quality. Faulkner presents Gerald through Quentin's eyes, in an ironically varied light, first heroic, then blindly reactionary, at the same time demonstrating that it is because of Quentin's sensitive understanding of these shades that he is robbed of the ability to act positively, and by his too inclusive vision rendered inadequate in the 'loud world'. The image containing this view of Gerald and Quentin is a microcosm of the total authorial position and as such is worth examining:

> The shadows on the road were as still as if they had been put there with a stencil, with slanting pencils of sunlight. But it was only a train, and after a while it died away beyond the trees, the long sound, and then I could hear my watch and the train dying away, as though it were running through another month or another summer

> somewhere, rushing away under the posed gull and all things rushing. Except Gerald. He would be sort of grand too, pulling in lonely state across the noon, rowing himself right out of noon, up the long bright air like an apotheosis, mounting into a drowsing infinity where only he and the gull, the one terrifically motionless, the other in a steady and measured pull and recover that partook of inertia itself, the world punily beneath their shadows on the sun. 1

An earlier image has suggested Quentin's oxymoronic sense of captive freedom:

> A gull on an invisible wire attached through space dragged. 2

Now Faulkner gives us Quentin's awareness of a similarly ironic failure as the very grandeur of Gerald's pose determines, by its denial of time, its failure. Quentin's sense of the contradictory nature of space and time is dramatized: "terrifically motionless"; movement "that partook of inertia". Faulkner shows that as Gerald reaches towards an apotheosis he removes himself beyond the corrosion of time, but in doing so denies himself all but static, historial validity and thus becomes again a victim of time. In this way Faulkner dramatizes the irony of a situation in which Gerald's unawareness of his dilemma is paradoxically his strength, and it is his heroic consistency, in the face of changing values, which earns him Quentin's admiration. Faulkner is explicit that despite a moral and rational disapproval Quentin is attracted by the

---

1. The Sound and The Fury, p.119-120.
2. The Sound and The Fury, p.103.

the magnificence of Gerald's epic failure,[1] but because of his perception of the fact that he is at the mercy of a temporal order whose apparent freedom conceals destruction, he is incapable of acting with Gerald's anachronistic faith. In this way the power of a rigid attitude, however malformed, is fully realised as a dramatic irony. The authority of Gerald's confidence in his dated life style, confronting the paralysing indecision of Quentin's more complicated response, reflects in microcosm the power of a fixed, ordered world such as Jason proposes, dominating the impotence of the enervated protagonists of a more flexible, inclusive pattern of existence.

The major preoccupations of the novel are contained in this episode but the ironic stance of the implied author is maintained throughout the novel with similar precision, veering neither towards defeatism nor nihilism, which over-involvement with Quentin's predicament would produce, nor towards that false optimism which I shall show in Light in August, Absalom,Absalom! and A Fable and which the whole theme and structure of The Sound and The Fury denies.

If Faulkner falters at all, it is in the last section, where, as he puts it:

---

1. Faulkner's treatment implies that this view of Gerald impresses itself on Quentin, despite Quentin's qualifying sense of comic irony.
"When he sailed away, she (Gerald's mother) made a detour and came down to the river again and drove along parallel with him, the car in low gear. They said you couldn't have told they'd ever seen one another before, like a King and Queen, not even looking at one another, just moving side by side across Massachusetts on parallel courses like a couple of planets."
Quentin's section, p.89.

"Now and then the river glinted beyond things in sort of swpoping glints, across noon and after. Well after now, though we had passed where he was still pulling upstream majestical in the face of god gods. Better. Gods."
Quentin's section, p.110.

> I tried to gather the pieces together and fill in the gaps by making myself the spokesman. [1]

The flaws are stylistic improprieties rather than thematic or structural inconsistencies, but the slight verbal indulgences[2] and the careless use of point of view[3] in occasional departures from a strict observance, illustrate the debt Faulkner owes to the discipline of his chosen technique and suggest how easily without its restrictions he loses some control.

Faulkner's development away from posturing cynicism to a calm ironic detachment, coincides with his discovery of a narrative form which is perfect for the poised vision he now manifests. It is this coincidence rather than the more random set of fortuitous circumstances which chiefly accounts for the artistic success of The Sound and The Fury.

It is this successful marriage of form with vision which lies at the foundations of the novel and determines the balance of the entire superstructure. The explanation of this unique success seems to lie in the limited nature of the vision with which Faulkner contents himself for the first and last time, a vision which does not require him to distort his psychological patterning nor to over-extend his technical accomplishment. The Sound and The Fury was written before he began

---

1. Jean Stein, p.73-74.
2. Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time. The Sound and The Fury, p.295.
3. It may well be that Faulkner wishes to emphasize Jason's force in the final section, but by intruding on Jason's consciousness he flouts the convention of impersonal narration, which he has chosen for this section, and flaws the technical authority and dramatic credibility of his work. Examples of this inconsistency are chiefly to be found during the description of Jason's drive to Mottson. The Sound and The Fury, p.305-314.

committing himself to "magnificent failure",[1] and before he was repeatedly convincing himself of Hemingway's ultimate failure through successful completion of an attainable ambition. So that he is making none of those feverish attempts which mar Light in August and A Fable for example, to exploit Dilsey's Christianity for purposes other than those appropriate to the virtues of endurance and love, nor to deepen Jason's heartless pragmatism to mythic levels. Instead he contents himself with an ironic evocation of how things are in South, and how things must necessarily continue to be, and remains free from his later, aesthetically destructive need to resolve, conclude, and impress contradictory and confusing significance on his realism. In The Sound and The Fury he expresses his vision of the South with the spontaneous force of originality. In later novels he tries to recreate the sense of discovery, but the impossibility of pushing out the boundaries of his vision causes him to substitute stylistic frenzy for genuine thematic expansion, in an attempt to justify a retelling.

Later more technical innovation replaces thematic advance, for the theme of The Sound and The Fury admits no development. It is a vision of an ironically inevitable stasis, and cannot be extended by adjectival enthusiasm, but only distended, as I shall show in my discussion of later novels, to gross and vulnerable proportions.

The fact that Faulkner wrote his best book so early in his career has surprised many critics. I have attempted to show that it is the natural otcome of the problems posed by the two preceding novels, of the newness of the subject, of Faulkner's stage of psychological development at this time, and of his public anonymity. I have suggested

---

1. Faulkner in the University, p.61. Faulkner has perhaps an exaggerated respect for failure. See Chapter II, p.40.

that these factors combine uniquely, in a way which gives The Sound and The Fury the definitive function of a touchstone in the Faulkner can on, to produce his one really assured, masterful novel.

An analysis of the success of The Sound and The Fury throws illumination backwards on to the deficiencies of Soldier's Pay and Mosquitoes and forward on to the excesses of the late novels. It is our one clear glimpse of the confident author at work "behind the typewriter".[1]

---

1. See Chapter II, p.46.

CHAPTER V

LIGHT IN AUGUST

In Light in August Faulkner attempts a more ambitious statement of man's predicament.[1] The Christian myth was only tenuously included in the referential framework of The Sound and The Fury[2] but Light in August relies heavily on the life of Christ to provide a specific religious association between the events of the book and the Christian legend. This I shall show to be an unfortunate juxtaposition, resulting in an inconsistency between the realistic texture and the implications of the structural organisation which has been the cause of much critical dissension. Critics are unanimous in their praise of the richly realistic opening scenes of the book. The controversy arises when Faulkner begins to force the stylistic and symbolic pace in order to achieve his ambitious goal, which is to demonstrate, through the crucifixion of Joe Christmas, his expiation of the general guilt and his resurrection into the imaginations and consciences of the guilty society:

> For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out of the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, beside whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant. 3

---

1. As I Lay Dying does not represent any significant advance on the underlying philosophical attitude of The Sound and The Fury. It is, as Faulkner has described it, "a tour de force", and apart from an addition of grotesque comedy it differs from The Sound and The Fury only in its rather obtrusive technical virtuosity. For this reason a consideration of it is not profitable in this thesis.

2. Benjy's age, the events of the Easter weekend, perhaps Quentin's empty room, all imply an association with the Christian story.

3. Light in August, p.439-440.

Light in August is generally understood to present a faceless character searching for identity in a society founded on rigid conventions of ethnic and moral order. Alfred Kazin describes Joe Christmas as "an abstraction seeking to become a human being".[1] But the evidence of Christmas's passivity denies this interpretation.[2] He shows no desire for definition or for inclusion in any section of society; on the contrary, his sole demonstration of will is in his determined effort, to remain uninvolved, and this alone precipitates his violent acts of rejection.

Apart from this one assertion of self Christmas is a particularly formless, undetermined character, open to the forces of prejudice displayed in the novel. The fact that Christmas inherits the stigma of the South's most rigid intolerances, racialism and illegitimacy, increases his vulnerability. Faulkner shows that by refusing to accept its share in the traditional guilt, the South is obliged to force itself into prejudice and persecution of the negro. In its determination first to identify Christmas as negro, society displays the self-destructive nature of its refusal. Acceptance of guilt would bring intolerable self-awareness; projection of it on to the negro in the form of racism intensifies the moral blindness. Christmas's apparent role is to precipitate persecution, and by suffering Southern guilt to 'realise' it through his death. His negro blood is never incontrovertibly established. It is a provocative possibility challenging society to define him. It is his refusal to be reduced to any category or type of human being which provokes persecution, and his death which completes the inevitable cycle and dramatically underlines the social guilt.

---

1. Alfred Kazin, "The Stillness of Light in August", in Three Decades, p.252.
2. "All I wanted was peace", Light in August, p.104.

Illegitimacy exposes Christmas to the second guilt-ridden Southern prejudice. Faulkner suggests that the sexual immorality of the slave-owners has poisoned the sexual life of the South,[1] increasing the Calvinists' tendency to react violently against sensuality, equating it with women and rejecting both as evil, corrupt snares to draw man from his rigid path of virtue. Here again Faulkner is demonstrating how the refusal to acknowledge slavery as corrupt, to take responsibility for the evil, compounds society's guilt and increases the destructive power of sensuality and perverts further the dogma of Calvinism. By inheriting the stain of his mother's 'bitchery' Christmas is laid open to the fanaticism of Hines and McEachern who burden him with their sense of guilt and cause his unnatural fear of women.

With this inheritance, and armed solely with his will to freedom, Joe Christmas is born anonymously into the South. From the moment of his birth onwards he is brought into contact with prejudice, fanaticism, guilt and perversion, extreme forms of various traditions and dogmas, and his only continual effort is to remain uninvolved. Otherwise, his passivity as he is moved from one influence to another suggests a vague defeatist awareness of his role as social sacrifice and the futility of non-acceptance.

The plot of the novel shows Christmas passing from one limiting influence to another, acquiring the colour of their resentment from each, but remaining finally uninvolved. He is shown to be a symbol of 'abomination and bitchery' even before his birth, in the imagination of his obsessed grandfather, and as such is placed in the orphanage, with

---

1. Faulkner is even more explicit in Go Down Moses: "Don't you see?" he cried. "Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse?" Ike's speech follows his disoovery in the ledger of his grandfather's connection with the slave girl Eunice.

Hines projecting an aura of guilt over him, so that the boy inevitably precipitates the dietician's guilt and incurs her active prejudice. This leads to his removal to a home where he is exposed to the excesses of Calvinism with its presupposition of sin and the need for self-flagellating expiation. Faulkner presents McEachern's Calvinism as a perversion of nature; a dogma hardened by time and prejudice into the betraying Southern rejection of man's sexual nature; a lust for punishment.

Christmas's life with McEachern is an imposed education, teaching Christmas to become the 'outward expression' of McEachern's own suppressed guilt. Believing that he has discovered the final sin in Joe.

> He sighed; it was a sound almost luxurious, of satisfaction and victory... "You have revealed every other sin of which you are capable: sloth, and ingratitude, and irreverence and blasphemy. And now I have taken you in the remaining two: lying and lechery." 1

Joe has previously defied McEachern's doctrine by refusing the Catachism, now for the first time this threat to his freedom rouses him to violence and, returning his stepfather's blows he escapes from definition as 'Joe McEachern'.

The world of Bobbie and Mame offers a more subtle threat. Already Christmas has felt the greater power of Mrs. McEachern with her "woman's affinity and instinct for secrecy, for casting a faint taint of evil about the most trivial and innocent actions",[2] and her pity:

> She was trying to make me cry. Then she thinks that they would have had me. 3

---

1. Light in August, p.154.
2. Light in August, p.157.
3. Light in August, p.158.

Now, instructed by the partiality of his previous experience, he is blind to the sham and prejudice behind the

> diamond-surfaced tranquillity which invested (Mame) with a respectability as implacable and calm as the white lifted glove of a policeman, not a hair out of place. 1

In all innocence and humility he offers the prostitute his affection, not through a desire to become part of her world, but purely for love. His shock at her rejection reveals the confused values with which society has already burdened him:

> He just stared at her, at the face which he had never seen before, saying quietly (whether aloud or not, he could not have said) in a slow amazement: Why I committed murder for her. I even stole for her as if he had just heard of it, thought of it, been told that he had done it. 2

"The street which was to run for fifteen years" [3] carries Christmas primed with disillusion and hatred. Sexual experiences show him only more prejudice and amorality. Returning to Jefferson fifteen years later he is exposed to the crucial relationship with Joanna Burden. In her Faulkner dramatizes the heritage of a crusading anti-racialist spirit and nymphomania in significant contrast to Christmas's heritage of racialism and the bastardy caused by his mother's "bitchery". The contrast is marked by the active involvement of Joanna in her inheritance, as opposed to the passive, fatalistic acceptance of Christmas. In Joanna, Faulkner presents anti-racialism and nymphomania combining to produce the most destructively limiting prejudice yet displayed. Joanna's dual awareness of Christmas, as a 'cause' to be championed, and as a lover to be enjoyed because of the very negro blood she theoretically would ignore, shows her to be as committed to defining him as negro as

---

1. Light in August, p.204.
2. Light in August, p.204.
3. Light in August, p.210.

any racialist or Calvinist. Her anti-racialism is as partial as racism and a greater threat to him in being allied with his fear of "the lightless hot wet primogenitive Female".[1]

Christmas withstands her attempts to control him until, faced with the very antithesis of the freedom his life demands, her intention to train him as a negro lawyer, she forces him to the final impossibility, prayer. This supreme violation of his freedom, willing him to admit the superiority of another will, compels Christmas on to fulfil his bewildered prophesy "Something is going to happen to me".[2]

Now he is bearing the greatest guilt society can lay upon him. Thus burdened he is ready to be hounded, captured, killed and forgotten. Hightower realises

> They will do it gladly ... Since to pity him would be to admit self doubt and to hope for and need pity themselves. They will do it gladly, gladly. That's why it is so terrible, terrible, terrible. 3

But first Christmas runs. From Friday to Friday he fulfils

> an actual and urgent need to strike off the accomplished days towards some purpose, some definite day or act. 4

He feels

> the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upwards as death moves. 5

It is from this tide that he is running; from the pressures which would label him negro, bastard, murderer, and having defined him then have power to destroy him. Faulkner suggests that only in his unlimitation does Christmas have any power over the limited social imagination. Once he too is defined he is nothing. And so in this situation his only

---

1. Light in August, p.107.
2. Light in August, p.110.
3. Light in August, p.348.
4. Light in August, p.317.
5. Light in August, p.321.

exercise of freedom is in offering himself for capture, taking the initiative out of the hands of his persecutors and denying them their power, going freely to his death as a martyr and not a murderer. For this reason his earlier attempts to be captured are rejected.

> Any of them could have captured me, if that's what they want. Since that's what they all want: for me to be captured. But they all run first. They all want me to be captured, and then when I come up ready to say Here I am Yes I would say Here I am I am tired I am tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket of eggs they all run away. Like there is a rule to catch me by, and to capture me that way would not be like the rule says. 1

When the time is accomplished, and his will perfected, Christmas is taken and challenged:

> "Ain't your name Christmas?" and the nigger said that it was. He never denied it. He never did anything. He never acted like either a nigger or a white man. That was it. That was what made the folks so mad. For him to be a murderer and all dressed up and walking the town like he dared them to touch him, when he ought to have been skulking and hiding in the woods, muddy and dirty and running. It was like he never even knew he was a murderer, let alone a nigger too. 2

The unmistakable Christian parallels here clearly place Christmas in the role of a 'divine' victim, challenging the finite imagination of society to reduce him to its own stature.

The destined end for Joe Christmas is not the life imprisonment that Jefferson prides itself upon meting out to him. To allow it to indulge in such self-congratulation on the moderation of its law would increase the guilt and defeat Christmas's 'purpose'. And so Faulkner must motivate him to precipitate his own death by breaking away from his captors and bringing on himself the persecution of Percy Grimm.

---

1. Light in August, p.319.
2. Light in August, p.331.

The purport of the book is implied by its structure of concentric time scales, through which Joe Christmas describes ever-decreasing circles towards his confrontation with hisarch antagonist, Percy Grimm, and the sacrificial death which is to release him from the temporal pattern and produce his degree of 'resurrection'.[1]

Four time scales are involved; the immediate present of the townsfolk who are seen to be imprisoned within time, lacking the imaginative capacity to be aware of themselves in a temporal perspective, wholly formed by the prejudices of their culture, and intensifying their limitations by their insistence upon understanding temporality in its most destructive aspect, that of living from moment to moment and denying both past and future perspectives. The self-destructive nature of such blinkered existence is epitomized in Percy Grimm. His undeviating course as he pursues Christmas with "grave and reckless joy"[2] implies the disastrously narrow course his life has taken, "served by certitude, the blind and untroubled faith in the rightness and infallibility of his actions".[3] Completely imprisoned within his finite imagination he is without doubt or pity, the chosen instrument of "the Player who moved him for pawn"[4] to perform the 'crucifixion' of Christmas. Through his blind prejudice and conditioning he is able to define Christmas as rapist, negro, and to kill him. His enslavement within the present moment paradoxically frees him from awareness of guilt, but robs him of any imaginative perception and thus produces his dangerously limited vision.

---

1. This structural pattern of linear and cyclical time scales is discussed by Olga Vickery in her article (see p.22, note 4.).
2. Light in August, p.436.
3. Light in August, p.434.
4. Light in August, p.437.

The second time scale, encircling the first and including a degree of imaginative distancing which Grimm's and the townsfolk's totally lacks, is represented in Hightower. The continuity of the immediate action is broken by withdrawals into the imaginative retreat of Hightower's study. Faulkner introduces his home as a place remote from the life of the town:

> The house, the brown, unpainted and unobtrusive bungalow is small too and by bushing crape myrtle and syringa and Althea almost hidden save for that gap through which from the study window he watches the street. So hidden it is that the light from the corner street lamp scarcely touches it. 1

It is soon made clear that Byron and Hightower are not meeting in this study to rationalize experience, but to fight for greater imaginative awareness. Distanced from the pressure of the town and its mindless activity, Byron brings to Hightower the events of the week as they occur, and relates them with the impartiality of his unsophisticated understanding. This is Hightower's only link with the present, from which he is divorced by his imaginative imprisonment in the past. As the days pass Byron draws Hightower into closer involvement until he finally persuades him to act in the most positive way, helping Lena to give birth. His re-entry into 'reality' opens his imagaination to an understanding of the relevance of Christmas's life to his own. He dies[2] in the shocked realization of his guilt and complicity in the social condition. His vision of the halo full of faces

> not shaped with suffering, not shped with anything: not horror, pain, not even reproach. They are peaceful, as though they have escaped into an apotheosis; his own is among them. 3

---

1. Light in August, p.52.
2. Faulkner denies it in his university interviews: 'He didn't die. He had wrecked his life. He had failed his wife. He had failed himself, but there was one thing that he still had - which was the brave grandfather ...', Faulkner in the University, p.75.
3. Light in August, p.465.

culminates in his realization that Christmas has assumed the face of Percy Grimm:

> Then it seems to him that some ultimate damned flood within him breaks and rushes away. He seems to watch it, feeling himself losing contact with earth, lighter and lighter, emptying, floating. "I am dying", he thinks.[1]

The implication is clealy that Hightower has experienced, through Christmas, expiation and atonement.

Byron's understanding is less dramatic. His relationship with Hightower has benefited him by removing him from overinvolvement in the immediate action. Thus gaining perspective he is able to appreciate some significance and coherence in his experiences. He is unprejudiced, but his imaginative capacity is slight and his future limited to an appreciation of the permanence of rebirth and temporal continuity.

Lena's mode provides the third level of time in the structure of the novel. Her presence encircles the action; she is journeying in to Jefferson as the novel begins, journeying out as it ends, so that the impression is one of continuity, movement. Throughout the violent events of the week she remains detached, in bovine passivity, content with the physical completion of her journey and her reproductive process. Her reaction to the finally inescapable fact of Bunch's worthlessness is typical:

"'Now I got to get up again," she said, aloud."[2] Despite her importance in the perspective of the novel, and the dramatic strength with which Faulkner presents her, Lena is represented as a definitely limited personality. Like Byron she is limited only by her lack of imagination and not by prejudice or dogma. Her success lies in her fluid continuity which appears in sharp contrast to the rigid, suspended

---

1. Light in August, p.466.
2. Light in August, p.410.

doctrines of Calvinism and racialism. By keeping within her means of expression, and fulfilling herself as part of the reproductive cycle she achieves a sort of permanence but it is necessarily limited and has the inevitable, recurrent quality of the road she travels "like already measured thread being rewound on to a spool".[1]

These concentric, more closely focussing circles, Lena's, Hightower's, Grimm's, each owns its particular sense of time, but all are contained within time. To fulfil his role as predestined 'victim' Joe Christmas must initially and finally exist outside time, but to be meaningful his death must be accomplished in a certain time and a certain way, not finally by his voluntary surrender which would allow Jefferson the morally harmful gratification of displaying leniency and justice, but by provoking a violent act of murder from Percy Grimm, the personification of the town's morality. Faulkner is attempting to show that by forcing society to commit the final outrage, Christmas makes manifest its guilt and in some measure, relieves it. His black blood is symbolically shed, and his memory is granted a kind of resurrection. In this way Joe Christmas breaks out of the temporal circle

> (he is entering it again, the street which ran for thirty years. It had been a paved street, where going should be fast. It had made a circle and he is still inside of it. Though during the last seven days he has had no paved street, yet he has travelled further than in all the thirty years before. And yet he is still inside the circle.[2])

and achieves an imaginative permanence, establishing a fourth and linear dimension unmistakeably associated with the victory over time and death of the risen Christ.

---

1. Light in August, p.6.

2. Light in August, p.321.

This is what the book seems to propose. What it finally achieves has been a matter for much disagreement. The problem lies in the gap between the sort of realistic vitality found in the early scenes, and the indications of a highly abstracted and symbolic purport for the work as a whole. It is a disparity between structure and texture; between a compelling textural spontaneity, which brings scene and character to three-dimensional life, and the elaborate montage of symbolic events, characters and settings which insist that the reader shall detach himself from the realistic level in order to attend to, and interpret, an allegorical meaning.

The stress these opposing techniques impose upon the coherence of work is best illustrated by the central character, Joe Christmas. It is his double role which strains to breaking point Faulkner's capacity to maintain dramatic control. The attempt to produce a character at one level passive, unsocial and totally devoid of generous impulse, while at another motivated to draw upon himself the sins of society, its prejudice, its wrath, in order to offer an expiatory sacrifice, is more than Faulkner can convincingly achieve.

The symbolism demands that Christmas shall not flatter the Jeffersonians' sense of self-righteousness by accepting a moderate sentence for his crime, since to do so would, according to the structural purport, increase society's guilt and defeat Christmas's expiatory purpose. So Faulkner is forced into creating the dramatically improbable scene in which Christmas runs from the security of a lenient justice, towards a most uncertain source of aid in Hightower, and thus precipitates the violence and persecution which ends in his own martyrdom. There is an attempt to rationalise this in psychological terms. Faulkner offers us Gavin Stevens' belief that it was faith in Hightower's

ability to save him which gave Christmas

> not the courage so much as the passive patience to endure and recognize and accept the one opportunity which he had to break in the middle of that crowded square, manacled, and run. 1

This supposition is based upon nothing more substantial than Stevens' conjectural reconstruction of a possible scene between Christmas and his grandmother:

> And there, in the cell with him, I believe she told him about Hightower, that Hightower could save him, was going to save him.
>
> But of course I don't know what she told him I don t believe that any man could reconstruct that scene. I don t think that she knew herself, planned at all what she would say, because it had already been written and worded for her on the night when she bore his mother, and that was now so long ago that she had learned it beyond all forgetting and then forgot the words. Perhaps that's why he believed her at once, without question. I mean, because she did not worry about what to say, about plausibility or the possibility of incredulity on his part: that somewhere, some how, in the shape or presence of whatever of that old outcast minister was a sanctuary which would be inviolable not only to officers and mobs, but to the very irrevocable past; to whatever crimes had moulded and shaped him and left him at last high and dry in a barred cell with the shape of an incipient executioner everywhere he looked.
>
> And he believed her. 2

This raises the large question of Gavin Stevens' reliability as a witness. It is possible to show that elsewhere Faulkner makes a technically sophisticated use of the character,[3] but most critics see Stevens here as an authorial mouthpiece, and here the demands of the structure, opposing the psychological credibility of the characterization, do appear to press Faulkner into employing Stevens' specious conjecturing

---

1. Light in August, p.424.
2. Light in August, p.423-424.
3. See Mark Leaf, "William Faulkner, The Snopes Trilogy: The South Evolves", The 50's Fiction, Poetry, Drama, Florida, 1970, p.51-62.

as a substitute for authentic presentation of motive. Although in Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner represents his narrators' conjecture as vital action, here the isolated employment of the technique, involving a peripheral character, cannot claim to make a similar contribution.

Also demonstrated by this scene is the fact that Christmas's personal understanding is totally divorced from his symbolic role. Here his understanding of the situation, whether it is precisely as Gavin Stevens suggests or not, drives him to seek safety with Hightower, while in his sacrificial role Faulkner is showing him deliberately precipitating his own 'crucifixion' for the illumination of Hightower and Jefferson. In this case, as in others, the discrepancy between his individual understanding of his life, and what we see to be his implied role, provides either a confusing or else an ironic parallel between the joyful awareness of Christ's "I must be about my Father's business" (St. Luke, Chapter II, V.49) and Christmas's bewildered intimation of his destiny: "All this trouble", he thought. "All this damn trouble".[1]

Repeatedly we read of Joe's puzzled acceptance of his other consciousness. Faulkner's problem lies in his need to give Christmas some glimmerings of his symbolic stature in order to motivate his actions, but not enough to destroy his pathetic vulnerability. It is an ambitious attempt to create a character articulately conscious of his realistic nature, but just sufficiently conscious of his symbolic nature to be credibly moved to action by its promptings. As a helpless victim of society Joe Chsitmas is a successful realistic creation. But Faulkner's purpose demands an 'apotheosis' and to achieve that Joe Christmas must assume positive attributes and engage in essentially self-conscious action at the symbolic level. The difficulty is greatest at this point

---

1. Light in August, p.110.

of his capture, when the Christian parallel requires Christmas to make a willing sacrifice of himself while Faulkner's commitment to the representation of him as a persecuted hobo totally opposes the probability of self-sacrifice, demanding on the contrary that an instinct for self-preservation should be uppermost. The discontinuity between the roles is dramatically and psychologically disruptive. Christmas's new state of mind and consequent actions cannot be plausibly integrated into Faulkner's previously realistic treatment of the character:

> They all want me to be captured, and then when I come up ready to say Here I am Yes I would say Here I am I am tired I am tired of running of having to carry my life like it was a basket of eggs they all run away. Like there is a rule to catch me by, and to capture me that way would not be like the rule says. 1

Faulkner tries to deal with the problem by hinting at a hypnotic condition which permits a spiritual possession of Joe Christmas' psyche, so that his expressions of the promptings of his super-self take on a mesmerized tone:

> Something is going to happen to me. I am going to do something. 2

and

> That night a strange thing came into his mind. He lay ready for sleep, without sleeping, without seeming to need the sleep, as he would place his stomach acquiescent for food which it did not seem to desire or need. It was strange in the sense that he could discover neither derivation nor motivation nor explanation for it. He found he was trying to calculate the day of the week. It was as though now and at last he had an actual and urgent need to strike off the accomplished days toward some purpose, some definite day or act, without either falling short or overshooting. He entered the coma state which

---

1. Light in August, p.319.
2. Light in August, p.97.

> sleeping had now become with the need in his mind. When he waked in the dew grey of dawn, it was so crystallized that the need did not seem strange any more. 1

If Faulkner were presenting Joe Christmas as a schizophrenic divided between an irresponsible, anti-social, passive self and a religious maniac, there would necessarily be, for the reader, some element of ironic comedy, however modified by pity, in the violent discrepancy between the two roles. The re-enactment of Christian allegory as the cliche-ridden self-dramatization of a sick mind becomes a parody. Up to this point schizophrenia offers a satisfactory interpretation, placing Joe's otherwise implausible assumption of a sacrificial role into valid perspective. But if this is in the purported meaning then Faulkner must ensure that his reader is allowed a vantage point from which to appreciate it. In other words, before we can assume that Faulkner is offering us Joe Christmas' mental ambiguity in psychiatric terms, we must detect an authorial position enabling us, among other things, to appreciate that sense of comic irony which Joe's illness would inevitably produce. The authorial stance would indicate that the solemnity with which Joe endures his fate, and the clichés in which he enacts it, are symptoms of his lack of moral perspective.

But this is not the case. Christmas's tragic plight is seen with ponderous significance by the authorial commentator:

> "What day of the week is this? Thursday? Friday? What? What day? I am not going to hurt you." "It's Friday", the negro says. "O Lawd God, it's Friday." 2

---

1. Light in August, p.317.
2. Light in August, p.319.

> Looking, he can see the smoke low on the sky, beyond an imperceptible corner; he is entering it again, the street which ran for thirty years. It had been a paved street, where going should be fast. It had made a circle and he is till inside of it. Though during the last seven days he has had no paved street, yet he has travelled further than in all the thirty years before. And yet he is still inside the circle. "And yet I have been further in these seven days than in all the thirty years", he thinks. "But I have never got outside that circle. I have never broken out of the ring of what I have already done and cannot ever undo", he thinks quietly, sitting on the seat, with planted on the dashboard before him the shoes, the black shoes smelling of negro: that mark on his ankles the gauge definite and ineradicable of the black tide creeping up his legs, moving from his feet upwards as death moves. 1

Faulkner gives no indication of the ironic detachment necessary to an understanding of Joe's conflicting roles as the sort of ambiguity found in a psychologically morbid condition.

An alternative iron y may be considered. The discrepancy between the archetypal victim Faulkner proposes, whose life is in some measure to re-enact the Christian pattern of sacrifice, expiation and resurrection, and the bewildered, withdrawn orphan he produces may be ironic comment on the impossibility of heroic action in the modern world. Against this possibility, however, must be set the insistence of the structural and symbolic purport which point unmistakably towards an optimistic, not an ironic resolution, the structural progress of Christmas through the structure of time scales in the work, the encircling promise of Lena's continuing journey, the thinly veiled tableau of the Holy Family at the end of the book, the 'resurrection', Hightower's vision, even the title, all deny an ironic interpretation of the contradiction between Joe Christmas the tramp, and Joe Christmas the saviour, or between Light in August as realism, and Light in August as a

---

1. Light in August, p.321.

symbolic Christian romance.

Neither can it be felt that an ironic point of view is served by the obtrusive difficulties of attributing certain legendary actions to the central character. The laboriously executed pattern of Joe Christmas' last days raises nothing but awkward parallels - the last supper, the triumphal entry and so on - and the awkwardness appears rather to stem from the technical difficulties involved in fitting Christmas' realistic motives to his symbolic actions than to present any deliberate authorial comment on the ironic incompatability of modern man and legendary action. With such authorial comment absent, and technical difficulties overwhelmingly present, this seems an unavoidable deduction.

There is a gap between Faulkner's purported presentation of an imaginative permanence, a sort of aesthetic resurrection, and his actual presentation of a defeated man, which is nearer the truth of The Sound and The Fury. The over-ambitious framework of Light in August, larger than anything he can apparently maintain either technically or philosophically, forces Faulkner into pretensious devices[1] and structural expedients which deny him the plausible success of The Sound and The Fury.

In each of the novels I have discussed Faulkner uses a similar technique for the final climax. In Light in August it occurs at the murder of Christmas, in Soldier's Pay and The Sound and The Fury at the end of the novels, but in all three cases involves an emotional high point followed by a fall in tone and subject, from the preceding heights to mundane matters and a temperate tone. In Light in August the fall follows the passage already quoted describing Christmas' death:

---

1. Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing ever wonders. Knows remembers believes ... etc., Light in August, p.111.

> Again from the town, deadened a little by the walls, the scream of the siren mounted towards its unbelievable crescendo, passing out of the realm of hearing. 1

In The Sound and The Fury it is the triumph of Jason's inglorious sense of order over Benjy's monstrous, all-inclusive protest, and in Soldier's Pay it is the descent from the mystical unity of the negro spiritual to

> the mooned land inevitable with tomorrow and sweat, with sex and death and damnation; and they turned townward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes. 2

The fall in Light in August coincides far more closely with that in Soldier's Pay than with The Sound and The Fury, where defeat has been predicted throughout and only rephrased, not dramatically denied, by Dilsey's Christian endurance and Benjy's uncomprehending suffering. In Light in August, as I described in Soldier's Pay, Faulkner has over-reached himself in an attempt to establish an absolute, an immortality, and his failure robs the subsequent fall of sincerity and authority, reducing it to a rhetorical device. This same strain is felt throughout the work.

Faulkner once explained his title:

> in August, in Mississippi, there's a few days somewhere about the middle of the month when suddenly there's a foretaste of fall, its cool, there's a lambence, a luminous quality to the light, as though it came not from just today, but from back in the old, classic times. It reminded me of that time, of a luminosity older than our Christian civilization. 3

It seems his ambition to create this light in Jefferson, rather than content himself with his moving and sincere vision of 'twilight',[4] was his undoing.

---

1. Light in August, p.440.
2. Soldier's Pay, p.326.
3. Faulkner in the University, p.199.
4. The working title for The Sound and The Fury was Twilight. See Chapter 4, p.70.

CHAPTER VI

ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

In Light in August Faulkner employed two narrative approaches; the relaxed, extended foregrounding[1] of the chapter dealing with Lena and the boyhood of Joe Christmas, and the heavily allusive symbolically dominated technique of those parts concerning Joe's present sufferings and future apotheosis. I attempted to show that the co-existence of these two styles allows an assessment of the novel based on the consistency of purports deducible from each approach. Each point of view provided a vantage point from which to consider the coherence of the other to the total structure. In this way the authorial stance became readily accessible to critical evaluation.

This is not the case in Absalom, Absalom! Apart from a minimum of direct narration, which is necessary to establish the characters visually, the entire action of the novel is presented indirectly through the memories and imaginations of its fictional narrators. The reader is plunged directly into a sea of prejudice, conjecture and partial recollection, robbed of those spars of realism which proved so buoyant in Light in August. There appears to be no possibility here of deducing the authorial stance of Absalom, Absalom! by a simultaneous equation of contrasting techniques.

---

1. The technique of horizontal display, described as 'foregrounding' by Eric Auerbach in his discussion of Homer in Mimesis (p.11-13). Tony Tanner, in his book City of Words, uses the term differently to indicate "the use of language in such a way that it draws attention to itself - often by its originality ... One could say that some writing, like that of Jane Austen, seems to have a minimum of foreground, the language inviting no lingering at the surface but directing us instantly back to its referents. While other writing, Carlyle's for instance ... is heavily foregrounded and we are compelled to submit to the turbulence, or share the delight, of the writer's mind working itself out in visible verbal performance." p.20.

   In describing the techniques of John Hawkes he writes "Such effects, and in general the baroque - mannerist is perhaps better - foregrounding of his prose, are recognizably in the Faulknerian mode." p.202.

The effect of such consistency of medium is rigidly to determine the reader's response. Because of its illusory nature, offering the reader only second or third hand versions of the 'facts', Faulkner's chosen technique forces a necessary suspension of disbelief. Clearly the 'facts' themselves are relatively unimportant. They provide the impetus which moves the characters to construct their revealingly individual versions of the Sutpen story. The reader's attention is directed to a display of imaginative variations on a theme, about which it is neither permissible nor possible to question the 'truth'. Faulkner increases his reader's inability to maintain a critical distance by engaging him to the hilt in disentangling the narrator's sources, and the source of his sources, and the extent of his informant's knowledge, from the narrator's own personal prejudice.[1] It is a sizeable undertaking and one which has been attributed

---

1. Yes, sitting there in Grandfather's office trying to explain with that patient amazed recapitulation, not to Grandfather and not to himself because Grandfather said that his very calmness was indication that he had long since given up any hope of ever understanding it, but trying to explain to circumstance, to fate itself, the logical steps by which he had arrived at a result absolutely and forever incredible, repeating the clear and simple synopsis of his history (which he and Grandfather both now knew) as if he were trying to explain it to an intractable and unpredictable child: "You see, I had a design in my mind. Whether it was a good or a bad design is beside the point; the question is, Where did I make the mistake in it, what did I do or misdo in it, whom or what injure by it to the extent which this would indicate. I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family - incidentally, of course, a wife!" (Absalom, Absalom! p.263)

The extent of Mr. Compson's knowledge of Henry's reasons for killing Bon is another area provoking much critical discussion. A first reading of this

> It would be the fact of the ceremony, regardless of what kind, that Henry would balk at.
>
> (Absalom, Absalom! p.109)

implies ignorance of the whole story, but the first draft of Absalom, Absalom! has a cancelled passage which contradicts such authoritative tones and raises doubts:

(Footnote contd. on foot of p.100)

to Faulkner's desire, or need, for authorial anonymity.* However that may be, it is certain that at the end of a first reading one finds one has accepted with surprising confidence those few notions and actions which arise clearly from the intricate tangle of probability and possibility. It is doubtless more a result of the reader's clutching at prominent straws than of any obviously authorial emphasis. A more leisurely reading, relieved from some of the urgent demands of the technique, gives rise to doubts about the dramatic validity of those eagerly grasped straws and fails to provide any evidence to suggest that the first response was part of the authorial plan. Nevertheless, it is only in retrospect that we question the dramatic credibility of Mr. Coldfield's entombment, Henry's motives for fraticide, and particularly Clytie's reaction to the threatened exposure of the Sutpen dishonour and the interpretation Quentin puts on her behaviour. The first formative

---

* See Chapter II.

contd. from p.99

1. The whole thing just becomes the more inexplicable and confusing? Because if finding out about the octoroon mistress and child were sufficient grounds for Henry to kill Bon four years later, he could not have known about them that night when he repudiated his father and home. Then what could Sutpen have told him that would have caused him to repudiate the other and make himself a pauper in order to side with Bon? And then, why in the four years? Why, when Henry found out about the octoroon and so discovered his father's reason for forbidding the marriage; why, if he and then,why ...

   (M.S. p.49. Reprinted in Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom! Gerald Langford, Texas, 1971, p.130).

The effect of replacing this incoherent account by the final authoritative version is to delay the reader's penetration of the fact of miscegenation, temporarily convincing him of the validity of Mr. Compson's assessment.

response is a hypnotized engagement and acceptance which no later reading can entirely erase.

If we attempt to rationalize the force which, as Eric Mottram puts it "overwhelms the body with sensuous power"[1] we find the illogical associations and developments instanced by this confrontation between Clytie and Quentin. I shall analyse it closely to show the gap between the intellectual grasp and the emotive force.

We are invited to accept (and I suggest that at first reading we do accept, completely two remarkable events. Firstly that the vital illumination needed for the Sutpen story to fall into place is provided by a single expression on Clytie's face and directly communicated to Quentin who receives it in all its complexity. Secondly that Clytie's dramatic destruction of Sutpen's Hundred is a credible action consistent with her previous characterization. My contention is that in both cases Faulkner is producing noisy melodrama, raising his voice to a level at which the reader is browbeaten into an involvement in the atmosphere of Gothic frenzy and left incapable of independent criticism.

I will examine the way in which Quentin receives his inspiration about the Sutpen flaw first.

> And you couldn't stop her either and then you saw that Clytie's trouble wasn't anger nor even distrust; it was terror, fear. And she didn't tell you in so many words because she was still keeping that secret for the sake of the man who had been her father too as well as for the sake of the family which no longer existed, whose here-to-fore inviolate and rotten mausoleum she still guarded - didn't tell you in so many words anymore than she told you in so many words how she had been in the room that day when they brought Bon's body in and Judith took from his pocket the metal case she had given him with her picture init; she didn't tell you, it just came out of the terror and the fear - [2]

---

1. William Faulkner. Profiles in Literature, 1971, p.5.
2. Absalom, Absalom!, p.350.

This behaviour of Clytie's is offered as the trigger for the inspiration which enables Shreve and Quentin to reconstruct the crucial scenes between Sutpen and Henry and thus provide the key to the whole Sutpen story:

> "and she looked at you and you saw it was not rage but terror, and not negro terror because it was not about herself but was about whatever it was upstairs, that she had kept hidden up there for almost four years; and she didn't tell you in the actual words because even in the terror she kept the secret; nevertheless she told you, or at least, all of a sudden you knew-"
>
> Shreve ceased again. It was just as well since he had no listener. Perhaps he was aware of it. Then suddenly he had no talker either, though possibly he was not aware of this. Because now neither of them were there. They were both in Carolina and the time was 46 years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded still further, since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, 1

and the narrative merges into a first-hand account of the scene culminating in Sutpen's speech

> He must not marry her, Henry. His mother's father told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman. I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part negro. 2

Before this point Shreve and Quentin have only managed to produce incest as the motive for the murder and this did not explain Sutpen's desertion of his first wife, nor the flaw he regretted in his 'design'.[3]

It should be emphasized that these scenes are given as purely the work of Shreve's and Quentin's imaginations. The negro inheritance of Sutpen's first wife is an inspired guess, nothing more. The only 'actual' contact with Henry is contained in the brief circular dialogue enclosing the three-fold repetition "To die".[4]

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.351.
2. Absalom, Absalom! p.354-355.
3. Absalom, Absalom! p.263. "You see, I had a design in my mind."
4. Absalom, Absalom! p.373.

So that Clytie's inarticulate terror assumes the importance of communicating the final 'truth' to Quentin and Shreve. That is the immediately received sense. But, remembering that all the precipitated 'truth' is imaginative reconstruction and unproveable by any factual evidence, is it not possible to understand that Quentin has, in his overwrought condition, over-interpreted her behaviour, mistaking for her simple fear of Henry's capture this much more profound terror which he feels for the Sutpen flaw, a Conradian fear of "the dark, inscrutable continent"?[1] This interpretation reduces the exaggerated nature of Clytie's reaction (for what has she to be 'terrified' about? Henry would doubtless be dealt with leniently by a Southern jury and can we really attribute Quentin's subtle fears to Clytie who anyway was supported, according to Rosa, by "a brooding awareness and acceptance of the inexplicable unseen, inherited from an older and a purer race than mine".[2])

It also means we must place less reliance on the accuracy of Quentin's reconstruction and view it more as an expression of his own prejudices and fears. This would offer a provocative and informative approach, providing comment on the nature of truth, and on Quentin's unreliability, and avoiding over-extending Clytie's powers of communication and Quentin's of accurate perception. It would be consistent with the pervading emphasis on fiction rather than fact.

But we have no authority for this approach. On the contrary, insofar as Shreve is the less imaginative, more stable, witness, we have his word that

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.250.
2. Absalom, Absalom! pp138.

> she was still keeping that secret for the sake of the man who had been her father too as well as for the sake of the family which no longer existed. 1

and

> even in the terror she kept the secret[2]

which seems to support the sense that Clytie's terror is offered as objective fact to betray all we have now come to doubt it could betray. Certainly Shreve is relying on Quentin for his information. Perhaps we are to see him as diverted into Quentin's own self-delusion? It is a continuing ambiguity.

The second of these surprising events seems as melodramatically inevitable as the fall of the House of Usher. How else could such a tale end but in fire and destruction? This is the immediate impression, only secondarily contradicted by rational appraisal. Why should Clytie choose death rather than trial for Henry? His crime is known, he has nothing left to fear from public disgrace - in fact his name would be, if anything, cleared by an admission of his motives - fear of miscegenation would be received quite as sympathetically as themotive popularly attributed to him by the townsfolk.[3] What 'secret' is she keeping? The mere fact of Henry's presence is not one which could prompt her to such extreme action. If Faulkner is referring to Henry's fear of the negro then it is very hard to see how Clytie, herself part-negro, could have

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.350.

2. Absalom, Absalom! p.351.

3. 'Your grandfather didn't know, even though he did know more than the town, the countryside, knew, which was that there was a strange little boy living out there who had apparently emerged from the house for the first time at the age of about twelve years, whose presence was not even unaccountable to the town and county since they now believed they knew why Henry had shot Bon. They wondered only where and how Clytie and Judith had managed to keep him concealed all the time, believing now that it had been a widow who had buried Bon, even though she had no paper to show for it.'
Absalom, Absalom! p.200-201.

believed that Jefferson society would share her sense of shame about his weakness. Clytie has been seen as a protector of those unable to face the darkness of reality

> the inexplicable unseen,[5]
> the dark, inscrutable continent [1]

over which Sutpen walked so unheedingly, believing

> that darkness was something merely you saw, or could not see in.[2]

She has previously attempted to save Rosa from exposure to a truth which would destroy her dream world -

> my entire being seemed to run at blind full tilt into something monstrous and immobile, with a shocking impact too soon and too quick to be mere amazement and outrage at that black, arresting and untimorous hand on my white woman's flesh. [3]

Some kind of elemental knowledge

> (we seemed to glare at one another not as two faces but as the two abstract contradictions which we actually were, neither of our voices raised, as though we spoke to one another free of the limitations and restrictions of speech and hearing. [4])

could similarly have prompted her to destroy Henry in order to protect Rosa and Quentin now. But it is too late. They have already seen Henry. And she can have nothing to fear for the sensibilities of the townsfolk who could be relied upon to miss such profound experiences. Anyway the attribution of such mysticism to Clytie is Rosa's, and open to doubt. Her action lacks a satisfactory motive.

This is to suggest that in Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner has found this merely technical way of concealing his uncertain hand, of denying his readers that ready access to his purport which allowed the discovery

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.250.
2. Absalom, Absalom! p.251.
3. Absalom, Absalom! p.139.
4. Absalom, Absalom! p.138.
5. Absalom, Absalom! p.138.

of a damaging inconsistency in Light in August. Seen in this uncomplimentary light, as a probable technique of concealment, it is clearly unsatisfactory, though the view must be substantiated by discovery of the flaw around which the protective style developed. There are, of course, many other ways of describing the nature and effect of this disembodied projection of fictional imagination, many of them influenced by that obscurity which I take to be symptomatic of an authorial confusion claiming that Faulkner exhibits a masterful relativist technique. Other critics, as I have noted in an earlier chapter, pour their own impressions into neat moulds and serve them well set as authentic Faulkner shapes.

Eric Mottram offers another view, describing Faulkner's technique as

> a way of describing events and bodies in time by referring them to each other. As art it is amoral stasis. As morality it is deadly. As prophetic information it is a reactionary container assuming all events and bodies are there originally and finally as the types of all other events and bodies to come. 1

James Guetti, who understands Absalom,Absalom! as an admirably subtle illustration of linguistic tensions combining to make a profound statement about the nature of language and life, concludes his thesis by summarising approvingly very much what Mottram found to condemn:

> It may be that Faulkner's inability to dramatise this wisdom, (that the function of language can only be to create a hypothetical and insoluble potential) as he suggests, is indicative of a general and inevitable failure of the human mind to order and of his imaginative balance in dealing with this failure; it may also be that, like Rosa, he is not balanced at all, that he is simply unable to allow this wisdom to be tested. There is no way of knowing. 2

---

1. E. Mottram, 'Mississippi Faulkner's Glorious Mosaic of Impotence and Madness', Journal of American Studies, Vol.2, No.1, (April 1968), p.129.

2. J. Guetti, The Limits of Metaphor, Cornell, 1967, p.108.

But Guetti also differs from Mottram in discovering a definable linguistic purport in Absalom, Absalom!:

> This novel is the most thoroughgoing of those works of fiction that call into question the possibilities of language and meaning; as an immense display of fallen language and as a revelation of the nature of this language, it seems unparalleled. In it Faulkner insists that, as Sutpen's active force and Quentin's imaginative vitality arise from and are exhibited in their failure, the greatest success of language itself is to create a potential of meaning that must remain unrealised, a tension between order and disorder that cannot be resolved, but only repeated and repeated. 1

These two statements indicate how far Faulkner has abandoned his book to the personal interpretation of the critics. The interdependence of Guetti's definition of intention and assessment of achievement represents the degree to which they are both constructions of his own thinking, owing little to their supposed source.

This type of analysis is common to critics of Absalom, Absalom!. It is encouraged, even demanded by Faulkner's method. Alfred Kazin writes:

> It is precisely because his technical energy and what must be called a tonal suggestiveness are so profound, precisely because Faulkner's rhetoric is so portentous, that it has been possible to read every point of view into his work and prove them all. 2

Faulkner himself describes his method this way:

> No. Its Sutpen's story. But then, every time any character gets into a book, no matter how minor, he's actually telling his biography - thats all anyone ever does, he tells his own biography, talking about himself in a 1000 different terms, but himself. Quentin was still trying to get God to tell him why in Absalom, Absalom! as he was in The Sound and The Fury. 3

---

1. J. Guetti, The Limits of Metaphor, Cornell, 1967, p.108.

2. A. Kazin, On Native Grounds. An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature, 1943, p.458.

3. Faulkner in the University, p.275.

In attempting to reconcile these varied interpretations and criticisms of Absalom, Absalom! it may well be most profitable to consider Faulkner's own assessment of his book. His analogy of thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird is well known, but this description is more illuminating in its emphasis on quantity rather than quality, and on extended display rather than synthesis. Faulkner is stating that his intended form was that of a search, an inconclusive search, undertaken by means of continuous display of relevant material, which might be rearranged, reconsidered but which finally remains constant. Faulkner clearly shows that his interest lies in active techniques of the constructing imagination rather than in the goal towards which it moves. He appears to consider he has successfully displayed this process in Absalom, Absalom! As indeed he has. Undeniably Absalom, Absalom! is a brilliant representation of imaginative interaction. But at this point we can rejoin the argument I postponed in order to indicate the view of other critics with the intention of extending my exposition of Faulkner's method and the responses it produces. The question seems to be whether we leave the enquiry here and accept the book for what it ostensibly is, a virtuoso performance of relativism, or whether we pursue the direction in which a view of the technique as concealment must necessarily lead. That is, in a search for an underlying flaw. In the former case, any further enquiry going beyond the concentration on imaginative processes so admirably displayed, and asking about the relative value of each imagination, about the material with which they have worked, about the construction thet are attempting to produce, is irrelevant. In the latter case it is vital, for what we are seeking is an indication of the authorial stance[1] from which to

---

1. Authorial stance - not merely the stance of the implied narrator (detachment, prejudice, etc.) but as totally revealed by structural organization, characterization of implied author, choice and emphasis of theme - the basic manipulation.

deduce the purport of the novel and thus be in a position to evaluate the technique.[1] Michael Millgate acknowledges this necessity:

> The problem of point of view embraces, after all, some of the most crucial questions of literary technique: From whose angle and in whose voice is the story told? Where does authority lie in the novel, and whom, as readers, should we trust? Where does the author himself stand, and how do we <u>know</u> where he stands? We have to ask such questions, and answer them satisfactorily, before we can speak with any assurance of the moral patterning of a book or even, in some instances, of what it is, in the broadest sense, about.[2]

We must, therefore, ask about the narrators themselves, about their existence in the understanding not of each other, nor of themselves, but as creations of an author of whose purported intent we gradually become aware. We seek in the variety of versions offered by them for some trail of objective events, and if we fail to identify it we must ask whether irresolution and ambiguity is an integral part of the novel's purport, or whether it is perhaps a result of Faulkner's professed interest in mode of telling rather than in the tale.

If Faulkner fails to satisfy our demands we may conclude that the novel lacks an encompassing framework of authorial direction. Without such support it becomes an awesomely complicated machine, set in motion purely for observation of its working components, which have definition only in relation to each other and not to a final, productive end.

---

1. Wayne Booth, <u>The Rhetoric of Fiction</u>, Chicago, 1961, p.136.
   -if an author wishes to take me on a long quest for the truth and finally present it to me, I will feel the quest as a boring triviality unless he gives me unambiguous signs of what quest I am on and of the fact that I have found my goal when I get there; his private conviction that the question, the goal, and their importance are clear, or that clarity is unimportant, will not be sufficient. For his purposes, a direct authorial comment, destroying the illusion that the story is telling itself, may be what will serve his desired effect rather than kill it.

2. 'William Faulkner: The Problem of Point of View', in <u>Patterns of Commitment in American Literature</u>, ed. Marston La France, Toronto, 1967, p.181-192.

This is the pejorative conclusion to which Mottram comes, but it may perhaps be avoided by a closer examination of the authorial stance in an attempt to discover the purport of the book. If it raises no expectations of a more conclusive resolution then we are in no position to quarrel with Faulkner for failing to produce one.

In both The Sound and The Fury and Light in August it was possible to suggest the nature of an authorial position from the structural and thematic ordering of the novels. In discussing Absalom, Absalom! critics base their interpretations on the differing styles of the four narrators[1] or on the archetypal analogies.[2] But the first method leads towards the self-generating linguistic interpretation of Guetti, and the second to a reading of the mode of the novel as anything from irony to epic.

The greatest difficulty lies in sifting narrative 'fact' from narrative 'fiction'; in separating what Faulkner allows us to know directly from what is conjecture and imagination. For instance, we do not 'know' that Sutpen's mother-in-law was part negro. Quentin and Shreve come to assume it. Faulkner deliberately cancelled this passage in his first draft of the novel:

> "Yes", Quentin said, "Sitting in Grandfather's office that p.m., and ~~telling him how he never found out until after Bon was born that~~ the mother ~~that they~~ had told him was ~~a~~ Spaniard ~~had~~ some ~~nigger~~ blood." 3

So much of Absalom, Absalom! is offered as the most likely possibility in the supposed circumstances that the reader is left with very little reliable ground beneath his feet. When we read that Quentin and Shreve created between them "people who perhaps had never existed at all anywhere"[4]

---

1. see Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, Louisiana, 1964.
2. see J.H. Justus, 'The Epic Design of Absalom, Absalom!', Texas Studies in Literature, Vol.4 (1962) p.157-176.
3. Reprinted in Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom!, ed. by Gerald Langford, 1971, p.296.
4. Absalom, Absalom! p.303.

we may feel with some exasperation that it is well said. The further we move into the conjectural domains of the fictional narrators the more elusive becomes the authorial direction. It is only when we find ourselves in the presence of an authorial voice that we discover the objective material from which to construct an encompassing point of view and to deduce the purport of the novel.

The authorial voice is predictably most in evidence in the scenes between Shreve and Quentin. This is the latest point in time from which the rest of the action is viewed retrospectively. As such it is the superior vantage point and one naturally assumed by an omniscient author. But Faulkner complicates matters by interjecting his voice at other points in time too, particularly when Quentin is present, listening to his father, or to Rosa. So we cannot assume that the entire body of the novel, apart from the scenes in Quentin's study, is indirectly reported or remembered and therefore not immediately attributable to an implied author. Instead we must take into account a more complicated authorial presence which claims omniscience not only at the latest point in time, but also intrudes into the past, the reconstruction of which belongs properly to the fictional narrators. It is difficult to appreciate what advantage may be gained from the introduction of the voice at any other time than latest and therefore superior vantage point which Shreve and Quentin occupy. In fact, I shall show that it proves a definite disadvantage, causing a confusing identification with the voice of Quentin.

The basic form of Absalom, Absalom! depends upon the tension generated between Quentin and Shreve as they attempt, from their authoritative position in time and place, to wind one single skein from the tangle of truth and fiction which lies within their reach. The reader's essential

concern is with their degree of success in reconstructing a definitive version of the Sutpen story. In this view it becomes clear that the authorial voice has no place in the act of reconstruction but only in the representation of the actors. Its interjection then in those episodes recollected by Shreve and Quentin, is inappropriate. It is as though a producer, properly concerned with the way in which his actors communicate certain dramatic themes, should erratically abandon his comprehensive function to take on a temporary role in his own play.[1]

Nevertheless, this voice, however inconsistently produced, is our clearest evidence of the implied author whose point of view it is crucial to establish. I have already outlined what I take to be the informing structure of the novel. It is, basically, a simple design, involving the

---

1. But he owned land among them now, and some of them began to suspect what General Compson apparently knew: that the Spanish coin with which he had paid to have his patent recorded was the last one of any kind which he possessed. So they were certain now that he had departed to get more; there were several who even anticipated in believing (and even in saying aloud, now that he was not present) what Sutpen's future and then unborn sister-in-law was to tell Quentin almost eighty years later; that he had found some unique andpractical way of hiding loot and that he had returned to the cache to replenish his pockets.

   Absalom, Absalom! p.34-35.

   The voice here is neither Rosa's nor a projection of Quentin's imagination. It is the implied author characterised as a narrator conversant with the town's opinion of Sutpen in 1833. In other words, Faulkner is dramatizing his implied author in a way which gives authority to the opinions he is relating (for the narrator is also possessed of the latest vantage point) and thus contradicting his predominating method of presenting all opinion and recollection through the unreliable source of his fictional narrators, of laying his emphasis on the effect of their point of view on these facts and implying that the facts as absolutes do not exist.

creation of two antipathetic characters representing highly contradictory traditions, whose combined efforts towards a common goal promise to result in the establishment of something of value; a truth. It is in the manipulation of these two key figures that the authorial stance will reveal itself, directing the reader either to understand the outcome as success, or as failure. Therefore I shall concentrate, to the exclusion of the secondary fictional narrators whose visions I take to provide the texts with which Quentin and Shreve work, on the organization of the latters' mental activity. I am, of course, obliged to deal with each appearance of the authorial voice, which may, as I indicated earlier, prove contradictory. However, I hope to determine the existence of a point of view, albeit an unstable one, which will illuminate some of the critical confusion about Faulkner's intention and achievement in Absalom, Absalom!

The voice which begins the story fades imperceptibly into a projection of Quentin's consciousness and is hardly to be distinguished from Quentin. This is a futher difficulty in any attempt to isolate the implied author. Without any indication of when one voice ends and another begins it is impossible to know whether Faulkner is telling us that Miss Rosa really looked like a "crucified child"[1] or whether we are to understand it as Quentin's impression of her. This ambiguity is quickly exchanged for a clearly superior position allowing definitive criticism of Quentin:

> his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterwards, from the fever which had cured the disease. 2

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.8.

2. Absalom, Absalom! p.12.

This seems to deny any over-sympathetic involvement of the implied author with the character. It claims a critical distance enabling him to view quite dispassionately the causes and effects of Quentin's dilemma. It is not a unique stance. Much later this same voice describes Quentin as

> that gaunt tragic dramatic self-hypnotised youthful face like the tragedian in a college play, an academic Hamlet walked from some trancement of the curtains falling and blundering across the dusty stage from which the rest of the cast had departed last Commencement. 1

There are two scenes in which the hand of the implied author is directly evident, the gallery of the Compson house in Mississippi, and the study room in Harvard. They are manipulated to form recurring motifs throughout the novel, carrying with them numerous contrasting association between North and South. From the apparently uncommitted tone of the voice quoted above one could expect these scenes to be presented with their significance for Quentin clearly separated from their significance for the impartial author whom we must suppose to be independent of the effect of their seductiveness or uncongeniality. And so we read,in this expectation:

> It was a summer of wistaria. The twilight was full of it and of the smell of his father's cigar as they sat on the front gallery after supper until it would be time for Quentin to start, while in the deep shaggy lawn below the verandah the fireflies blew and drifted in soft random - the odour, the scent, which five months later Mr. Compson's letter would carry up from Mississippi and over the long iron New England snow and into Quentin's sitting-room at Harvard. 2

We accept that we are being offered a selective appreciation of these two backgrounds which is determined by the demands of a plot organized to exhibit the troubled consciousness of a southerner. In other words, we

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.174.

2. Absalom, Absalom! p.31.

assume that the author is aware of the seductive elegiac tone of his evocation of the south, and its clearly favourable comparison with the northern severity. We understand that he is presenting this prejudiced picture to indicate the way it seems to Quentin.

But it is a precarious position, demanding a sympathetic reader willing to give the implied author all the benefit of his previously demonstrated objectivity. In a later presentation the balance appears even more displaced in favour of the South, and reader's trust that the prejudice is Quentin's and not the author's becomes harder to maintain:

> There was snow on Shreve's overcoat sleeve, his ungloved blond square hand red and raw with cold, vanishing. Then on the table before Quentin, lying on the open text book beneath the lamp, the white oblong of envelope, the familiar blurred mechanical Jefferson Jan 10 1910 Miss and then, opened, the My dear son in his father's sloped fine hand out of that dead dusty summer where he had prepared for Harvard so that his father's hand could lie on a strange lamp-lit table in Cambridge; that dead summer twilight - the wistaria, the cigar smell, the fireflies - attenuated up from Mississippi and into this strange room, across the strange iron New England snow. 1

The insistence on death, dust and the past fails to rob the southern scene of its langorous attraction, and identification of the authorial voice with Quentin is confusingly close. Who sees "this strange iron New England snow"? Is it Quentin, or has the author abandoned his omniscience for partisan sympathies? Less obviously there is the subtle charm of the remembered softness of the Mississippi evening, set winningly against the harsh New England scene. Initially it appeared that this opposition was part of the author's intention to show Quentin struggling to free himself from the ghostly seduction of the one in the severe reality of the other. This would be seen to engender feelings of

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.173.

resentment and repulsion for the North in him, (and would allow the author to imply the historical precedent for such emotions, thus widening the significance of the story considerably), but it would in no way allow the author to engage his own sympathies. So how do we account for this most unattractive representation of Shreve? We were prepared to find him repulsive in Quentin's eyes, with his accumulated associations of historical defeat, painful self-knowledge and uncongenial way of life, and to direct us towards this understanding we were prepared to find the narrator offering a selection of characteristics which could be so interpreted. But here the narrator anticipates Quentin's partiality and himself offers the prejudiced contrast between Shreve's "blond square hand, red and raw with cold" and the "sloped fine hand" of Mr. Compson's letter.

This may be another instance of the authorial voice merging into Quentin's so that in fact we are being offered a deliberately partial view. But in the absence of indications to this effect the immediate response is to the most apparent sense, which is that this is the omniscient author's voice, and by the time the doubt arises the identification of author and partiality has become an irreversible part of the reader's response.

Our sense of the author's apparent feeling of revulsion for Shreve gathers momentum, communicating itself through images which convey a note of almost peevish intolerance:

> the smooth cupid-fleshed forearm, . . .
> Shreve's crossed pink bright-haired arms
> while he watched Quentin from behind the
> two opaque and lamp-glared moons of his
> spectacles. 1

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.217.

> resembling in his spectacles and nothing else...a baroque effigy created out of coloured cake dough by someone with a faintly nightmarish affinity for the perverse. 1
>
> In the overcoat buttoned awry over the bathrobe he looked huge and shapeless like a disheveled bear. 2

All this, together with disparaging mention of his habit of taking breathing exercises and his concern for suitably worn clothing implying an unbecoming personal anxiety persuades the reader of Shreve's essentially clownish character, intellectually and physically coarse especially when contrates with Quentin's aristocratic fragility and more "supple" blood.[3] A Caliban to Quentin's Ariel. The effect is cumulative and finally the reader loses sight of his first impression of Shreve as the goodnatured and able Horatio supporting Quentin's Hamlet and gives himself up to Quentin's prejudiced, antagonistic view since he no longer has authorial direction to do otherwise.

This abandonment of an impartial point of view undermines the entire balance of the novel's structure as I have outlined it. It prevents an objective view of Quentin's problem being maintained. It denies Shreve authority as a respected register (and throws his final, structurally vital speech into disrepute). And it thoroughly confuses the reader who, having been directed to understand the authorial voice as reasonably objective must now accept this very ambiguous stance.

This is not the last demand to be made on the reader's flexibility. The author reclaims his impartiality to reinvest Shreve with sufficient authority for him to be a credible intimate to Quentin's confidences. He broadens our field of vision in an extension of the original metaphor up to, and perhaps beyond, its capacity, directing us to view them equally

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.218.
2. Absalom, Absalom! p.293.
3. Absalom, Absalom! p.293, 294.

as twin factors in the continental womb brought together by a cosmic inevitability to effect some kind of birth:

> born half a continent apart yet joined, connected after a fashion in a sort of geographical transubstantiation by that Continental Trough, that River which runs not only through the physical land of which it is the geologic unbilical. 1

Again, viewed with complete equality

> the two of them back to back as though at the last ditch, saying No to Quentin's Mississippi shade. 2

Clearly it is necessary to maintain this equality in order to prepare for Shreve's essential participation in the final recreation of the Sutpen story. But its abrupt resumption, after the preceding partiality, leaves the reader entirely unsure of the reliability of the authorial voice or what response will be required of him next.

In fact he is required to deal with one of the author's most ambivalent images. Consistently he has been offered some sort of opposition between Quentin and Shreve however disproportionate. The reader has been invited to consider Shreve as a crude, healthy, commonsensical counterpart of Quentin's sensitive fragility. But he has not been invited to extend his sense of the partnership into areas of sexual relationships. Now we are given:

> Quentin and Shreve stared at one another - glared rather - their quiet regular breathing vaporising faintly and steadily in the now tomb-like air. There was something curious in the way they looked at one another, curious and quiet and profoundly intent, not at all as two young men might look at each other but almost as a youth and a very young girl might out of virginity itself - a sort of hushed and naked searching. 3

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.258, also see "joined after a fashion even before birth by that River which is the geologic umbilical of half the western world", Faulkner's Revision of Absalom,Absalom!, ed. by Gerald Langford, Texas, 1971, p.266.
2. Absalom,Absalom! p.280.
3. Absalom,Absalom! p.299.

The implication is that this act of imaginative recreation between the two youths is analogous with the birth of first love. The word 'curious' strikes an unexpected note. It demands attention. Perhaps it may be seen as the narrator's apology for the incongruity of his image which he intended simply to define the quality of the look that passed between Quentin and Shreve, or it may be an underlining, for the reader's benefit, of an unusual quality in their relationship. It is essential to distinguish the authorial position, for clearly it makes a great deal of difference to our total understanding of the association. But it is not easily decided. There is no precedent for this way of considering the youths; hitherto Shreve has been viewed intermittently with physical repulsion and with a degree of patronizing tolerance for his lack of intellectual finesse,[1] so we are quite unprepared for his promotion to the privileged position of Quentin's "lover". The image provokes an abundance of unheralded implications which the reader must attempt to assimilate; Shreve as the newly awakened youth (or is it Quentin?), the other as the trusting girl, the united recognition of their sexual potential. There is no indication from the author of how far we are to take these implications. The simile is tossed at the reader to assimilate as best he can and presumably to grasp from it a vague sense of Quentin's need for an imaginatively sturdy, masculine partner to fulfil his own feminine potential, all this to be reconciled with our previous instruction to view Shreve with, at best, tolerance, at worst, repulsion. It is a good example of precisely the sort of open ended image which encourages such diversity in the critical interpretation of Faulkner's work. Its ambiguity, and undirected suggestiveness provokes responses

---

1. Absalom,Absalom!p.361. "Gettysburg", Quentin said. "You can't understand it. You would have to be born there."

depending chiefly on the prejudice of the individual reader. The authorial stance can only be inferred from its apparent absence so that finally one must conclude that the analogy presented itself to Faulkner in much the same arbitrary manner as it presents itself to the reader and was included because it dramatised the quality of the mental intensity between Quentin and Shreve which was his concern at that time. The disproportion of its adjectival weight ('envious'... 'quiet'... 'hushed' ... 'naked' ... 'tomb-like') to the subject does not seem to have concerned Faulkner or rather the implied author. The superfluous implications are left to float in a hopefully provocative extension.

The variety and ambiguity of the tones adopted by the authorial voice prevent the reader from coming to rely upon it as a unified, stable point of view. Throughout the novel, whether we are hearing Miss Rosa's account of her brother-in-law, or Jason Compson's version of what Sutpen told the Colonel, our primary interest lies in the way in which Quentin and Shreve will ultimately inerpret it. Their activity is the cynosure towards which all the memories, and all our attention, is finally directed. The organizing force of the structural movement implies, and creates a demand for, an informing point of view which will control the presentation of Quentin and Shreve and instruct our understanding of their achievement. Were this a relativist novel no such need would have been created. But the clear structural and thematic patterning demands satisfaction. It is hard to see how the novel might be enriched by the deliberate withdrawal of authorial point of view at this crucial point. We must conclude that having stimulated the need, the author is under an obligation to fulfil it and that the discontinuity of his attitudes is unsatisfactory. He has adopted tones varying from complete detachment,

to so close an involvement that it has become impossible to distinguish his voice from that of his characters and has interjected these tones seemingly at random throughout his work.

There is other evidence of the implied author's activity which may prove less ambiguous. With every mention of the New England scene a kinetic equation has been made between growing chill, the passing night, and the progression of the young men's attempts to discover the final truth of the Sutpen legend. Each new presentation of the motif has intensified the last, lending an insistent sense of ominous progression towards

> the dead moment before dawn.[1]

Gradually the notion of death is introduced

> The room was indeed tomblike: a quality stale and static and moribund beyond any mere vivid and living cold. [2]

implying the goal towards which both the physical and mental activity is moving. This dismal scene is juxtaposed with a moonlight and magnolia (wistaria!) evocation of the South. I have already dealt with the author's attitudes to this motif from the point of view of his representation of Quentin. Now I want to emphasize the structural implications of the technique. Clearly a balance has been sought between the opposing modes of the nostalgically remembered South and the harshly immediate North. At times the author implies that we should feel this balance impartially:

> the two the four, ^the two facing one another in the tomblike room: Shreve, the Canadian, the child of blizzards and of cold in a bathrobe with an overcoat above it, the collar turned up about his ears; Quentin, the Southerner, the morose and delicate offspring of rain and steamy heat in the ^thin suitable clothing which he had brought from Mississippi, his overcoat

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.373.
2. Absalom, Absalom! p.345.

> (as thin and vain for what it was as the suit)
> lying on the floor where he had not even
> bothered to raise it. 1

But the cumulative effect of the polar technique fails to achieve this sort of balance. It seems Faulkner hoped to suggest the ironic paradox that progress, though vital, is repellent, while retrospection, though enervating, is attractive. Instead, the static, tranquillised quality of the Southern memories lend them charm quite unchallenged by the ominously advancing sense of the Northern reality, from which any redeeming notion of constructive energy is lacking.[2] So that finally our sympathies are confusingly engaged with Quentin and the South, as we reject Shreve and the North, and the structurally necessary resolution, given vain expression in Shreve's summing up,[3] has been denied by the authorial displacement of balance (lack of impartiality) long before Quentin's despairing cry of rejection.

This is to claim that the authorial voice has contradicted the structural purport by denying its apparent impartiality and balance with the intrusion of a tone which denigrates one of the truth-seekers and overtly sympathises with the other. Neither of these responses on the part of the implied author satisfies the reader's need to be guided towards

---

1. Absalom, Absalom! p.346.
2. This is, of course, a common criticism of Faulkner's work. He has frequently been accused of an inability to free himself from his idealized past in order to create an unpredictable future, or even a realistic present. Jean Paul Sartre gave the definitive statement of this; "The other characteristic of Faulkner's present is suspension, a kind of arrested motion in time" p.227. "Proust and Faulkner have simply decapitated (time), they have taken away its future, that is to say, the dimension of free choice and act" p.230. "As for Faulkner's heroes, they never foresee: the car takes them away as they look back", p.230. (in Three Decades).
3. Absalom, Absalom! p.378.

a comprehensive point of view. On the contrary, by reducing his perspective to these limited commitments, he is tacitly admitting his inability to maintain a comprehensive point of view, and the revelation of his vision of Quentin's and Shreve's common endeavour, predicted by the structural organization, and eagerly awaited by the reader, is stillborn. It is not an ironically conceived representation of the discrepancy between expectation and fulfilment. The apathetic attempts to breathe life into Shreve's prophetic summing up indicate the despair of a failed romantic, rather than the climatic volte face of an ironist. There is no invitation to see this in an ironic light. The qualities which prevent us from accepting Shreve as a reliable register are not the ones which we have been taught to regard with suspicion - his social inadequacy, his insensitivity. Here he is exhibiting the very qualities implied by the structural opposition of modernity and regression, an energetic foresight, a courage to face the future, and is clearly to be heard with respect. Yet his pompous prose, his naive philosophies and the uncharacteristically expansive nature of his speech and thought rob him of all authority. We are offered a 'true' version of the events over which Quentin and Shreve have been labouring so intensely. What we lack is not an outcome of their effort, but a viewpoint from which to appreciate their attitude to their achievement. It is precisely this which we have most consistently been invited to seek. The author's failure to provide us with a comprehensive point of view reduced the ending of the novel to the kind of anticlimax displayed in Soldier's Pay and Light in August where Faulkner's overworked optimism breaks down, suspending the half-finished vision on useless machinery. We are left undirected in our responses to Shreve (do we accept his simplistic

prophecy? It has been predicted all too clearly by the action. Or do we recognise the sententiousness of

> and so, in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings

which Faulkner extended in his revision, emphasizing the role of Jim Bond[1] as authorial comment and dismiss the pronouncement as more of Shreve's naivety?) and to Quentin (do we take his pathetic cry as an admission of personal failure, or do we view it in the wider context so frequently given us, and understand it as a univeral failure to bear reality? Significantly Faulkner erased the phrase "too quickly" from Quentin's last speech).[2] Such ambiguity is the result of the uncertainty of the authorial stance, which I take to be symptomatically exhibited in the image of the lovers. As in that case, so with this informing opposition, too much has been attempted. Variously the author has evoked Quentin and Shreve as representatives of time past and time present, as masculine and feminine principles, as Hamlet and Horatio, as the historical conflict between North and South, as progressiveness and reactionary stasis; the implications are endless. It is precisely what Alfred Kazin calls "tonal suggestiveness".[3] And the disparity between these universal, archetypal roles claimed for the characters, and their specific local realization, is the failure of a comprehensive, controlling vision. The inconsistency of the dramatically realised present of the characters and their symbolic pretensions could not be tolerated in an authorially controlled statement. Equally the displacement of balance between the author's overtly proposed opposition of Quentin and all he suggests, against Shreve and his associations could only occur when the omniscient stance was abandoned for a contradictorily partial point of view.

---

1. Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom!, ed. by Gerald Langford, Texas, 1971, p.362.
2. "I don't hate it", Quentin said, quickly, ~~too quickly~~ (at once, immediately). Ibid. p.362.
3. A.Kazin, On Native Grounds, An Interpretation of Modern Prose Literature, 1943, p.458.

The root of the problem lies in the inconsistency of the authorial point of view with the structurally indicated purport. By its rather clear-cut dualism, a dialectic which appears encompassed by a direction towards synthesis, the structure raises expectation of resolution. The author's failure to maintain a necessary objectivity in order to satisfy this expectation is not consistent. In part his tone is appropriate for such a resolution, in others it is entirely contradictory. Such ambiguity leads one to suppose a basic confusion in Faulkner's thinking which disabled him from fulfilling the structural purport in the tone of his implied author, or in the impartial treatment of his thematically proposed opposition. We saw much the same problem in Soldier's Pay where the structural symmetry was upset by the textural emphasis, and in Light in August where the symbolic structure was inconsistent with the actual achievement.

In Absalom, Absalom! yet again Faulkner has proposed a scheme beyond his emotional limits. He is no more capable now of asserting the triumph of Quentin Compson over his past, than he was when he wrote The Sound and The Fury. In Absalom, Absalom! he betrays, by the inconsistency of his authorial point of view, his difficulty in achieving the absolutes his structural and thematic patterns demand. The purport we sought from an examination of the authorial stance is revealed in its confusion to be a tonal contradiction of the structural organization. The superfluous suggestiveness of image and adjective betray Faulkner's urgent necessity to retrieve his comprehensive position in order to create his universal absolutes.

This stylistic frenzy is described by Tony Tanner as a characteristic quality in American writing, being the writer's attempt to remain free

from the pressure to conform and to create his own "City of Words". His thesis adds a dimension to mine in proposing that Faulkner's technical 'turbulence is more than an expression of temperamental inadequacy; it is an attempt to create an autonomous world

> Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi.
> William Faulkner, sole owner and proprietor. 1

in which the writer may dwell unrestrained by literary preconceptions. As he readily admits, this problem is not unique to American writers

> my title could obviously apply to any writer, for they all live in the City of Lex. I would seek to justify invoking it with particular reference to American writers by suggesting that they reveal an unusual degree of awareness of this City of Words. 2

It seems to me that Faulkner fits very well indeed into the first part of this thesis:

> It is my contention that many recent American writers are unusually aware of this quite fundamental and inescapable paradox: that to exist, a book a vision, a system, like a person, has to have an outline - there can be no identity without contour. But contours signify arrest, they involve restraint and the acceptance of limits. The main villain, Urizen, in Blake's myth is named after horizon, that is to say limit or boundary, and I think many American writers share Blake's feeling. For restraint means the risk of rigidity, and rigidity, so the feeling goes, is the beginning of rigor mortis. Between the non-identity of pure fluidity and the fixity involved in all definitions - in words or in life - the American writer moves, and knows he moves. 3

Repeatedly Faulkner dramatizes the opposition of rigidity and fluidity. As I Lay Dying is probably his most polished exposition, in which the limited, stubborn rigidity of Anse Bunden is seen to triumph in a way ironically impossible for the all-seeing Darl who is finally contained by

---

1. See Faulkner's map prefacing Chatto and Windus edition of Absalom, Absalom!
2. T. Tanner, City of Words. American Fiction, 1950-1970, 1971, p.21.
3. Ibid. p. 17-18.

social definition and labelled "insane". Here, as in his other work, Faulkner recognises the ironic paradox of the villain Urizen.

It is the second proposition, that of the writer's consciousness of his dilemma and attempt to move beyond it into an

> environment of freedom made possible by language 1

that significantly fails to apply to Faulkner. For Faulkner's foregrounding - to use the term in Tanner's sense as

> a way of demonstrating one's resistance to, and liberation from, other people's notions as to how one should use language to organize reality 2

is less a positive bid for freedom, than a retreat into a world ruled by obscurity, paradox, oxymoron, definition by negation and amorphous symbolism; a world motivated by a "quest for failure".

This has a great deal to do with Tanner's theory,

> That which defines you at the same time confines you. 3

In Faulkner's terms success is conclusive but failure openended, reserving the chance to try again. His recognition of the irony, his stylistic response, are in the main stream of this tradition. It is in his "World Elsewhere" that Faulkner deflects, one might say retracts, for in Absalom, Absalom! his world lacks the energy to confront the irony it has proposed, to commit itself to fulfilling the expectation of active direction it has raised, to 'risk' success. His response to the dilemma is not 'a coming to terms', nor even a definition, but an unhappy conflict

---

1. T. Tanner, City of Words. American Fiction 1950-1970, 1971, p.21.
2. Ibid. p.20-21.
3. Ibid. p.17.

between a stylistic show of independence and an ideological, reactionary defeatism. Tony Tanner's analysis of the characteristic response in American literature serves to chart the level and quality of Faulkner's variance from the shared approach, and helps to define the fundamental inadequacy in his work.

CHAPTER VII

A FABLE

Alan Tate, writes of A Fable, "(it) seems to me a mediocre calamity. No matter: there is no common law of literature which compels a writer to get better year after year. And it is not important that A Fable, The Town, and The Reivers show little of Faulkner's genius."[1]

Robert Penn Warren writes differently: "a colossal failure and a colossal bore". "A Fable is abstractly conceived; it is an idea deductively worked out - and, at critical moments, blurred out. By the very absoluteness of the failure, however, A Fable indicates, not so much the limit of, as the nature of Faulkner's success."[2]

Quite clearly, for the purpose of my argument, I must disprove Alan Tate's contention that a writer's work may be studied piece-meal and that the failure of some books should in no way be allowed to reflect upon the success of others. He appears to ignore the involuntary spontaneous critical process which will inevitably produce associations, comparisons and syntheses, and thus colour one experience, literary or otherwise, with another. More than one reader, ploughing laboriously through the turgid prose of A Fable must have been reminded, for the first time critically, of these lines from The Sound and The Fury:

> Two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and
> out of the myriad corruscations of immolation
> and abnegation and time.3

Norman Podhoretz reassessed Faulkner's work in this way, concluding, "the early works are masterpieces. Nevertheless they struck me as the consummation of a minor, and not, as I once thought, a major talent. It now seems obvious that he really is what he always claims to be: a simple man."[4]

---

1. 'Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth', Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol.44 (1968), p.418-427.
2. Introduction to Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.17.
3. The Sound and The Fury, p.295.
4. Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing, 1966, p.13.

Robert Penn Warren's claim that A Fable's failure has something to say about Faulkner's success indicates the area I intend to develop in this last chapter of my thesis. Warren explains his comment in terms of the intuitive nature of Faulkner's best work, as opposed to the conscious allegorizing of A Fable. This is certainly one way in which an illuminating comparison may be made. There are, I think, others.

In Faulkner's 1952 review of Hemingway's novel he professes admiration for Hemingway's discovery of God and significantly ignores the note of strained optimism so foreign to Hemingway's best work. "This time, he (Hemingway) discovered God, a Creator. Until now his men and women had made themselves, shaped themselves out of their own clay; their victories and defeats were at the hands of each other, just to prove to themselves or one another how tough they could be. But this time, he wrote about pity; about something somewhere that made them all; the old man who had to catch the fish and then lose it, the fish that had to be caught and then lost, the sharks which had to rob the old man of his fish; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all. Its all right."[1] The appropriateness of these remarks to Faulkner's A Fable and his earlier works is quite striking. The new note of dogmatism ("had to catch the fish", "had to rob the old man") which Faulkner approves in Hemingway, might refer directly to the rigid determinism of A Fable as opposed to earlier ambivalent, fluid structures.

V.S. Pritchett in his review of the novel[2] remarks on a similar development in the later work of Tolstoy. "The moral Faulkner of A Fable represents the sort of accomplished retreat once notices, say in Tolstoy's

---

1. First printed in Shenandoah in Autumn 1952. Quoted by M.E. Bradford in "On the Importance of Discovering God: Faulkner and Hemingway's The Old Man and The Sea", Mississippi Quarterly, Vol.20 (1967), p.158-162.

2. Partisan Review, Vol.21, No.5 (1954), p.557-561.

Resurrection". The tendency of certain writers to produce religious affirmations in their later work after maintaining an energetic humanitarianism in their most successful periods could prove a subject for interesting research. However, I am here confining my discussion to Faulkner's affinity with such writers. I wish simply to illustrate the way in which his later work demonstrates the failure of energies which had sustained and restrained his Sisyphean vision of life, by revealing in stylistic, intellectual and structural terms, the desperate hope of a man clutching at the straw of Christianity. Norman Podhoretz puts it this way: "A Fable, then, is one of those disembodied, religious affirmations that we have learned to regard as the typical literary symptom of a failure of nerve in difficult times."[1] As Robert Penn Warren would see it A Fable draws attention to the lack of insistence on rigidifying Christian allegory in Faulkner's more successful work and points to an inverse relationship between success and an reliance on a Christian framework.

In a sense A Fable is the least 'fictional' of Faulkner's novels. It presents Faulkner's public face; the face he showed to the Stockholm audience and the university students during his seminars. It is quite clearly determined by external considerations, by what is expected of him, and equally clearly it is contradicted by the Faulkner of The Sound and The Fury. A Fable resounds with the pulpit intonations of

---

1. Doings and Undoings. The 50's and After in American Writing, p.22.

faith[1] and in this book, as in the interviews, he seems to make himself uniquely accessible, as if trying to confirm his commitment by an act of public witness. He made his affirmative intention quite clear during the class conferences in Virginia:

> What I was writing about was the trilogy of man's conscience represented by the young British Pilot Officer, the Runner and the Quartermaster General. The one that said, This is dreadful, terrible, and I won't face it even at the cost of my life - that was the British aviator. The old General who said, This is terrible but we can bear it. The third one, the battalion Runner who said, This is dreadful, I won't stand it, I'll do something about it. The Old General was Satan, who had been cast out of heaven, and because God Himself feared him. 2

Briefly, A Fable tells the story of an incident during the First World War in which a company of French soldiers refused to make an ordered attack. Faulkner presents the action as the triumphant conclusion of his hero's vocation to release mankind from its slavish subservience to

---

1. For example, this stylized exchange between the old general and the corporal - the "Temptation" scene: "There are still that ten", the corporal said. "Then take the world", the old general said. "I will acknowledge you as my son; together we will close the window on this aberration and lock it forever. Then I will open another for you on a world such as caesar nor sultan nor khan ever saw, Tiberius nor Kubla nor all the emperors of the East ever dreamed of - not Rome and Baiae... A fate, a destiny in it; mine and yours, one and inextricable. Power, matchless and immeasurable." (A Fable, p.312-313)

   of. ... I believe in God. Sometimes Christianity gets pretty debased, but I do believe in God, yes, I believe that man has a soul that aspires towards what we call God, what we mean by God. (Faulkner at Nagano, p.23-24)

   To me a proof of God is in the firmament, the stars. To me, a proof of man's immortality - that his conception that there could be a God, that the idea of a God is valuable, is in the fact that he writes the books and composes the music and paints the pictures. They are the firmament of mankind. They are the proof that if there is a God and he wants us to be something that proves to him that mankind exists, that would be proof. (Faulkner at Nagano, p.29).

2. Faulkner in The University, p.62.

officialdom, which is seen as closely analogous to the expiatory life of Christ. The situation is also associated with a father-son relationship, the corporal being the unacknowledged son of the General. Although the corporal is finally put to death Faulkner shows that his spirit of resistance will be perpetuated in the defiance of the runner, a character serving as a kind of everyman. The opposition against which these two pit their individual strength is represented by the generals, marshals and chiefs of staff whose autocratic interest in the perpetuation of war is shown to be rooted in a fear of democratic liberty.

While he was in Nagano Faulkner claimed that the germinal idea of A Fable concerned the Unknown Soldier: "It came, incidentally, out of a speculation which a lot of people besides me have probably wondered at: Who might have been in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier?".[1] In his book The Unknown Soldier is revealed to be the Christ-like corporal, who, by a series of pure coincidences is chosen to fill the tomb in the Arc de Triomphe. The closing scenes describe the funeral procession of the old general as it passes beneath the Arc and the Runner makes his final gesture of independence, throwing his Croix de Guerre towards the cortege.

This is the main plot. Innumerable flashbacks and digressions provide subsidiary action: the affair of the three-legged racehorse; the organization of the de Tout le Monde, the childhood of the corporal and more. But essentially it is a simple plot; opinions to the contrary arise from the complication of stylistic and symbolic additions.

I have identified three ways in which A Fable refers back provocatively to Faulkner's other novels; in its obtrusive allegory, in its commitment to Christian symbolism and therefore to a rigid, linear

---

1. Faulkner at Nagano, p.159.

structure, and in the transparency of this authorial stance ostensibly unclouded by the ambiguities and irresolutions which characterize Faulkner's other novels. It will, as I shall describe later, be possible to qualify all these apparent commitments and demonstrate how the tension of this "self generated paroxysm"[1] conceals contradictory positions. I shall also consider the question of ironic paradox, seemingly begged by the title and clearly raised by the underlying sense of pessimism and irresolution which recurs in all Faulkner's work, but which in this book is almost drowned by the stridency of the purported metaphor.

First I intend to examine some more specific techniques, employed in varying degrees in earlier books, but abused in A Fable in a way which reflects back upon the earlier usage with retroactive warning. There are four of these characteristic literary practices which illustrate how the effect of their indulgence in A Fable is prefigured throughout the Faulkner canon. The use of Christian symbolism, making demands upon structure, character and plot is one such practice, common to A Fable, The Sound and The Fury, Light in August, As I Lay Dying, Go Down Moses, and some of the short stories. In The Sound and The Fury it is restricted to brief ironic strokes such as the Compsons' discovery of the empty room on Sunday morning or Benjy's age, and the coincidence of the events of the narrative with the Easter anniversary is not insistent. There is no attempt to force the full weight of Christian precedent upon plot or characters. The story exists in its own right and the Easter analogy provides an ironic 'aside'. In Light in August, as I have shown, Faulkner commited himself to a 'resurrection' he was unable to produce,

---

1. Norman Podhoretz, 'William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith', in Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.243-250.

but he achieved a fairly powerful 'crucifixion' by establishing the character of Joe Christmas both naturalistically and as a representative of persecuted man. In A Fable the symbolism dominates the event. The fictive reality of the corporal and his family is submerged beneath a welter of biblical parallels.[1] The (20 characterizations are subservient to their symbolic precedents; Judas, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Martha, the ambiguous Satan who is also father of Christ, and those who have no specific New Testament counterpart assume Morality roles such as Everyman (the runner), Conscience (The Quartermaster General), Youth (Levine). Europe, 1918, is no more than a backcloth on which these silhouettes are pinned. "(Faulkner) cannot realise", says Podhoretz, "that today as perhaps never before the question of man - and - his - destiny is inseparable from the hard, dull, wearisome details of E.D.C.'s and N.A.T.O.'s and Austrian Peace Treaties."[2]

In discussing Light in August I described the difficulty Faulkner made for himself in attempting to present a character moving in the classic pattern towards self-sacrifice while intellectually unaware of such a pattern, and emotionally antipathetic to it. In A Fable the symbolic pattern dominates the scene and the characters heavily acknowledge its presence:

> "Him?" the runner said. "So it's just one now?"
> "Wasn't it just one before?" the old porter said.
> "Wasn't one enough then to tell us the same thing
> all them two thousand years ago:" 3

---

1. Born in a stable p.262. Wedding at Canaan p.254. ? Reincarnation p.252. Temptation scene p.312. Triumphal Entry p.20. Betrayal p.297. Last Supper p.301. Denial p.304. Crucifixion p.345. The empty tomb p.360. Resurrection p.380. The corporal's age p.271. The thirty pieces of silver p.385. The descent into hell p.367, etc.

2. N. Podhoretz, Doings and Undoings. The 50's and After in American Writing, 1965, p.249.

3. A Fable, p.64.

> She brought the two bowls of soup; the man with the feather did not even wait for her to set his down, snatching and wolfing it, glaring across the bowl with his dead intolerant outrageous eyes while Marya stooped about their feet and beneath and around the table, gathering up the scattered coins. "There are only twenty-nine", she said. "There should be one more". Still holding the tilted bowl to his face, the man with the feather jerked another coin from his pocket and banged it on to the table." 1

In Light in August, and in Soldier's Pay and The Sound and The Fury a case could be made, with varying degrees of success, for an effect of irony in the discrepancy between the Christian archetype and the contemporary situation. In A Fable the dramatization of twentieth century Europe is so neglected that there virtually is no discrepancy between symbol and subject; the Old General is more Satan than soldier,[2] the corporal is more Christ than man, and the plot certainly owes more to its biblical source than to any events of the first world war. This, in a novel set in a modern context, proves unsatisfactory. The reader can only be irritated by the sketchy and unbelievable group of Europeans upon which Faulkner is casting such archetypal roles. This reader, startled by the elegance of the peasant girl,[3] the simplistic

---

1. A Fable, p.384-385.

2. Faulkner was questioned about the conflicting allegorial role of the General who appears to be both Satan and the father of Christ. He appeared to find no irony or difficulty in the paradox and answered readily. "That was part of Satan's fearsomeness, that he could usurp the legend of God. That was what made him so fearsome and powerful that he could usurp the legend of God and then discard him. Thats why God feared him." (Faulkner in the University, p.63).

3. She describes her journey to the General: "The doom might have been his, but the curse to hurry it, consummate it, at least was mine; I was the one now wearing the secret talisman, token, not to remember, cherish; no tender memento of devoted troth nor plighted desertion either: but lying instead against my flesh beneath my dress like a brand a fever and coal a goad driving me ... Yes, the doom was his but at least I was its handmaiden: to bring you this. I must bring with me into your orbit the very object which would constitute and make imperative that need Worse." (A Fable, p.263).

theorizing,[1] the crude transposition of the biblical events,[2] looks in vain for a redeemingly ironic point of view which will perhaps have something to say about man's irrepressible urge to mythologize himself. It seems that only wry humour could save the day amongst this pompous posturing. But we are far from the comic realism of Yoknapatawpha now, and the devastating common sense of Jason Compson, which cut through Quentin's poses and Benjy's pathos and Dilsey's saintliness with its bitter debunking, is entirely lacking. There is no furniture dealer[3] to rephrase events with casual humour.

---

1. The corps commander reassures the divisional commander that he has no cause for shame since he is simply a puppet in the war machine; "The boche doesn't want to destroy us, any more than we would want, could afford, to destroy him. Can't you understand: either of us, without the other, couldn't exist?" A Fable p.30 and similarly, the group commander instructing an inferior; "We can permit even our own rank and file to let us down on occasion; that's one of the prerequisites of their doom and fate as rank and file forever. They may even stop the wars, as they have done before and will again; ours merely to guard them from the knowledge that it was actually they who accomplished that act. Let the whole vast moil and seethe of man confederate in stopping wars if they wish, so long as we can prevent them learning that they have done so." A Fable, p.53.

2. "now it was Christmas, the eve before; and now I don't remember if we were driven from the inn itself or just turned away or maybe perhaps it was our mother still who would cut even that cord too with man. I remember only the straw, the dark stable and the cold, ..." A Fable, p.262.

3. The last narrator in Light in August.

This novel grows dropsical with self-importance.

It is possible that a consistently allegoric approach would have produced a more successful book. As it stands the confused meaning of some of the symbolism, notably the role of the old general, and the corporal's final destiny as the unknown soldier,[1] and the disruptive addition of sections of realism weaken its claim to allegory without strengthening its claim to comprehensiveness. The tale of the three-legged race-horse has little or nothing to do with the style or ideology of the bulk of the novel; though critics have made brave attempts to justify its inclusion.[2] The total effect is neither allegory, nor realism, but an unhappy mixture of both, leaving the reader unsure whether to expect moral rhetoric from a peasant girl, or vernacular accents from a private, or vice versa. In this way A Fable transparently defines the imperfect fusion of symbolic and realistic techniques which flaws much of Faulkner's other work.

The plotting and structure of Faulkner's books is rarely conventional, and here too A Fable provides illumination. During its composition Faulkner drew a frieze around his study walls plotting the days the action covers, and the events of each day. It appears to have been a unique exercise, and oddly inconsistent with his normally private way of working. I would like, without pressing the point too far, to suggest a

---

1. Taken by some critics to be an irony, defla ting Christian hopes, by others to be an indication of the omnipresence of Christ. See I. Malin, William Faulkner: An Interpretation, and R.A. King "Everyman's Warefare: A Study of Faulkner's Fable", MFS. Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn '56) p.132-138.

2. "The story is a metaphor of the death of the American Dream". It is a three-legged horse, unbeatable. It represents an image of the Trinity or of God. It is also presumably an Ideal, carried to America, accompanied by the idealist groom. But because of greed, of commerce, the groom must kill the horse to preserve its integrity... J. Gold, "Delusion and Redemption in Faulkner's A Fable". MFS Vol.7 (1961), ii, p.145-156.

connection between this display, and the lack of authorial reserve displayed in the book itself. The structure of A Fable refers back most directly to The Sound and The Fury which is also organized in sections dated to coincide with the Easter festival. But its juxtaposition of episodes links it with books like Soldier's Pay, Wild Palms and As I Lay Dying, and the inclusion of Harry's story, despite the attempt at integration, is in the style of Go Down Moses where independent tales are grouped to form an interacting whole. The one characteristic structural technique significantly absent from A Fable is the use of fictional narrators; a usage which I have suggested allowed Faulkner elsewhere to achieve what Penn Warren calls "The monk-like, taciturn and withdrawn quality", which, together with "the impersonality of his fiction ... seem, paradoxically to attest to a deep, secret involvement, to the possibility of a revelation which the reader might wrest from the Delphic darkness."[1]

The inappropriateness of this comment to the blinding clarity of A Fable's revelation, together with the lack of fictional narrators, may well be considered indirect evidence for my contention that Faulkner uses the narrator to conceal his hand. In other ways, however, the book is directly illustrative of earlier structural techniques, showing how, for example, The Sound and The Fury used its chronological divisions at the realistic level for a delicate control as the fluid movement of memory, whereas A Fable laboriously insists on a chronology which seems to have little value apart from involving the reader in the let-me-see-was-it - Tuesday - or - Wednesday? type of pointless enquiry. At the symbolic level Faulkner integrates the Easter festival into The Sound and The Fury so organically that the symbolic implications (the fact that

---

1. Introduction to Faulkner, ed. Warren, p.12-13.

Benjy's section is dated Good Friday for example) become light, almost optional, ironies. A Fable, on the other hand, has no dramatic roots in the Easter chronology but simply a symbolic insistence. The "Friday" parallel is blatantly clear, in fact it hardly is a parallel, but merely a crude retelling of the crucifixion.[1] The contemporary cast is entirely irrelevant. The same criticism applies to the section entitled "Sunday", and the "empty tomb",[2] bringing to mind that Easter Sunday in Jefferson when Jason discovered Quentin's flight. In that latter scene Faulkner preserved his impassive anonymity and the resulting ambiguity of the symbolism prevented it being pushed too far. In A Fable the writing is on the wall, literally and figuratively, and there is no ambiguity to soften the stridency of the implication until "Tomorrow", Faulkner's unsubtle title for his final chapter, where some critics feel that the reader is left to decide for himself whether or not the corporal's "resurrection" as the Unknown Soldier is a sign of triumph or failure.[3]

The difference between Faulkner's structural techniques in A Fable and his earlier books is thus seen to be one of degree rather than kind.

---

1. A Fable, p.345.

2. A Fable, p.359.

3. I. Malin, William Faulkner: An Interpretation, Faulkner ironically suggests in the novel that rebellion against authority in our society is not only defeated, it is made to appear as rigidity. I believe this is the meaning of the end. The corpse of This Corporal who fought for peace is buried, by chance occurrence, to symbolise the Unknown Soldier. p.11.

   R. King, 'Everyman's Warfare: A Study of Faulkner's Fable', M.F.S. Vol.2, No.3 (Autumn 1956), p.132-138.
   Yet there remains the tantalizing, inescapable possibility that the body in the tomb is not the Corporal's. And if it is not? To this question Faulkner, the artist, offers no dogmatic answer.

In this book techniques, once used with more restraint, are employed without regard for the effect upon characterization or credibility. The result is that instead of structural and textural effects blending into one organic, formal whole, each retains autonomous existence, producing an unwanted contradiction of the kind found in Light in August and Soldier's Pay.

The characteristically extended sentence structure is another illustration of this point, also showing how A Fable intensifies and clarifies the reason for earlier misgivings. Few critics have failed to remark this Faulknerian hall-mark, and various ways have been found to justify its complexities.[1] Experiencing Faulkner's prose has been aptly likened to under-water swimming, taking a deep breath and plunging under, surfacing rarely for gasps of clarification. More frequently it is seen as "stylistic expression of Bergsonian "becoming", a grammatical imitation of the fluidity of life, or, in its oxymoronic construction, indicative of a basic irresolution, a psychological need to avoid commitment. Allan Tate, himself a Southerner, simply sees it as a faithful recreation of Southern rhetoric, an integral part of Yoknapatawpha.[2]

---

1. See Florence Leaver, 'Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power', South Atlantic Quarterly (1958), reprinted in Three Decades, p.208. "Perhaps it is the distance between the deed and the word, the idea without form; the form which it must take, however imperfectly, which accounts for Faulkner's intensity, his attempt to make words do more than they can do - to find logos for mythos"

   and W. Slatoff who, in his book 'Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner, Cornell, 1960, limits Faulkner's Bergsonian sense of dynamic 'becoming' with the prolonged, inclusive sentence, and his "compulsive desire to leave things unresolved and indeterminate" (p.259) with the oxymoronic syntax.

2. See Allen Tate, 'Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth', Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol.44 (1968), p.418-427.

But in spite of all the justifications, it is impossible to avoid the occasional (or frequent) sense of irritation with the repetitious heaping of phrases and polysyllabic adjectives. I have already suggested that The Sound and The Fury, reviewed in the light of A Fable's verbiage, displays symptoms of the same disease.[1] But the restraining effect of the fictional narrators preserved it from the excesses of A Fable where all proprieties of characterization are sacrificed to the flood of rhetoric.[2] R.W. Flint, in his review of the novel, writes, "Faulkner's good instincts are profoundly temperate as well as orderly", but A Fable "is everywhere vitiated by rampaging ideas, ideas divorced, and disembodied muddled and self-defeating."[3] His recognition that the novel differs from its predecessors in degree rather than kind endorses my contention that A Fable is not an isolated disaster but merely magnifies and makes visible tendencies inherent to some degree in all Faulkner's work.

In all these ways, in its symbolism, its organization, its syntax, A Fable throws light on the earlier novels, but it is in the discrepancy between its apparent public commitment to an optimistic and resolved view of life, and its pessimistic, ambiguous undertones, which is most significant. Faulkner's generally acknowledged failure[4] to reconcile Christian archetype with twentieth century reality may be seen as evidence of his private inability to accept the public commitment. These are much the same comments as those provoked by Soldier's Pay. We have almost come full circle.

---

1. The Sound and The Fury, p.295.
2. See A Fable p.139, or Marya's speech on p.263 and elsewhere.
3. 'What Price Glory', Hudson Review, Vol.17 (1954-1955), p.662-666.
4. See Chapter II.

There are three ways in which A Fable is apparently unlike Faulkner's other work; in the essential orderliness of its plot, rigidly following its biblical parallel, in the optimism implied by its symbolism,[1] and outstandingly in the clarity of the authorial stance which is what I mean by public commitment, a willingness to be identified with the point of view displayed. On the other hand A Fable appears unique in lacking the two most typical qualities of Faulkner's work, ambiguity and irony. It has been claimed that irony is not lacking[2] and that the "resurrection" of the corporal as the Unknown Soldier is an ironical indication of Christ's ultimate failure in contemporary society, so before discussing the apparent optimistic and public commitment of the book, I must first support my interpretation of the ending.

The question must be decided on the fate of the runner, the Everyman, even as Christ's immortality depended on those who survived after Him in faith. And without doubt the presence of the runner at the funeral of the Old General, his lonely little protest, his spiritual resistance at the point of physical defeat, all indicate that Faulkner's position here is as professedly affirmative as the sentiments of the Nobel Prize speech. Supporting evidence is provided by Marya's unswerving belief in the divine role of her "Brother",[3] and by the traditional demoralization of the Judas figure vizualized in clear contrast to the Runner:

> framed for a moment in the door, his face livid and intolerable, with nothing left now but the insolence the tall feather in the hat which he had never removed breaking into the line of the lintel as if he were actually hanging on a cord from it against the vacant shape of the spring darkness. Then he was gone too. 4

---

1. In Soldier's Pay, though using similar metaphor, Faulkner was less ambitious, attempting only a balance between Christian optimism and post-war depression. Also in Light in August where he emphasizes crucifixion rather than resurrection.

2. See previous references to Roma King, I. Malin, etc.

3. A Fable, p.386.

4. A Fable, p.388.

Compare this with the Runner's departure which is described in typical Faulknerian images of permanence:[1]

> he braced the two crutches into his armpits and with the hand he still had, removed the ruined homburg in a gesture sweeping and invulnerable and clapped it back on at its raked and almost swaggering angle and turned, the single leg once more strong and steady and tireless between the tireless rhythmic swing and recover of the crutches. But moving: back down the lane toward where he and the man with the feather had appeared, even if the infinitesimal progress was out of all proportion to the tremendous effort of the motion. Moving, unwearyable and durable and persevering, growing smaller and smaller with distance until at last he had lost all semblance of advancement whatever and appeared fixed against a panorama in furious progressless unrest, not lonely: just solitary, invincibly single. Then he was gone.
>
> "Yes", Marya said. "He can move fast enough. He will be there in plenty of time." [2]

This is, of course, essentially nothing more than the humanism which informs all Faulkner's work but since he has forced it so emphatically into a Christian mould this time, insisting that we view the characters as motivated by Christian, and not merely humanist principles, it seems impossible to ignore his instructions. We must accept that the novel is organized to provide, not a mere fable (and here, I would say, is the only

---

1. See Light in August, p.5,6. Though the mules plod in a steady and unflagging hypnosis, the vehicle does not seem to progress. It seems to hang suspended in the middle distance for ever and forever, so infinitesimal is its progress, like a shabby bead upon the mild red string of road. So much is this so that in the watching of it the eye loses it as sight and sense drowsily merge and blend, like the road itself, with all the peaceful and monotonous changes between darkness and day, like already measured thread being rewound onto a spool.

2. A Fable, p.386-387.

irony, directed against those who consider Christianity a dead legend, and who are to be re-educated by the example of the runner and the corporal) but an allegory of a living faith in a credible divinity. Its success is another matter.

The apparent ambivalence of the old General's role clearly presented no contradiction for Faulkner, who told the students "The Old General was Satan, who had been cast out of heaven, because God himself feared him",[1] and when asked about the conflicting God-like attributes of the general, answered "That was part of Satan's fearsomeness, that he could usurp the legend of God. That was what made him so fearsome and so powerful that he could usurp the legend of God, and then discard God. That's why God feared him".[2] Seen in this light, the confrontation between the general and the corporal can be nothing but a recreation of the temptation of Christ by Satan, and the corporal's rejection of the general's ethos is Christ's triumph. The ambiguities and doubts which arise in the reader's mind are products not of the purport of the book but of Faulkner's failure to realize his "wish to feel". In A Fable he wished to "feel" the conviction of the resurrection, but the wish without the conviction produced what Norman Podhoretz has called "a self-generated paroxysm"[3] Faulkner, he writes, has "not ideas, not a wish to understand the world, only the wish to feel deeply and to transcribe what he felt and saw". "This will also affect his capacity to distinguish between emotion which refers to something outside and feeling which is created by the will to feel".[4]

---

1. Faulkner in the University, p.62.
2. Ibid., p.63.
3. 'William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith', Commentary, (1954)
4. Doings and Undoings. The 50's and After in American Writing, 1965, p.17.

This brings me to the evidence of a discrepancy between what I have now shown to be Faulkner's purported intention, that is, an affirmation of the permanence of the human spirit in orthodox Christian terms, and the presence of ambiguity, irresolution and pessimism. It is to be found in the one really powerful image A Fable contains. The crowd has gathered outside the Place de Ville to voice its sympathy with the twelve men. The old general looks down:

> It came up beneath them, beginning not as sound at all but rather as light, diffused yet steady from across the plain beyond the city: the voices of men alone, choral almost, growing not in volume but in density as dawn itself increases, filling the low horizon beyond the city's black and soaring bulk with a band not of sound but light while above and into it the thin hysteric nearer screams and cries skittered and spun and were extinguished like sparks into water, still filling the horizon even after the voices themselves had ceased with a resonant humming like a fading sunset and heatless as aurora against which the black tremendous city seemed to rush skyward in one fixed iron roar out of the furious career of earth toward its furious dust, unreared and insensate as an iron ship's prow among the fixed insensate stars. 1

This is the metaphor which could have worked for A Fable. It has the spatial dimensions of Light in August's controlling structure in the vision of the chorus of humanity encircling its self-destructive core, the formalized expression of itself, the city. This is Faulkner's perpetual paradox; man's inevitable failure to express his individual aspirations in permanent and corporate form. And it is this pessimistic assertion which lurks beneath the pulpit stance, exposing it for the flimsy, prefabricated platform it is. As Podhoretz says, "as long as he

---

1. A Fable, p.219-220.

(Faulkner) refuses to surrender to the reality and the truth that he cannot help rendering he will continue to mount the stilts of oratory and distort the things he sees."[1]

It is not possible to argue that this image contradicts the optimistic purport for a calculated ironic effect. It is not sufficiently maintained or supported to allow its utter contradiction of the entire structural movement and mood toward resolution and attainment, a linear form, to make a sustained contribution. This metaphor, which, like Faulkner's best,[2] is cyclical in form, unresolved, displaying a sort of maintained tension between two forces, and stoical in mood, is not integral. It occurs at this point because of Faulkner's need to personify the protest of the crowd and to express it as a force opposing the rigid, inhuman mechanics of civilization. But, as happened in Soldier's Pay, Faulkner's difficulty in establishing the positive pole betrays itself in the growing elegaic tone ("fading sunset", "heatless as aurora"), while the opposition is portrayed with increasing vigour ("tremendous city", "rush skyward", "iron prow") as an insurmountable, unbeatable power.

This is not the only evidence of an undercurrent working to disrupt the smooth surface of A Fable, although I feel it offers the most concentrated expression of the mood working against the purported intention. Contradictions are also presented by the irregularity of style. I have already commented on the fact that the tale of the race-horse remains an unassimilated chunk in the allegorical digestion, producing an uneasy truce between the unforced realism of Faulkner's best work, and this rhetorical posturing. The inconsistency of style implies the

---

1. Doings and Undoings: The 50's and After in American Writing, 1965, p.29.

2. The Sound and The Fury is similarly formed, also Light in August until Joe Christmas 'breaks' the cyclical pattern to attempt his linear extension.

contradictory points of view. Faulkner does his best to force the story of Harry into a linear mould, but its tall-tale humour, though weakened, refuses to be subdued and finally asserts itself as evidence of that stoic realism which cannot be reshaped into Christian resolution or purple prose.

Equally significant is a comparison between Levine's last hours and those of Quentin Compson and Joe Christmas.[1] In each case a matter-of-fact tone confines itself to physical details of movement and scene. In The Sound and The Fury we know precisely why Quentin's attention focuses on trivial details of his appearance during those last moments; his fastidiousness is an established characteristic and it is psychologically convincing that he should preoccupy himself in this way. In Light in August there is, as I have shown, a conflict between the action of Joe Christmas the martyr, and Joe Christmas the man. Even so, his involuntary, bemused progress towards death dramatizes convincingly the pathos of an exile and succeeds in suggesting society's guilt in at least some of the proposed areas.[2] In A Fable the character of Levine has neither the psychological conviction of Quentin nor the social significance of Christmas. Levine is crudely sketched as the idealistic young flier whose romantic notions of war are shattered when he confronts the self-interest which, according to Faulkner, motivates the machinery of war. His suicide preparations are remarkably similar to Christmas's and Quentin's; eating, shaving, attention to dress. In Quentin's case the clothes he vainly sponged had been bloodied during a climatic confrontation with Gerald, the arch opponent of Quentin's life-style,

---

1. Cf. A Fable, p.292-293. Light in August, p.313-321. The Sound and The Fury, p.177-178.

2. The guilt of society towards the negro is fully realised. Its complicity in the fate of a Christ-figure, dying to expiate society's sins, is not so successfully dramatized.

so that his action has both dramatic credibility and symbolic significance. In Levine's case the Sidcott which mirrors his approaching death is slowly disintegrating in the sulphur burn received during his abortive attack on the German general's plane. The difference is between the credibility of Quentin's actions and the stereotyped quality of Levine's; between the restrained use of an organically integrated symbol in The Sound and The Fury and the crude insistance on a contrived symbol in A Fable. Clearly Faulkner hoped, by employing a tested technique, to arouse the pathos and concern for Levine that he had won for Quentin and Christmas. But where they were thoroughly established characters whose deaths are consistently dramatized, Levine is simply another representative face in A Fable's over-inclusive tableau, and techniques appropriate to the situation of Quentin and Christmas merely highlight the failure of this character to work on either the realistic or the symbolic level. Faulkner is relying on the technique alone to breathe life into his abstractions, and as R.W. Flint writes, "Faulkner's good instincts ... deal profoundly only with experienced realities, not, as in A Fable with received ideas."[1]

This analysis of Faulkner's failure to dramatize a situation he managed more successfully in earlier novels indicates the way on which such failure argues against the optimistic purport of the novel. The disproportion between the weight of a pessimistic present, and the shadowy protagonist of the life to come, lends additional support. In all the ways I have discussed, Faulkner's apparent commitment to a resolved, linear structure and an optimistic[2] mood is contradicted by style, structural proportion and direction, image and mood. My analysis of

---

1. 'What Price Glory', Hudson Review, Vol.7 (1954-1955), p.602-606.

2. I use optimism, in this context, to mean the Christian optimism which accepts shame, pain and rejection in this life, in the hope of the life to come.

Soldier's Pay, Light in August and Absalom,Absalom! has shown that this is a continuing paradox. The unique interest of A Fable is in its open commitment to a single point of view, rather than the masking taciturnity of the authorial stance in the other books. Such apparent straight-forwardness allows direct penetration of the gap between what Faulkner "wishes to feel", and what Faulkner feels, which lies beneath all his writing. It illuminates the features beyond the "Delphic darkness", and reveals the darkness of ambiguity for a protective veneer, concealing the gap not only from his readers but also from Faulkner himself. "A Fable", as Penn Warren says, "indicates not so much the limit of, as the nature of, Faulkner's success", and it is in this light that I have examined the book, to define the central confusion at the heart of all Faulkner's work. I have chosen the five books to illustrate the growing divergence between purport and achievement, culminating in A Fable which crystallises the problem into a compulsive need to attempt more, stylistically, emotionally, intellectually, than could be achieved. The non-fictional evidence I produced in Chapter 2 pointed to this conclusion. The mass of conflicting critical attention bears witness not only to the ambiguity of Faulkner's work but also the cause of that ambiguity. I am referring to the peculiarly assertive nature of much Faulkner criticism which itself mirros the willed face of Faulkner's literary dualism.

CONCLUSION

In the first chapter of this thesis I suggested that the broad divergence of critical opinion on almost every aspect of Faulkner's work reflected a basic confusion within the books. I proposed to examine the nature of this ambiguity as it is revealed in five books spanning Faulkner's creative career. I hoped to determine whether it was a conscious technique employed to mask the authorial presence and so allow the reader a sense of uninterrupted creative involvement with the work, or a device enabling Faulkner to evade the authorial responsibility of commitment to the final organization. I am aware that my understanding of authorial responsibility, with its connotations of morality and integrity, is contentious. However it is the foundation of my critical approach and I must assume it to be valid. I can claim support. Virginia Woolf, for example, writes in A Room of One's Own about a novelist she is reading: "Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence, now she has broken the sequence. Very well, she has every right to do both these things if she does them not for the sake of breaking, but for the sake of creating. Which of the two it is I cannot be sure until she has faced herself with a situation. I will give her every liberty, I said, to choose what that situation shall be; she shall make it of old tin cans and old kettles if she likes; but she must convince me that she believes it to be a situation; and then when she has made it she must face it. She must jump. And, determined to do my duty by her as a reader if she would do her duty by me as a writer, I turned the page and read ..."[1]

---

1. A Room of One's Own, 1929, p.122-123.

The latter alternative would suggest a fundamental conflict in the writer which demands a technique of concealment, in Faulkner's case obscuring ambiguity. Wayne Booth, too, considers this a legitimate enquiry: "The moral question is really whether an author has an obligation to write well in the sense of making his moral orderings clear, and if so, clear to whom."[1]

It was with these preconceptions that I began my examination of the ambiguity in Faulkner's novels. I considered that, to be a legitimate technique, it must finally be seen to be employed in the creation of a committed point of view, which is what I understand by the term "a work of art". If, on the other hand, it proved to be a technique of= concealment, designed to hinder and obscure the reader's penetration of Faulkner's world, then my enquiries must be directed towards revealing what was being concealed, and how, and why.

There were two clear alternatives. Either Faulkner was so subtly in control of his vision that the confusion of the critics was caused by their inability to penetrate a masterly device, or, penetrate as one might, nothing was to be found behind the ambiguous techniques but disorder and irresolution. I would forestall the criticism which at this point will suggest that this effect may have been precisely Faulkner's intention, by claiming awareness of the fact,and therefore I have sought to ensure that the purported intention of the novels denied any such effect, before assuming the confusion reflected as unconscious paradox within Faulkner's psychological make-up.

Although, as Wayne Booth says, "The views of man of Faulkner and E.M. Forster, as they go about making their Stockholm addresses or writing their essays, are indeed of only peripheral value to me as I read their

---

1. The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, 1961, p.386.

novels",[1] such evidence of the writer's intention[2] and his non-fictional opinions may provide, according to Alan Rodway "tips on what to look out for, or psychological support if it turns out to tally with what the purport seems to be." I felt that for both these reasons a chapter dealing with Faulkner's own critical opinions was necessary. Evidence of controlled and consistent thinking would point to, though not assure, artistic control whereas confused or contradictory opinions would possibly influence the fiction. Moreover, applying Rodway's theory in reverse, if my analysis of the novels revealed an authorial confusion then I could return to this chapter for psychological elucidation.

It soon became apparent that Faulkner was not a reliable critic. By referring to the book Phil Stone claimed had influenced Faulkner, I established his familiarity with Bergsonian notions of fluidity in art. But increasingly one noticed a discrepancy between his statements of faith in the human race and his talk of artistic technique. It seemed that his determination to believe in man's ultimate triumph over life's adversity, and more, in the immortality of man, in God, was at war with his sense of the flux and change and the inevitable failure of any aspiration which seemed to inform his aesthetic theories. Further, these comments gave the clue to Faulkner's awareness of the contradiction in their evasiveness, and, at times, their disarming simplicity. They were framed to keep the questioners at a distance and to present an impregnable persona. This impression strengthened as I read more, confirming itself, culminating in two urgent sentences, one expressing the wish that he had "had enough sense to see ahead thirty years ago and,

---

1. Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, 1961, p.137.

2. See A. Rodway, The Truths of Fiction, 1970, p.123. "Intention" - the writer's stated purpose, or a purpose deduced from evidence outside the work.

like some of the Elizabethans, not signed them," the other referring to a proposed biography: "I will want to blue-pencil everything which even intimates that something breathing and moving sat behind the typewriter which produced the books."[1]

Looking back, one can see clearly how the conclusions drawn from this chapter prefigured the evidence of the novels. Not only did the same discrepancy between Faulkner's willed optimism and sensed futility or flux show itself there, but also his wish to disguise it. His fictional method of concealment, too, was mirrored by his public manner of assuming roles - the simple farmer, the disclaiming author passing responsibility for interpretation over to his readers, or the polite, ingenuous country squire. However, my intention was to approach the novels with the two alternatives presented at the end of Chapter One, still open, only returning to the conclusions drawn from this non-fictional material if it proved necessary.

I chose to examine five novels, spanning Faulkner's creative career from 1926-1954. I deliberately omitted the Snopes trilogy and the short stories since their realistic, less experimental technique, generally avoids arousing the kind of contradiction I wanted to examine. I therefore chose four of the most discussed books, and the earliest.

I approached the task of evaluation by attempting to discover the purport of each book and measure it against the actual achievement. In every case I found the same gap between the purported intention, usually distinguishable in the structure and the symbolism, and the total effect. It became increasingly clear that this contradiction was a recurring phenomenon and that, having established this as the result of my initial

---

1. The Faulkner-Cowley File, p.121-122.

enquiry, I should now direct my attention to defining the techniques with which Faulkner observed his problem and the nature of the confusion itself.

Faulkner's first novel lacks the sophistication of his later work and for this reason I chose to examine it, hoping that it would offer a simplified version of a pattern later obscured by more subtle presentation. My analysis produced two facts; firstly that the structural purport was at odds with the overall effect, and secondly that while Faulkner had established an emphatic pessimistic mood, he seemed unable to dramatize the optimism demanded by the structural purport. It was a flagrant inconsistency and Faulkner's inexperience made no attempt to obscure it.

The Sound and The Fury was a very different proposition. I attributed its consistency to three things, Faulkner's recent development from the rather immature cynical attitudes of Soldier's Pay, his freedom from public commitment and fame, and his first, and therefore freshest, use of the technique of fictional narrators. I described how these factors contributed to eliminate the discrepancy between purport and achievement which marred Soldier's Pay. In The Sound and The Fury Faulkner employed a consistently relativist technique, and appeared content with an unresolved presentation of ironic paradox. The lack of commitment to any public image of himself was reflected in the novel by a sense of unforced sincerity and an absence of structural strain. The device of the fictional narrator, observed with propriety, restrained Faulkner's verbal excesses and postponed the problem of immediate authorial responsibility until the final section where Faulkner "tells it himself", and then, significantly enough, the few flaws appear. My conclusions showed that this novel defined the area within which

Faulkner could work successfully, and the techniques and structures he could profitably employ.

In my discussion of Light in August I described how a slightly more ambitious purport lessened the degree of final success. I located the signs of strain where Faulkner attempted to realize his ambitious symbolism. The gap between what he felt and what he wished to feel demonstrated itself in the imperfectly fused characterization of Joe Christmas. The advantages of the fictional narrators became increasingly apparent, for had this character been self-revealing, as Benjy or Quentin, then its anomalies could have been seen as expressions of the characterization rather than authorial irresolution. Eventually, of course, the authorial position could be probed, and its purport deduced and measured against the apparent achievement, but the fictional narrator increases the illusion of fictive reality/autonomy which is essential to a writer with Faulkner's problems.

Absalom, Absalom! illustrated this point, for it is Faulkner's most complex demonstration of the illusion of fictive independence from the creative mind. Because of its almost total use of internal narration, the purport had to be deduced chiefly from structural organization. Characterization offered no indication of authorial stance, since in this novel it could be seen only as a reflection of the fictional narrator's point of view. And the authorial voice was rarely evident. Nevertheless it was from the obscured evidence that I deduced the purport of Absalom, Absalom! to be a movement in structural and intellectual terms towards the resolution of opposing cultures; a movement reducing the distance between them to a point which could offer a mutually acceptable truth. The truth itself was not necessarily an optimistic one; it was in

the resolution of the search, in the linear structure, that Faulkner proposed his over ambitious goal. My conclusions, though much harder to arrive at, repeated the contradiction in Soldier's Pay and Light in August. The particular interest of Absalom, Absalom! lay in the techniques which had so nearly proved impregnable. Faulkner had almost succeeded in writing an 'authorless' book.

A Fable completed my thesis by offering the last variation on my theme of authorial responsibility and techniques of evasion. Of the books I examined, A Fable was the only one with an obtrusive authorial presence - as though the author thrust his symbolic pattern down his reader's throat. This apparent contrast to the obscurity of Absalom, Absalom!, the confusion of Light in August, the reticence of The Sound and The Fury and the immature posturing of Soldier's Pay, promised a similar change in the authorial point of view. In fact I was able to demonstrate that beneath the apparently simple point of view lay the same contradiction which informed the other work. The sharpness of contrast between purport and achievement enabled me to illustrate definitively Faulkner's psychopathic need to attempt more, stylistically, emotionally, intellectually, than he could achieve. The ambitious, resolute, optimistic purport of his novels reflects the willed face of his literary schizophrenia. He did his utmost to "blue pencil" his private, doubting, irresolute self, and thus dispel the idea that anything less consistent than a typewriter produced the books. In Absalom, Absalom! he almost succeeded. The exceptional diversity of critical opinion on that particular book, proves how frequently the critical search for William Faulkner has been deflected into the critics search for himself.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FAULKNER'S WORKS PUBLISHED IN BOOK FORM

Absalom, Absalom!, Chatto and Windus, 1971.

As I Lay Dying, Chatto and Windus, 1971.

Barn Burning and Other Stories, Chatto Educ., 1971.

Dr. Martino and Other Stories, Chatto and Windus, 1965.

Early Prose and Poetry, ed. Carvel Collins, Cape, 1963.

A Fable, Chatto and Windus, 1965.

Go Down Moses, Chatto and Windus, 1960.

The Hamlet, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1966.

Intruder in the Dust, Chatto and Windus, 1968.

Knight's Gambit, Chatto and Windus, 1969.

Light in August, Chatto and Windus, 1968.

The Mansion, Chatto and Windus, 1966.

Mosquitoes, Chatto and Windus, 1964.

New Orleans Sketches, ed. Carvel Collins, Chatto and Windus, 1968.

Pylon, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1967.

The Reviews, Chatto and Windus, 1962.

Requiem for a Nun, Chatto and Windus, 1965.

Sanctuary, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1966.

Sartoris, Chatto and Windus, 1964.

Soldier's Pay, Chatto and Windus, 1967.

The Sound and The Fury, Chatto and Windus, 1966.

These Thirteen, Chatto and Windus, 1963.

The Town, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1966.

Uncle Willy and Other Stories, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1967.

The Unvanquished, Collected ed., Chatto and Windus, 1967.

Wild Palms, Chatto and Windus, 1970.

The Wishing Tree, Chatto and Windus, 1967.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY. BOOKS QUOTED

Booth, Wayne	The Rhetoric of Fiction, Chicago, 1961.
Brooks, Cleanth	The Hidden God: Vision of Good and Evil, Yale, 1963.
Brooks, Cleanth	William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Yale, 1963.
Campbell H.M. and Foster R.E.	William Faulkner: A Critical Appraisal, Oklahoma, 1951.
Cash, W.J.	The Mind of the South, New York, 1941.
Chase, Richard	The American Novel and Its Tradition, 1958.
Coughlan, R.	The Private World of William Faulkner, New York, 1953.
Cowley, M.	The Faulkner-Cowley File. Letters and Memories, 1944-1962, 1966.
Faulkner, John.	My Brother Bill, 1964.
Fielder, L.A.	No! in Thunder: Essays on Myth and Literature, 1963.
Geismar, M.	Writers in Crisis: The American Novel Between Two Wars, Boston, 1942.
Gold, Joseph	William Faulkner: A Study of Humanism. From Metaphor to Discourse, Oklahoma, 1967.
Green, Martin.	Reappraisals: Some Commonsense Readings in American Literature, 1963.
Guetti, J.C.	The Limits of Metaphor, Cornell, 1967.
Gwynn, F.L. and ed. Blotner, J.L.	Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958, Virginia, 1959.
Hoffman, F.J. and ed. Vickery, O.W.	William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, Michigan, 1954.
Hoffman, F.J. and ed. Vickery, O.W.	William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, Michigan, 1960.
Holman, C. Hugh	Three Modes of Southern Criticism, Georgia, 1966.

Howe, Irving — William Faulkner: A Critical Study, New York, 1962.

Hunt, John W. — Art in Theological Tension, Syracuse, 1965.

Jelliffe, R.A. — Faulkner at Nagano, Tokyo, 1959.

Kazin, A. — On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature, 1943.

Langford, G. — Faulkner's Revision of Absalom, Absalom!, Texas, 1971.

Malin, Irving. — William Faulkner: An Interpretation, Stamford, 1957.

Massey, L.R. ed. — Man Working, 1919-1962. William Faulkner. A Catalogue of the William Faulkner Collections at the University of Virginia, Virginia, 1968.

Meriwether, J.B. — Essays, Speeches and Public Letters, 1967.

Millgate, Michael — Faulkner, 1961.

Miner, W.L. — The World of William Faulkner, New York, 1952.

Nilon, Charles, H. — Faulkner and the Negro, New York, 1965.

O'Connor, W.V. — The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, Minnesota 1954.

O'Connor, W.V. — William Faulkner, Minnesota, 1959.

Podhoretz, Norman. — Doings and Undoings: The 50's and After in American Writing, 1965.

Poirier, Richard — A World Elsewhere. The Place of Style in American Literature, 1967.

Richardson, H.E. — William Faulkner: The Journey to Self-Discovery, Columbia, 1967.

Richardson, K.E. — Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner, The Hague, 1967.

Rodway, Alan — The Truths of Fiction, 1970.

Slatoff, W.J. — Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner, Cornwell,, 1960.

Smart, G.K. — Religious Elements in Faulkner's Early Novels: A Selective Concordance, Miami, 1965.

Swiggart, P. — The Art of Faulkner's Novels, Texas, 1962.

Tanner, T. — City of Words. American Fiction 1950-1970, 1971.

Waggoner, Hyatt, H. — William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World, Kentucky, 1966.

Warren Robert Penn (ed) — Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, New Jersey, 1966.

Webb, J.W. and Wigfall Green, A. ed. — William Faulkner of Oxford, Louisiana, 1965.

Woolf, V. — A Room of One's Own, 1929.

Wright, Willard, Huntington — The Creative Will. Studies in the Philosophy and The Syntax of Aesthetics, New York, London, 1916.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY. ARTICLES QUOTED

Backman Melvin A. 'The Pilgrimage of William Faulkner: A Study of Faulkner's Fiction', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.21 (1960), p.193-194.

Beck Warren 'William Faulkner's Style', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.142-150.

Beck Warren 'Faulkner in The Mansion', The Virginia Quarterly Review, vol.36 (1960), p.272-292.

Berner R.L. 'The Theme of Responsibility in the Later Fiction of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.21 (1960), p.1561.

Bouvard, L. 'Conversation with William Faulkner', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.5 (1959), p.361-364.

Bowling, L.E. 'The Technique of The Sound and The Fury', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954. p.165-179.

Bowling, L.E. 'Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence', Kenyon Review, vol.20 (1958), p.466-487.

Bowling, L.E. 'Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation', Georgia Review, vol.18 (1964), p.50-66.

Bowling, L.E. 'Faulkner and The Theme of Pride in The Sound and The Fury', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1965), p.129-139.

Bradford, M.E. 'On the importance of Discovering God: Faulkner and Hemingway's Old Man and The Sea', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.20 (1967), p.58-62.

Brumm, Ursula 'Wilderness and Civilisation: A Note on William Faulkner', Partisan Review, vol.22 (1955), p. 340-350.

Chase, Richard 'The Stone and the Crucifixion: Faulkner's Light in August', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.205-217.

Coanda, Richard 'Absalom, Absalom! The Edge of Infinity', Renascence, vol.11 (1958), p.3-9.

Collins, Carvel — 'Bergsonian Dynamism in the Writings of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.2521.

Cowley, M. — 'Introduction to The Portable Faulkner', in William Faulkner Three Decades of Criticism, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960 p.94-109.

Cross, Barbara, M. — 'The Sound and The Fury: The Pattern of Sacrifice' Arizona Quarterly, vol.16, (1960), p.5-16.

Donnelly, William and Doris — 'William Faulkner: in Search of Peace', The Personalist, vol.44 (1963), p.490-498.

Doyle, C. — 'The Moral World of Faulkner', Renascence, vol. 19 (1966), p.3-12.

Elkin, S.L. — 'Religious Themes and Symbolism in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol. 22 (1961), p.3659-3660.

Fadiman, C. — 'Faulkner, Extra Special, Double Distilled', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.62-64.

Fazio, R.R. — 'The Fury and the Design: Realism of Being, and Knowing in Four Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25, (1964) p.1910.

Flint, R.W. — 'What Price Glory', Hudson Review, vol.7 (1954), p.602-606.

Friend, G.L. — 'Levels of Maturity: The Theme of Striving in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.6622-6623.

Gold, Joseph — 'Delusion and Redemption in Faulkner's A Fable', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.7 (1961) p.145-156.

Hoffman, F.J. — Introduction to 'William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism,' ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.1-50.

Holman, C. Hugh — 'The Unity of Faulkner's Light in August', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.73 (1958), p.155-166.

Hornback, V.T. Jr. — 'William Faulkner and the Terror of History: Myth, History and Moral Freedom in the Yoknapatawpha Cycle', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1964), p.476.

Hovde, C.F. 'Faulkner's Democratic Rhetoric', South Atlantic Quarterly, vol.63 (1964), p.530-541.

Justus, J.H. 'The Epic Design of Absalom, Absalom!', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.4 (1962), p.157-176.

Kartiganer, D.M. 'Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!: The Discovery of Values', American Literature, vol.37 (1965-1966), p.291-360.

Kazin, A. 'The Stillness of Light in August', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism', ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.247-265.

King, Roma, A. Jr. 'Everyman's Warefare: A Study of Faulkner's A Fable', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.2 (1956), p.132-138.

Lamont, W.H.F. 'The Chronology of Light in August', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.3 (1957-1958), p.360-361.

Leaf, M. 'William Faulkner. The Snopes Trilogy: The South Evolves', in The 50's: Fiction, Poetry and Drama', ed. by Warren French, Florida, 1970), p.51-62.

Leaver, Florence 'Faulkner: The Word as Principle and Power', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.199-209.

Leavis, W.R. 'Dostoevsky or Dickens', Scrutiny, vol.2 (1933-1934), p.91-93.

Lind, Ilse, Dusoir 'The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August', New England Quarterly, vol.30 (1957), p.307-329.

Lind, Else, Dusoir 'The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.70 (1955), p.887-912.

Lytle, A. 'Regeneration for the Man', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.231-237.

Magny, Claude Edmonde 'Faulkner or Theological Inversion', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.66-78.

Malraux, Andre 'A Preface for Faulkner's Sanctuary', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.272-274.

Mayoux, Jean Jacques — 'The Creation of the Real in William Faulkner', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1966, p.156-173.

Moses, W.R. — 'The Limits of Yoknapatawpha County', Georgia Review, vol.16 (1962), p.297-305.

Mottram, Eric — 'Mississippi Faulkner's Glorious Mosaic of Impotence and Madness', Journal of American Studies, vol.2 (1968), p.121-129.

O'Donnell, G.M. — 'Faulkner's Mythology', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.82-93.

Podhoretz, Norman — 'William Faulkner and the Problem of War: His Fable of Faith', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.243-250.

Poirier, W.R. — 'Strange Gods' in Jefferson, Mississippi: Analysis of Absalom, Absalom!', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.217-243.

Pritchett, V.S. — 'Faulkner's Fable', Partisan Review, vol.21 (1954), p.557-561.

Rabi — 'Faulkner and the Exiled Generation', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.118-138.

Richardson, H.E. — 'Quest for Faith: A Study of Destructive and Creative Force in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.3384.

Rossky, W. — 'As I Lay Dying: The Insane World', Texas Studies in Language and Literature, vol.4 (1962), p.87-95.

Rossky, W. — 'Faulkner: The Image of The Child in The Mansion', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.15 (1961-1962), p.17-20.

Sartre, Jean Paul — 'Time in Faulkner: The Sound and The Fury', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.225-232.

Scott, Evelyn — 'On William Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury: in (20 Interpretations of The Sound and The Fury, ed. by M.H. Cowan, New Jersey, 1968, p.25-29.

Simon, J.K. — 'The Glance of the Idiot: A Thematic Study of Faulkner and Modern French Fiction', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965) p.1220.

Slabey, R.M. — 'Faulkner's "Wasteland". Vision in Absalom, Absalom!', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.16 (1961), p.153-161.

Slabey, R.M. — 'William Faulkner: The Wasteland Phase', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.22 (1961), p.1632.

Slabey, R.M. — 'Joe Christmas: Faulkner's Marginal Man', Phylon, vol.21 (1960), p.266-277.

Slabey, R.M. — 'As I Lay Dying as an Existential Novel', Bucknell Review, vol.11 (1963), p.12-23.

Sowder, W.J. — 'Lucas Beauchamp as Existentialist Hero', College English, vol.25 (1963), p.115-127.

Stein, Jean — 'William Faulkner: An Interview', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.67-82.

Stewart, David H. — 'Absalom Reconsidered', University of Toronto Quarterly, vol.30 (1960-1961), p.31-44.

Stewart, D.H. — 'William Faulkner and Mikhail Sholokhov: a Comparative Study of Two Representatives of the Regional Conscience. Their Affinities and Meanings', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.19 (1959), p.3309-3310.

Stone, P. — Letters to the Editor: Faulkner Publication, Saturday Review, vol.42 (27 June 1959), p.23.

Straumann, H. — 'An American's Interpretation of Existence: Faulkner's A Fable, in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.349-372.

Tate, Allen — 'Faulkner's Sanctuary and the Southern Myth', Virginia Quarterly Review, vol.44 (1968), p. 418-427.

Vickery, O.W. — 'Faulkner and the Contours of Time', Georgia Review, vol.12 (1958), p.192-210.

Vickery, O.W. — 'The Sound and The Fury: A Study in Perspective', Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.69 (1954), p.1017-1037.

Wall, C.G. 'Faulkner's Rhetoric', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.5947.

Warren Robert Penn 'William Faulkner', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.109-124.

Wigall, Green A. 'William Faulkner at Home', in William Faulkner Two Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.294-306.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY. BOOKS CONSULTED.

Adams, R.P.	Faulkner: Myth and Motion, Princeton, 1968.
Backman, Melvin.	Faulkner: The Major Years, Indiana, 1966.
Beck, Warren.	Man in Motion: Faulkner's Trilogy, Wisconsin, 1961.
Blotner, J.L.	William Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue, Virginia, 1964.
Bradford, Daniel. ed.	Black, White and Gray: 21 Points of View on the Race Question, New York, 1964.
Brylowski, W.	Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels, Detroit, 1968.
Cowan, M.H. ed.	Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Sound and The Fury, New Jersey, 1968.
Cowley, M. ed.	Writers at Work, New York, 1958.
Everett, W.K.	Faulkner's Art and Characters, New York, 1969.
Fadiman, Clifton.	Party of One: The Selected Writing of Clifton Fadiman, New York, 1955.
Holmes, E.M.	Faulkner's Twice-Told Tales, The Hague, 1966.
Inge, M.T. (compiled)	Studies in Light in August, Ohio, 1971.
Kerr, E.M.	Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner's "Little Postage Stamp of Native Soil", New York, 1969.
Longford, R.E. ed.	Essays in Modern American Literature, Stetson, 1963.
Longley, John L.J.	The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes, Carolina, 1963.
Meriwether, J.B. and Millgate, M.	Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner (1926-1962), New York, 1968.
Millgate, Michael.	The Achievement of William Faulkner, 1966.
Minter, D.L. ed.	Twentieth Century Interpretation of Light in August, New Jersey, 1969.
Mizener, A.	The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel, 1965.

Mottram, E.	William Faulkner: Profiles in Literature, 1971.
Robb, Mary Cooper.	William Faulkner: An Estimation of his Contribution to the Modern American Novel, Pittsburgh, 1957.
Thompson, Lawrence.	William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation, 1967.
Tuck, Dorothy.	A Handbook of Faulkner, 1965.
Vickery, J.B. and O.W.	Light in August and The Critical Spectrum, Wadsworth, 1971.
Vickery, Olga.	The Novels of William Faulkner, Louisiana, 1964.
Volpe, E.L.	A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner, 1964.

CRITICISM AND BIOGRAPHY. ARTICLES CONSULTED.

Adams, P.G. 'Humor as Structure and Theme in Faulkner's Trilogy', Winsconsin Studies, vol.5 (1964), p.205-212.

Adams, P.G. 'The Franco-American Faulkner', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.5-8 (1960-1963), p.1-13.

Adams, R.P. 'Faulkner and the Myth of the South', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.14 (1961), p.131-137.

Adams, R.P. 'The Apprenticeship of William Faulkner', Tulane Studies in English, vol.12-14 (1962-1965), p.113-156.

Aiken, C. 'William Faulkner: The Novel as Form', William Faulkner: in Three Decades of Criticism, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.135-142.

Allen, C.A. 'William Faulkner: Comedy and the Purpose of Humor', Arizona Quarterly, vol.16 (1960), p.59-69.

Alter, J.V. 'Faulkner, Sartre and The "Nouveau Roman", Symposium, vol.20 (1966), p.101-111.

Altenbernd, Lynn. 'A Suspended Moment: The Irony of History in William Faulkner's "The Bear"', Modern Language Notes, vol.75 (1960), p.572-582.

Arthos, J. 'Ritual and Humor in the Writing of William Faulkner' in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.101-118.

Atkins, A. 'The Matched Halves of Absalom, Absalom!', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.15 (1969-1970), p.264-265.

Backman, Melvin, A. 'The Wilderness and The Negro in Faulkner's "The Bear", Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.76 (1961), p.595-600.

Backman, Melvin, A. 'Faulkner's Sick Heroes: Bayard Sartoris and Quentin Compson', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.2, (1956), p.95-108.

Backman, Melvin, A. 'Sutpen and The South: A Study of Absalom, Absalom!', Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.80 (1965), p.596-604.

Baldanza, F. 'Faulkner's 1699-1945: The Compsons', Explicator, vol.19 (1961), Item 59.

Baldanza, F. 'The Structure of Light in August', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.67-78.

Baldanza, F. 'Faulkner and Stein: A Study in Stylistic Intransigence', Georgia Review, vol.13 (1959), p.274-286.

Barth, J.R. 'Faulkner and The Calvinist Tradition', Thought, vol.39 (1964), p.100-120.

Bass, Eben. 'Meaningful Images in The Sound and The Fury', Modern Language Notes, vol.76 (1961), p.728-731.

Baum, C. 'The Beautiful One: Caddy Compson as Heroine of The Sound and The Fury,' Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.33-44.

Beebe, M. 'Criticism of William Faulkner: A Selected Checklist', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.115-161.

Beja, M. 'A Flash, a Glare: Faulkner and Time', Renascence, vol.16 (1964), p.133-141, 145.

Berland, A. 'Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1962), p.159-170.

Bigelow, G.E. 'Faulkner's Snopes Saga', The English Journal, vol.49 (1960), p.595-605.

Bjork, Lennart 'Ancient Myths and The Moral Framework of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!', American Literature, vol.35 (1963-1964), p.196-204.

Blanchard, Margaret 'The Rhetoric of Communion: Voice in The Sound and The Fury', American Literature, vol.41 (1969-1970), p.555-565.

Blocker, Gunter 'William Faulkner', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, New Jersey, 1966, p.122-126.

Bowling, L.E. 'William Faulkner: The Importance of Love', Dalhousie Review, vol.43 (1963), p.474-482.

Bradford, M.E. 'Escaping Westward: Faulkner's Golden Land, Georgia Review, vol.19 (1965) p.72-76.

Bradford, M.E. 'Brother, Son and Heir: The Structural Focus of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!', Sewanee Review, vol.78 (1970), p.76-98.

Bradford, M.E. 'The Gum Tree Scene: Observations on the Structure of "The Bear"', Southern Humanities Review, vol.1 (1967), p.141-150.

Bradford, M.E. 'Faulkner, James Baldwin and the South', Georgia Review, vol.20 (1966), p.431-443.

Bradford, M.E. 'Faulkner and the Jeffersonian Dream: Nationalism in "Two Soldiers" and "Shall not Perish"', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.18 (1963-1965), p.94-100.

Brady, E.K. 'The Literary Faulkner: His Indebtedness to Conrad, Lawrence, Hemingway and other Modern Novelists', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1962), p.2131-2132.

Breaden, D.G. 'William Faulkner and The Land', American Quarterly, vol.10 (1958), p.344-357.

Broderick, J.C. 'Faulkner's Sound and the Fury', Explicator, vol.19 (1960), Item 12.

Brown, Calvin, S. 'Faulkner's Geography and Topography', Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.77 (1962), p.652-659.

Brown, W.R. 'William Faulkner's Use of the Material of Abnormal Psychology in Characterization', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.26 (1965), p.1036-1037.

Brylowski, W.M. 'Man's Enduring Chronicle: A Study of Myth in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.6617-6618.

Bungert, Hans, 'William Faulkner on Moby Dick: An Early Letter', American Studies, vol.19 (1963), p.371-375.

Callen, S.P. 'Bergsonian Dynamism in the Writings of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.2521.

Cambon, Glauco 'Faulkner's Old People: The Numen-Engendering Style', Southern Review, vol.1 (1965), p.94-107.

Campbell, H.M. 'William Faulkner: A New Look', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.14 (1961), p.115-116.

Cantwell, R. 'Faulkner's Popeye', The Nation, vol.186 (1958), p.140-141, 148.

Cantwell, R. 'The Faulkners: Recollections of a Gifted Family', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.51-66.

Carey, G.O. — 'William Faulkner: Critic of Society', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.2522.

Chisholm, W.S. — 'Sentence Pattern in The Sound and The Fury' Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.7254-7255.

Clerc, Charles — 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.24 (1965-1966), Item 29.

Coffee, J. — 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.24 (1965-1966), Item 21.

Cole, D. — 'Faulkner's Sanctuary: Retreat from Responsibility', Western Humanities Review, vol.14 (1960), p.291-298.

Collins, Carvel — 'A Note on Sanctuary', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.290-291.

Collins, Carvel — 'Miss Quentin's Paternity Again', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.2 (1960-1961), p.253-260.

Collins, Carvel — 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.17 (1958), Item 19.

Connolly, T.E. — 'Faulkner's A Fable in the Classroom', College English, vol.21 (1959), p.165-171.

Cross, Barbara, M. — 'Apocalypse and Comedy in As I Lay Dying', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.13, (1961-1962), p.251-258.

Cross, R.K. — 'The Humor of The Hamlet', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.12 (1967), p.203-215.

Day, Douglas — 'The War Stories of William Faulkner', Georgia Review, vol.15 (1961), p.385-394.

Dickerson, M.J. — 'As I Lay Dying and "The Wasteland" - Some Relationships', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17 (1963-1965), p.129-135.

Dillingham, W.B. — 'William Faulkner and the Tragic Condition', Edda, vol.53 (1966), p.322-335.

Dorsch, R.L. — 'An Interpretation of the Central Themes in the Work of William Faulkner', The Emporia State Research Studies, vol.11 (1962), p.5-42.

Doster, W.C. — 'The Several Face of Gavin Stevens', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.11 (1958), p.191-195.

Doster, W.C. 'William Faulkner and the Negro', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.20 (1959), p.1094.

Douglas, H.J. and Daniel, R. 'Faulkner and the Puritanism of the South', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.2-4 (1957-1959), p.1-13.

Dowell, B.R. 'Faulkner's Comic Spirit', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.4355.

Dunn, R.J. 'Faulkner's Light in August', Explicator, vol.25 (1966-1967), Item 11.

Eby, C.D. Jr. 'Ichabod Crane in Yoknapatawpha', Georgia Review, vol.16 (1962), p.465-469.

Farmer, N. Jr. 'The Love Theme: A Principle Source of Thematic Unity in Faulkner's Snopes Trilogy', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.8 (1962-1963), p.111-123.

Farnham, J.F. 'Faulkner's Unsung Hero: Gavin Stevens', Arizona Quarterly, vol.21 (1965), p.115-132.

Feaster, J. 'Faulkner's Old Man: A Psychoanalytic Approach', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.89-93.

Fisher, R.E. 'The Wilderness, the Commissary and the Bedroom: Faulkner's Ike McCaslin as Hero in a Vacuum', English Studies, vol.44 (1963), p.19-28.

Flint, R.W. 'Faulkner as Elegist', Hudson Review, vol.7 (1954-55), p.602-606.

Flynn, Robert. 'The Dialectic of Sanctuary', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.2 (1956), p.109-113.

Franklin, R.W. 'Narrative Management in As I Lay Dying', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.57-65.

Freedman, M. 'Sound and Sense in Faulkner's Prose', C.E.A. Critic, vol.19 (1957), p.1-5.

Freedman, W.A. 'The Technique of Isolation in Sound and The Fury, Mississippi Quarterly, vol.15 (1962), p.21-26.

Garmon, G.M. 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.25 (1966-1967), Item 2.

Garrett, G. 'Faulkner's Early Literary Criticism', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.1 (1959), p.3-10.

Garrett, G. 'The Influence of William Faulkner', Georgia Review, vol.18 (1964), p.419-427.

Gerstenberger, Donna 'Meaning and Form in Intruder in the Dust', College English, vol.3 (1961-1962), p.223-225.

Gibson, W.M. 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.22 (1963-1964), Item 33.

Going, W.T. 'Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", Explicator, vol.16 (1958), Item 27.

Gold, Joseph 'Truth or Consequences: Faulkner's The Town', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.13 (1960), p.112-116.

Gold, Joseph 'The Normality of Snopesism: Universal Themes in Faulkner's The Hamlet', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, vol.3 (1962), p.25-34.

Gold, Joseph 'William Faulkner's One Compact Thing', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.8 (1962), p.3-9.

Graham, P. 'Patterns in Faulkner's Sanctuary and Requiem for a Nun', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.8 (1963), p.39-46.

Greene, T.M. 'The Philosophy of Life Implicit in Faulkner's The Mansion', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.2 (1960-1961), p.401-418.

Greer, P.D. 'Dilsey and Lucas: Faulkner's Use of the Negro as a Gauge of Moral Character', The Empire State Research Studies, vol.11 (1962), p.43-60.

Greet, T.V. 'The Theme and Structure of Faulkner's The Hamlet, Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.72 (1957), p.775-790.

Guttman, A. 'Collisions and Confrontations', Arizona Quarterly, vol.16 (1960), p.46-52.

Hagan, J. 'Deja Vu and the Effect of Timelessness in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!', Bucknell Review, vol.11 (1963), p.30-52.

Hagopian, J.V. 'Nihilism in Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.45-55.

Hagopian, J.V. 'Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily", Explicator, vol. 22 (1963-1964), Item 68.

Handy, W.J. — 'As I Lay Dying: Faulkner's Inner Reporter', Kenyon Review, vol.21 (1959), p.437-451.

Hardwick, E. — 'Faulkner and the South Today', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.244-250.

Harris, Wendell, V. — 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.21 (1962-1963), Item 54.

Harvey, W.J. — 'Faulkner's Fable', Essays in Criticism, vol.6 (1956), p.94-101.

Harwich, R.D. — 'Humor in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.26 (1965), p.1646.

Hawkins, E.O. Jr. — 'Jane Cook and Cecilia Farmer', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.18 (1963-1965), p.248-251.

Holmes, E.M. — 'Faulkner's Twice-Told Tales: His Re-Use of his Material', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.2527.

Howell, — 'The Quality of Evil in Faulkner's Sanctuary', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.2-4, (1957-1959), p.99-107.

Hughes, Richard — 'Faulkner and Bennet', Encounter, vol.21 (1963), p.59-61.

Inge, M.T. — 'William Faulkner and George Washington Harris: In the Tradition of Southwestern Humor', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.7 (1962), p.47-59.

Isaacs, N.O. — 'Gotterdammerung in Yoknapatawpha', Tennessee Studies in Literature, vol.8 (1963), p.47-55.

Iskak, E.K. — 'The Manuscript of The Sound and The Fury: The Revision in the First Section', Studies in Bibliography, vol.20 (1967), p.189-202.

Jenser, E.G. — 'The Play Element in Faulkner's "The Bear"', Texas Studies in Language and Literature, vol.6 (1964), p.170-187.

Jones, L.M. — 'Faulkner's The Hound', Explicator, vol.15 (1957), Item 37.

Kartiganer, D.M. — 'The Role of Myth in Absalom, Absalom!', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.9 (1963), p.357-369.

Kartiganer, D.M. 'The Individual and the Community: Values in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.4701-4702.

Kerr, E.M. 'The Reivers: The Golden Book of Yoknapatawpha County', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.95-113.

Kerr, E.M. 'As I Lay Dying as Ironic Quest', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, vol.3 (1962), p.5-17.

Kerr, E.M. 'William Faulkner and The Southern Concept of Woman', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.15 (1961-1962), p.1-16.

Kerr, E.M. 'Snopes', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, vol.1 (1960), p.66-84.

Kimmey, J.L. 'The Good Earth in Light in August', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17, (1963-1965), p.1-8.

Kirk, R.W. 'Faulkner's Anse Bundren', Georgia Review, vol.19 (1965), p.446-452.

Kirk, R.W. 'An Index and Encyclopedia of the Characters in the Fictional Works of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.20 (1959), p.2292.

Klotz, Marvin 'The Triumph Over Time: Narrative Form in William Faulkner and William Styron', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17-18 (1963), p.9-20.

Klotz, Marvin 'Procrustean Revision in Faulkner's Go Down Moses', American Literature, vol.37 (1965-1966), p.1-16.

Knoll, R.E. 'The Unvanquished for a Start', College English, vol.19 (1958), p.338-343.

Kubie, L.S. 'William Faulkner's Sanctuary', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.137-146.

Kunkel, F.L. 'Christ Symbolism in Faulkner: Prevalence of the Human', Renascence, vol.16 (1965), p.148-156.

Labor, E. 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.17 (1959), Item 30.

Larsen, E. 'The Barrier of Language: The Irony of Language in Faulkner', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.19-31.

Lawson, L.A. 'The Grotesque - Comic in the Snopes Trilogy', Literature and Psychology, vol.15 (1965), p.107-119.

Lehan, Richard 'Faulkner's Poetic Prose: Style and Meaning in The Bear', College English, vol.27 (1965-1966), p.243-247.

Levine, Paul 'Love and Money in the Snopes Trilogy', College English, vol.3 (1961-1962), p.196-203.

Levins, L.G. 'The Four Narrative Perspectives in Absalom, Absalom!', Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, vol.85 (1970), p.35-47.

Lewis, R.W.B. 'William Faulkner: The Hero in the New World', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.204, 218.

Longley, J.L. Jr. 'Faulkner's Byron Bunch ', Georgia Review, vol.15 (1961), p.197-208.

Longley, J.L. 'Joe Christmas: The Hero in the Modern World', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.265-278.

Marcus, S. 'Snopes Revisited', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.382-391.

Markovic, Vida 'Interview with Faulkner', Texas Studies in Language and Literature, vol.5 (1964), p.463-466.

McLaughlin, C.D. 'Religion in Yoknapatawpha County ', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1963), p.2915-2916.

Mellard, J.M. 'Humor in Faulkner's Novels: Its Development, Forms and Functions', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1964), p.480-481.

Meriwether, J.B. 'Sartoris and Snopes: An Early Notice', Library Chronicle of the University of Texas, vol.7 (1962), p.36-39.

Meriwether, J.B. 'Notes on the Textural History of The Sound and The Fury', The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, vol.56 (1962), p.285-316.

Meriwether, J.B. 'The Text of Faulkner's Books: An Introduction and Some Notes', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.9 (1963-1964), p.159-170.

Meriwether, J.B. 'Faulkner and The South', in The Dilemma of the Southern Writer, ed. by R.K. Meeker, Vancouver, 1961, p.143-163.

Meriwether, J.B. 'Faulkner and the New Criticism', Books Abroad, vol.37 (1963), p.265-268.

Meriwether, J.B. 'Early Notices of Faulkner by Phil Stone and Louis Cochran', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17 (1963-1965), p.136-164.

Meriwether, J.B. 'The Place of The Unvanquished in William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Series', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.19 (1959), p.2957.

Miller, D.M. 'Faulkner's Women', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.3-17.

Millgate, M. 'William Faulkner: The Problem of Point of View' in Patterns of Commitment in American Literature, ed. by Marston LaFrance, Toronto, 1967, p.181-192.

Millgate, M. 'William Faulkner', British Assocation for American Studies, vol.5 (1962), p.43-46.

Millgate, Jane 'Short Story into Novel: Faulkner's Reworking of "Gold is Not Always", English Studies, vol.45 (1964), p.310-317.

Mitchell, C. 'The Wounded Will of Faulkner's Barn Burner', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.11 (1965), p.185-189.

Moldenhauer, J.J. 'Unity of Theme and Structure in Wild Palms', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.305-322.

Monteiro, G. 'Bankruptcy in Time: A Reading of William Faulkner's Pylon', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.4 (1958-1959), p.9-18.

Moreland, A.L. 'A Study of Faulkner's Presentation of Some Problems That Relate to Negroes', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.21 (1961), p.1192.

Morrison, Sister Kristin 'Faulkner's Joe Christmas: Character through Voice', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.2 (1961), p.419-443.

Moses, W.R. 'Water, Water Everywhere: Old Man and A Farewell to Arms', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.5 (1959-1960), p.172-174.

Moses, W.R. 'The Unity of The Wild Palms', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.2 (1956), p.125-131.

Muste, J.M. — 'The Failure of Love in Go Down Moses', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.10 (1964), p.366-378.

Nestrick, W.V. — 'The Function of Form in 'The Bear', Section IV', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.12 (1966), p.131-137.

Norwood-Pratt, J. — 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.23 (1964-1965), Item 37.

O'Connor, W. van — 'Faulkner on Broadway', Kenyon Review, vol.21 (1959), p.334-336.

Pearce, R. — 'Faulkner's One Ring Circus', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, vol.7 (1966), p.270-283.

Perluck, H.A. — 'The Heart's Driving Complexity': An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's "The Bear", Accent, vol.19-20 (1959-1960), p.23-46.

Player, R.P. — 'The Negro Character in the Fiction of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.27 (1966), p.483A.

Pollock, A.S. — 'The Current of Time in the Novels of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.7276-7277.

Price-Stephens, G. — 'Faulkner and The Royal Air Force', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17 (1963-1965), p.123-124.

Price-Stephens, G. — 'The British Reception of William Faulkner, 1929-1962', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.18 (1963-1965), p.119-200.

Pouillon, Jean — 'Time and Destiny in Faulkner', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, 1966, p.79-86.

Pummer, H.F. — 'Light in August: A Letter by Faulkner', English Language Notes, vol.4 (1966), p.47-48.

Ransom, John Crowe — 'William Faulkner: An Impression', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.294-295.

Rice, P. Blair — 'Faulkner's Crucifixion', Kenyon Review, vol.16 (1954), p.661-670.

Richardson, H.E. 'Anderson and Faulkner', American Literature, vol.36 (1964-1965), p.298-314.

Richardson, H.E. 'William Faulkner: From Past to Self-Discovery: A Study of his Life and Work Through Sartoris (1929)', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.24 (1964), p.3756.

Richardson, H.E. 'Faulkner, Anderson and Their Tall Take', American Literature, vol.34 (1962-1963), p.287-291.

Risoldi, N.M. 'Game Consciousness and Game Metaphor in the Works of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.24 (1964), p.4196-4197.

Roberts, J.L. 'The Individual and The Family: Faulkner's As I Lay Dying', Arizona Quarterly, vol.16 (1960), p.26-38.

Roberts, J.L. 'Snopeslore: The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion', University of Kansas City Review, vol.28 (1961), p.65-71.

Rossky, W. 'The Reivers: Faulkner's Tempest', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.18 (1963-1965), p.82-93.

Rubel, W.G. 'The Structural Function of the Christ Figure in the Fiction of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1965), p.5941-5942.

Sadler, D.F. 'The Second Mrs. Bundren: Another Look at the Ending of As I Lay Dying', American Literature vol.37 (1965-1966), p.65-69.

Seiden, Melvin 'Faulkner's Ambiguous Negro', The Massachusetts Review, vol.4 (1963), p.675-690.

Shanaghan, Fr. M.M. 'A Critical Analysis of the Fictional Technique of William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.20 (1960), p.4663.

Sidney, G.R. 'Faulkner in Hollywood: A Study of His Career as a Scenarist', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.20 (1960), p.2810.

Simon, J.K. 'What are you laughing at, Darl? Madness and Humor in As I Lay Dying', College English, vol.25 (1963), p.104-110.

Simon, J.K. 'Faulkner and Sartre: Metamorphosis and the Obscene', Contemporary Literature, vol.15 (1963), p.216-225.

Simon, J.K. 'The Scene and Imagery of Metamorphosis in As I Lay Dying', Criticism, vol.7 (1965), p.1-22.

Simpson, H.A. 'The Short Stories of William Faulkner' Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1962), p.1709.

Simpson, H.A. 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.21 (1962-1963), Item 27.

Slabey, R.M. 'Myth and Ritual in Light in August', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.2, (1960-1961), p.329-349.

Slabey, R.M. 'Faulkner's Sanctuary', Explicator, vol.21 (1962-1963), Item 45.

Sleeth, I.L. 'William Faulkner: A Bibliography of Criticism', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.8 (1962), p.18-43.

Sowder, W.J. 'Col. Thomas Sutpen as Existentialist Hero', American Literature, vol.33 (1961-1962), p.485-499.

Stavrou, C.N. 'Ambiguity in Faulkner's Affirmation', Personalist, vol.40 (1959), p.169-177.

Stein, R.E. 'The World Outside Yoknapatawpha: A Study of Five Novels by William Faulkner', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.26 (1965), p.2225.

Stein, William Bysshe 'Faulkner's Devil', Modern Language Notes, vol.76 (1961), p.731-732.

Steinberg, A. 'Intruder in the Dust: Faulkner as Psychologist of the Southern Psyche', Literature and Psychology, vol.15 (1965), p.120-124.

Steinberg, Aaron 'Absalom, Absalom!: The Irretrievable Bon', College Language Association Journal, vol.9 (1965), p.61-67.

Stewart, D.H. 'The Purpose of Faulkner's Ike', Criticism, vol.3 (1961), p.333-342.

Stewart, G.R. and Backus, J.M. 'Each in Its Ordered Place: Structure and Narrative in "Benjy's Section" of The Sound and The Fury', American Literature, vol.29 (1957-1958), p.440-456.

Stewart, R. 'William Faulkner's Literary Reputation in America', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.23 (1962), p.631.

Stonesifer, R.J. 'Faulkner's The Hamlet in the Classroom', College English, vol.20 (1958), p.71-77.

Stonesifer, R.J. 'Faulkner's The Bear: A Note on Structure', College English, vol.23 (1961-1962), p.219-223.

Strandberg, V. 'Faulkner's Poor Parson and The Technique of Inversion', Sewanee Review, vol.73 (1965), p.181-190.

Sullivan, W.P. 'William Faulkner and The Community', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.22 (1961), p.4355.

Sultan, S. 'Call Me Ishmael: The Hagiography of Isaac McCaslin', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.3 (1961-1962), p.50-66.

Swiggart, P. 'Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury', Explicator, vol.22 (1963-1964), Item 31.

Swiggart, P. 'Moral and Temporal Order in The Sound and The Fury', Sewanee Review, vol.61 (1953), p.221-237.

Swiggart, P. 'The Snopes Trilogy', Sewanee Review, vol.68 (1960), p.319-325.

Tate, Alan 'William Faulkner, 1897-1962', Sewanee Review, vol.71 (1963), p.160-164.

Taylor, W.F. Jr. 'Let My People Go: The White Man's Heritage in Go Down Moses', South Atlantic Quarterly, vol.58 (1959), p.20-32.

Taylor, W.F. Jr. 'The Roles of the Negro in William Faulkner's Fiction', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.25 (1964), p.2990.

Thompson, L. 'A Defense of Difficulties in William Faulkner's Art', The Carrel Journal of the Friends of the University Library, vol.4 (1963), p.7-19.

Thompson, L. 'Mirror Analogues in The Sound and The Fury', in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1960, p.211-225.

Thonon, R. 'William Faulkner: From The Hamlet to The Town', English Studies in Africa, vol.1-2, (1958-1959), p.190-202.

Tick, S. 'The Unity of Go Down Moses', Twentieth Century Literature, vol.8 (1962), p.67-73.

Toole, W.B.III. 'Faulkner's "That Evening Sun", Explicator, vol.21 (1962-1963), Item 52.

Torchiana, D.T. 'Faulkner's Pylon and The Structure of Modernity', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.3 (1957-1958), p.291-308.

Tritschler, Donald 'The Unity of Faulkner's Shaping Vision', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.5 (1959-1960), p.337-343.

Turaj, Frank 'The Dialectic in Faulkner's A Fable', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, vol.8 (1966), p.93-102.

Turner, Arlin 'William Faulkner, Southern Novelist', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.14 (1961), p.117-130.

Ulrey, P.A. 'Faulkner's Sanctuary and Requiem for a Nun: Songs of Innocence and Experience', Dissertation Abstracts, vol.24 (1963), p.2043-2044.

Warren, Robert Penn 'Faulkner: The South and the Negro', Southern Review, vol.1 (1965), p.501-529.

Watkins, Floyd, C. 'Delta Hunt', Southwest Review, vol.45 (1960), p.266-272.

Watkins, Floyd, C. 'What Happens in Absalom, Absalom!?, Modern Fiction Studies, vol.13 (1967), p.79-87.

Watkins, Floyd, C. 'William Faulkner, The Individual and the World', Georgia Review, vol.14 (1960), p.238-247.

Watkins, Floyd, C. and Young, T.P. 'Revisions of Style in Faulkner's The Hamlet', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.5 (1959-1960), p. 372-336.

Way, Brian 'William Faulkner', Critical Quarterly, vol.3 (1961), p.42-53.

Webb, J.W. 'Faulkner, Writes a Fable', University of Mississippi Studies in English, vol.7 (1966), p.1-13.

West, R.B. Jr. 'Atmosphere and Theme in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily"', in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. by F.J. Hoffman and O.W. Vickery, Michigan, 1954, p.259-267.

West, R.B. Jr. 'Faulkner's Light in August: A Vew of Tragedy', Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, vol.1 (1960), p.5-12.

Wheeler, O.B. 'Some Uses of Folk Humor by Faulkner', Mississippi Quarterly, vol.17 (1963-1965), p.107-122.

Wheeler, O.B. 'Faulkner's Wilderness,' American Literature, vol.31 (1959-1960), p.127-136.

Wilson, E. 'William Faulkner's Reply to the Civil-Rights Program', in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by R.P. Warren, New Jersey, 1966, p.219-225.

Wynne, C. 'Aspects of Space: John Marin and William Faulkner', American Quarterly, vol.16 (1964), p.60-71.

Young, James Dean 'Quentin's Maundy Thursday', Tulane Studies in English, vol.10-11 (1960-1961), p.143-151.

Zink, Karl E. 'Faulkner's Garden: Women and The Immemorial Earth', Modern Fiction Studies, vol.2 (1956), p.139-149.

Zoellner, Robert, H. 'Faulkner's Prose Style in Absalom, Absalom!', American Literature, vol.30 (1958-1959), p.486-502.