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Abused Children in Two Faulkner Novels

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1981

ABUSED CHILDREN IN TWO FAULKNER NOVELS

A Thesis

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Western Kentucky University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Teresa Gail Moore

December 1981

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ABUSED CHILDREN IN TWO FAULKNER NOVELS

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ABUSED CHILDREN IN TWO FAULKNER NOVELS

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To William Faulkner, art must bolster man; it must somehow remind man of those truths toward which his race has struggled and must continue to struggle if life is to have meaning and significance. Faulkner's works meet this aim by dramatizing the conflict individuals face if they seek to wrench from life a morality that allows them placement within the larger human community.

Both The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! require a re-examination in light of Faulkner's artistic aim. For at the center of both novels are children inescapably threatened by a corrupted moral tradition--a decayed antebellum southern morality. Such is the legacy Jason and Caroline Compson and Thomas and Ellen Sutpen bequeath their children; that is, the Compson children and the Sutpen children receive as part of their inheritance a moral tradition stripped of its base--a concern for the well being of others. The dilemma, then, that confronts these children is whether they choose to adhere to the moral tradition bequeathed them, to deny it, or to endeavor to transcend it. For different reasons, Jason and Caddy succumb to the moral code they inherited. Quentin, Henry, and Judith attempt to transcend but finally embrace

the very code they waged war on.

What is important, though, in Faulkner's handling of the abusing legacy that each child in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! inherits is not the degree to which each seems irrevocably doomed; rather, what is crucial is the degree to which each struggles to achieve a moral identity that affords placement within the family of man. Courage, strength, honor, pity are truths toward which the individual must aspire: they are the goal of a life-long struggle that cannot be wholly successful because it aims for ideals. But for Faulkner, the struggle itself--not its outcome--is all.

Introduction

Inevitably, an attempt to deal critically with a piece of literature leads to evaluation. No matter how intensively a critic examines the parts of a literary work, he must ultimately reassemble those parts and take in the whole of the work and its unified effect. Only such a comprehensive view enables a grasp of that meaning undergirding the work; otherwise, the critic will find himself discussing a plethora of themes. Art's moral impetus depends upon a unity of meaning, and the critic who endeavors to discuss segments ends with only a partial evaluation if he fails to discuss the whole. William Faulkner's literary works have long been subjected to a multitude of critical approaches; nevertheless, too often the totality of meaning and moral significance of many of those works have been ignored. His The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! suffer this neglect. If one tries to study the children in these novels, then both require a re-examination based upon Faulkner's avowed effort to endow the vicissitudes of life with significance, and the starting place for such a study is with Faulkner's statements concerning his artistic intent.

Upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950, Faulkner concluded his acceptance speech with an expression of his personal belief in man and in the value of art. Even

more surprising than these disclosures was his revelation of what had been the aim of his life's literary efforts--an aim he referred to as the duty and privilege of every author:

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 pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.¹

Until his delivery of this speech, Faulkner had never stood upon so public a platform and made so eloquent a statement of his artistic premises.

The speech met with a furor of mixed responses. Although Faulkner had completed the bulk of his writing by 1950, he had enjoyed little positive recognition of his artistry. Malcolm Cowley's 1946 publication of The Portable Faulkner was largely responsible for bringing Faulkner's works out of the dark and back into print, but the emergence was a gradual one. Particularly since the 1932 appearance of his Sanctuary, the publication Faulkner prefaced with a confession of having begun the work with one intent--to make money, critics castigated Faulkner as a nihilist and an opportunistic sensationalist.² Amidst such a backdrop of heated critical censure, the 1950 acceptance speech was virtually lost. For the most part, critics either

denied the speech's validity outright, deeming it an appropriate enough response to an auspicious occasion, or else gave the speech only a nodding recognition.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Faulkner never accompanied his innovations in the novel's form with detailed explanations; therefore, only from the works themselves could his theory of the novel be extracted. Nevertheless, he did write in accordance with one controlling principle--art must bolster man. Seminal to what Faulkner came to hold as the ultimate purpose of his art was his early reading of Henry Sienkiewicz's Pan Michael, a novel which concludes, "Written in the course of a number of years and with no little toil, for the strengthening of men's hearts."³ Through the years Faulkner lost none of the passage's import; and, as Cowley notes, "there are echos of the phrase, both magnified and distant, like thunder among the hills" throughout the Nobel Prize address.⁴

Faulkner's belief that art should serve in the uplifting of men's hearts did much more than add weight and eloquence to his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. It was a belief Faulkner made foundational to his art. Voiced both before and after 1950, Faulkner's remarks regarding his artistic aim revolve around the individual, certain ageless truths, and the struggle that unavoidably ensues whenever man seeks to attain those truths. To charges that his works exploited what was base in human nature or presented a world devoid of hope or meaning,

Faulkner answered in the only terms that art allows: a writer must "use the evil to try to tell some truth."⁵ Yet Faulkner wrote neither to disparage nor to preach. Aware that within man is the potential for good as well as evil, Faulkner believed that man's prevailing hinged solely upon his effort to do so. Art, Faulkner explained, "arrests motion, which is life, by artificial means and holds it fixed so that . . . it moves again," and in doing so is the "salvation of mankind."⁶

Faulkner, like Hawthorne, aimed for the truths of the heart, an aim that the children in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! advance. These truths he referred to as "verities," to be distinguished from virtues which are sought for their intrinsic goodness.⁷ Faulkner believed that man has practiced and must continue to practice the verities "simply because they are the edifice on which the whole history of man has been founded" and through which the human race has endured.⁸ Repeatedly, he contended that the artist's creation must be a responsible truth-telling, a "record of man's endeavor" so carefully crafted as to "take the truth and set it on fire."⁹ Man's salvation depends upon his struggle to adhere to those truths of the heart, not upon his ever actually reaching those truths. Thus, Faulkner's world vision partakes of the tragic, and is not nihilistic, because to him "man's immortality is that he is faced with a tragedy which he can't beat and he still tries to do something with it."¹⁰ As for the role art plays in such a vision, redemptive power resides within the art

object. Whether or not the artist determines to better the human condition is unimportant so long as the artist "is able to communicate his message."¹¹ Obviously, such power bestows upon art both a moral and religious significance. Christianity, Faulkner once explained, shows man "how to discover himself, evolve for himself a moral code and standard within his capacities and aspirations, by giving him a matchless example of suffering and sacrifice and the promise of hope."¹² Great art fulfills the same function.

Because of his intense concern with the individual, the verities, and the unbridgeable chasm between them, Faulkner rightly included himself in the "humanist school."¹³ That his art should show man in conflict, be it a conflict against man, nature, or the self, was Faulkner's manner of meeting the responsibility which every human individual faces. For, as Faulkner stated, all men must fight "to save mankind from being desouled as the stallion or boar is gelded; to save the individual from anonymity before it is too late and humanity has vanished from the animal called man."¹⁴

Given the abundance of his statements concerning his art and its uplifting purpose, the question still stands: can Faulkner's works be measured by his own standard? The proof, as Warren Beck succinctly puts it, "is in the works themselves."¹⁵ Both The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! contain such proof. These novels can no longer be dismissed as allegorical interpretations of the South's decline and fall or as pathos-

filled renditions of a family's destruction, readings as myopic as those which equate Faulkner's works with reverberating screams of darkest despair.

Faulkner, like other Southern writers of the twentieth century, made the plight of the individual the key to his stories.¹⁶ For this reason, in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! his handling of Southern families in crisis centers around the children--innocent legatees of an abusing inheritance--and the conflict within both novels stems from each individual child's struggle to find meaning in a world governed by an outworn and corrupted tradition of morality. To illustrate, Absalom, Absalom!'s protagonist, Thomas Sutpen, driven with a vengeance to create his own dynasty and thus actualize the mythical design of a Southern plantation, acts as both victim and victimizer. Adhering to a code shorn of any concern for human welfare, Sutpen destroys his own life and the lives of his family members. Likewise, Jason and Caroline Compson of The Sound and the Fury are the progenitors of an equally destructive code of behavior, one which psychologically cripples and eventually defeats their children. This almost genetic transmission of a decadent morality is important in both novels because of the force with which it molds the characters of the children and, consequently, determines the nature of the struggle they must engage in to survive as moral individuals. What Faulkner reveals in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! is the struggle

that each individual must undertake if he is to meet his need for some code of behavior that will give meaning to life. For, as Faulkner consistently argued and as his fiction makes clear, each individual must evaluate his legacy of moral values, discarding those no longer applicable and striving to retain those unadulterated truths which sustain. A failure to accept this responsibility leads to moral, and ultimately spiritual, stagnation.

Chapter I

The Genesis of Abuse

Time, to Faulkner, is a continuum. Certainly the very structures of The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! make manifest his conceptualization of time as a fluidity of motion. Yet the characters within these novels doggedly superimpose upon time logical divisions of past, present, and future. Few come to Quentin Compson's realization:

Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm. . . .¹

As Faulkner explained at a University of Virginia session on the novel, "Time is, and if there's no such thing as was, then there's no such thing as will be. . . . 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."² This definition of time as a "sum" of all human consciousnesses points to an important distinction between Faulkner's notion of time and a Lockian subjective time; for, in the Faulknerian

sense, time lies not within but exists apart from individual minds, all-encompassing, as though in a perpetual state of "fullness." Cause and effect, like the divisions of past and present, merge, becoming indiscernible in time's vortex. Man's error, however, resides not so much within his insistence upon logical or associative orderings of time as it does within the curtailment of vision (hence, understanding) that results from such abstractions. Tragedy, then, as Faulkner's novels frequently show, befalls those whose ophthalmia blinds them to the presence of the past and the pastness of the present. "No man is himself," according to Faulkner, "he is the sum of his past."³

The ramifications of such a stance on man's condition are crucial to an understanding of Faulkner's fiction. One corollary idea of particular importance is that of the transference of moral tradition through time. Edmund L Volpe observes in Faulkner's works a presentation of the inexorable force with which "social man" is "determined by his relations to his parents and his society."⁴ Being recipients of a "heritage of codes and concepts which prohibit a feeling response to life," Faulkner's characters, suggests Volpe, face an unswerving doom of total isolation.⁵ In brief, Volpe sees in Faulkner's works an exertion of psychological determinism.

Sigmund Freud, in treating the psychical personality, identifies the super-ego (that division of the psyche which observes, judges, and punishes the self) as the "vehicle of

tradition." Tracing the development of the personality, Freud explains that the super-ego is born when parental authority becomes internalized in the previously amoral child through a process of "identification." Freud explains that because "parents and authorities analogous to them follow the precepts of their own super-egos in educating children," what results is that one super-ego serves as a model of construction for another. Hence, according to Freud, moral tradition undergoes a direct transference across minds:

Mankind never lives entirely in the present. The past, the tradition of the race and of the people, lives on in the ideologies of the super-ego, and yields only slowly to the influence of the present and to new change.⁶

Interestingly, Faulkner always denied any knowledge of Freudian psychology, quipping once, "I have never read him. Neither did Shakespeare. I doubt if Melville did either, and I'm sure Moby Dick didn't."⁷ Still, the children in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! suffer an all-too-apparent abuse because of their parents' inability to preserve and bequeath a life-sustaining moral tradition. In neither novel, however, did Faulkner seek to emphasize psychological determinism as the power by which free will is annihilated. In other words, the significance of the children's lives in these two novels emerges from the action that they take against their dire legacy. The evidence of a struggle is all. Thus, as Faulkner put it, "That they go down doesn't matter. It's

how they go under."⁸

Before the nature and outcome of the children's struggle in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! can be examined, an awareness of precisely what they are up against must be achieved. Melvin Backman has stated that for Faulkner the family unit fulfills two important functions: it is a "preserver of tradition," but it is also that which nurtures the individual, being the "fundamental group from which an individual receives the love that brings identity and that makes life livable."⁹ The families of The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! fail on both counts. It is this failure of a basic cultural institution with which the children in both novels must contend.¹⁰

Faulkner referred to The Sound and the Fury as his "most magnificent failure," the one over which he most agonized in the attempt to dramatize his conception of "an image, a very moving image . . . of the children."¹¹ And it was so moving an image as to compel Faulkner to create a deep and poignant novel. The Sound and the Fury's power, pinpoints Cleanth Brooks, arises from the "sense of frustration and 'entrapment'" which permeates the novel.¹² This haunting mood is particularly felt in sections one through three, which record, in turn, the consciousness of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson. Faulkner, in effect, innovatively explored the history of the Compson family, a "rotting family" in a "rotting house," from the inside out.¹³ As Amos N. Wilder notes, The Sound and the Fury was so vivid an expansion of Faulkner's germinal image of the

children as to make clear their "meager and irremediably injured early years . . . , the prenatal history, as it were, of later giant traumas and obsessions."¹⁴

With regard to this "prenatal history," so important to the origin and momentum of later actions, critics tend to divide in their attribution of blame for the devastating influence exerted on the lives of Benjy, Caddy, Quentin, and Jason Compson. Some, with differing degrees of severity, accuse the children's mother of being the sole arbiter of their doom; others, focusing upon and seeking to explain the suicide of the Compson male heir, name the father. However, to assign primary or secondary causality to either Mr. or Mrs. Compson only obscures their joint responsibility for the twisted natures of their children. To borrow and extend Richard Poirier's offhanded but penetrating observation, Caroline Compson represents the "spiritual deadend" which Jason Compson III "pathetically articulates."¹⁵ In The Sound and the Fury neither mother nor father approximates the role of an ideal parent--theirs is an influence of intense reciprocity.

Mrs. Compson envisions herself the incarnation of the Southern lady ideal, an antebellum construct which not only made woman the center of the family but which also, according to W. J. Cash, apotheosized woman into a "mystic symbol" of Southern culture and led to "downright gyneolatry."¹⁶ Yet none worship at the altar of Caroline Compson, and with good

reason. Her concept of self is, in fact, a rationalization, a grand delusion, which enables her to shun sordid reality and thus avoid any involvement that might entail responsibility for her own or others' sins.

Caroline Bascomb Compson is a lady for one reason--being a Bascomb, a family "every bit as well born" as the Compsons (TSAF, p. 53), she is ipso facto a lady. Something of a false premise, however, couches within this logic. For, Mrs. Compson, despite her assertions to the contrary, labors under a suspicion of social inferiority. Obsessed with the discrepancy between her own heritage and that of her husband--her son Quentin explains, "because one of our forefathers was a governor and three were generals and Mother's weren't" (TSAF, p. 125)--she drinks from a poisoned chalice and forces her children to do the same. As female defender of the Bascomb name, Caroline Compson insists upon a sharp division of her immediate family into Bascombs and Compsons. She, notes Volpe, aligns "herself, her brother Maury and her son Jason" against her husband, Caddy, and Quentin.¹⁷ Thus, she pleads with Mr. Compson: "You must let me go away I cannot stand it let me have Jason and you keep the others they're not my flesh and blood like he is strangers nothing of mine and I am afraid of them . . ." (TSAF, p. 128). Mrs. Compson makes her sense of enmity well known.

Ironically, however, these very enemies provide Mrs. Compson a path to martyrdom. That is, compounding her unease regarding the social standing of the Bascombs is her awareness of having

committed essentially one crime against her maiden family.

She, at one point, confesses to her husband:

I thought that Benjamin was punishment enough for any sins I have committed I thought he was my punishment for putting aside my pride and marrying a man who held himself above me I don't complain I loved him above all of them because of it because my duty . . . I see now that I have not suffered enough I see now that I must pay for your sins as well as mine. . . . (TSAF, p. 127)

The passage remarkably illuminates Faulkner's characterization of Caroline Compson. As Lawrence E. Bowling explains, within this confession she "pays herself a backhanded compliment by pretending that the only 'sin' she has been guilty of is humility (chief of the Christian virtues); whereas her real fault is pride (chief of the seven deadly sins).¹⁸ For this one error, this one infraction of her duty to exalt the Bascomb name (and concomitantly secure her unsubstantiated self image) Mrs. Compson is, to follow her own confused logic, sorely burdened by what she terms the Compson "bad blood" (TSAF, p. 128). In other words, the Compsons are her scourge and so she sees, among other tribulations, Benjy's idiocy, Caddy's adolescent promiscuity, Caddy and Quentin's "always conspiring" against her (TSAF, p. 326), Caddy's eventual moral suicide, and having to raise Caddy's illegitimate daughter as God's judgment, the dispersement of His wrath. It might be of interest to point out here that Mrs. Compson's outburst, when she thinks that her grand-daughter has followed in her son's footsteps and

killed herself, would exclude suicides from the list of divine retribution. Even God, suggests Mrs. Compson, "would not permit" a lady's hands to be stained with blood (TSAF, p. 374).

Caroline Compson is, as Volpe describes her, a "self-absorbed" and self-pitying woman whose one undeviating action is her "retreat" to her bedroom, where she can nurse her "psychosomatic headaches."¹⁹ She is, thus, the very opposite of the Southern idealized lady who through fortitude and compassion sustains her family and, consequently, her culture. Yet Jason Compson III, the father in The Sound and the Fury, seems quite content to allow his wife her visions of grandeur; for, as he tells his son Quentin, "no compson has ever disappointed a lady" (TSAF, p. 221). This concession, however, comes as a natural result of his attitude toward all of those ideals postulated in the Southern code: to Mr. Compson, honor, strength, courage, and pity are but words which, though once able to stimulate heroic action, serve in the present as mere echoing reminders of their loss.

Mr. Compson makes a limited number of appearances in The Sound and the Fury, but he wields a profound influence upon his children, especially Quentin, upon whom he levels his nihilistic philosophy. Mr. Compson instructs Quentin:

Man is the sum of his misfortunes. One day you'd think misfortune would get tired, but then time is your misfortune. . . . A gull on an invisible wire

attached through space dragged. You carry the symbol of your frustration into eternity. (TSAF, p. 129)

Consistently, Quentin's father defines man strictly in terms of the past, and in doing so he negates the worth of man's taking action in the present or in the future. Furthermore, man's past actions, according to Mr. Compson, give little cause for triumph; for they, however heroic and redeeming, endure no better than did Christ's, being gradually "worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels" (TSAF, p. 94). In brief, time flows relentlessly onward, ever increasing the distance between man and his past, between man and whatever may once have given stability and meaning to his life. Mrs. Compson never realizes, as does Quentin, that her husband, far from harboring a sense of Compson superiority, believes that "all men are just accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from the trash heaps where all previous dolls had been thrown away" (TSAF, p. 218). Mr. Compson sees no distinctions of value among men because he, in essence, denies value any continuous existence. All is fleeting, according to Mr. Compson's world view; even the need for something of value is "temporary"--"there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was" (TSAF, pp. 221-22). To Quentin, to all of his children, Jason Compson III bequeaths this theory of retrogression.

Benjy, Caddy, Quentin, and Jason have for a father a man who, with his whiskey and his self assurance that nothing

really matters in the end, retains from his heritage only a nostalgic appreciation for his forefathers' possession of "something . . . of decency and pride even after they had begun to fail" (TSAF, p. 415). And for a mother, the children have a living representation of Mr. Compson's philosophy: she is, through her "passivity," Bowling explains, "the personification of death itself."²⁰ That is, as Brooks characterizes her, she damns not by an active exertion of evil but by her very inaction, by being a "cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships."²¹ Both father and mother attest to the absence of honor, strength, courage, and compassion--the former by declaration and the latter by example. Mr. Compson confines these moral ideals to the past. Caroline Compson transmogrifies honor into a false pride of family, compassion into self pity; and any strength and courage she may have once had were spent as she climbed the steps to her bedroom.

As parents, then, Caroline and Jason Compson fail their children. They offer their children no sustaining verities. And as for love, Mrs. Compson neither expresses nor gives any behavioral indication of the term's meaning. Though Mr. Compson loves his children (the early image of his holding young Benjy, Caddy, and Jason in his lap is certainly the most dominant, if not the only, instance of an obvious display of parental affection), his love proves ineffective against his failure, as Volpe summarizes it, "to provide them the security

and strength they require."²² Thus, Benjy, Caddy, Quentin, and Jason grow up in what "is not really a family but only a group of related individuals seeking shelter under one roof."²³ In the dark abyss created by their parents, the Compson children are, indeed, "lost somewhere . . . without even a ray of light" (TSAF, p. 215).

Though theirs is a different time and situation, the children of Absalom, Absalom! are equally "lost." Absalom, Absalom! is, on one level, the story of Thomas Sutpen, a man who in 1833 descended upon Jefferson, Mississippi, with one purpose--to "establish a dynasty."²⁴ But the re-creation of that story is the task of Quentin Compson, who in 1910, approximately five months before his suicide, sits in his room at Harvard and with his roommate attempts to reconstruct the piecemeal Sutpen history from information given him by Rosa Coldfield and his father. A strong link between The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! exists, though some have argued to the contrary. To Quentin, the Sutpen story comes as a part of his family history (due to his grandfather's involvement in the story) and as a part of his Southern heritage. Yet Quentin's interest in Thomas Sutpen's life transcends that of historical chronicler. As Poirier states, "Quentin hopes, when he begins, that in the world in which Sutpen lived, unlike his own world in The Sound and the Fury, violence was of some moral consequence and evil was at least a violation of a corruptible but not wholly devitalized moral

code."²⁵ Thus, in Absalom, Absalom! Quentin seeks to satisfy the need that his mother and father have abusively neglected--from the past enveloping Sutpen's history, Quentin hopes to extract his moral identity.

Quentin Compson's forage for proof of the Southern code's validity--his desire to see such ideals as honor, strength, courage, compassion grounded in human experience--uncovers a titan who, because of the very nature of his ambition, is both unwilling and unable to provide such evidence. Thomas Sutpen severs what to him becomes the Gordian knot of morality and a humane concern for mankind; in other words, he never learns that, as Faulkner argues, "one has got to belong to the human family."²⁶ This inability defeats Sutpen's effort to "establish a dynasty," and it is the force which destroys the lives of his family members.

The children of Absalom, Absalom! suffer the same deprivation of a sustaining moral tradition as do the Compson children of The Sound and the Fury. Nevertheless, as Brooks has rightly cautioned, "It is the quality of Sutpen's innocence that we must understand if we are to understand the meaning of his tragedy."²⁷ Bowling offers an illuminating distinction between two traditional definitions of innocence: "In the Puritan tradition, innocence is considered to be synonymous with purity and virtue; in the humanist tradition, innocence is viewed not as a virtue but as a negative or neutral state, which must be lost before one can achieve knowledge."²⁸ With

Sutpen, Faulkner succeeded in creating a representation of this latter brand of innocence--the very antithesis of that knowledge of truths toward which man must strive if his race is to endure and prevail. Yet Sutpen, not simply a flat personification of this fatal ignorance, also engages in a struggle, one of far-reaching tragic consequences, and the seed of his and his family's destruction lies in his childhood. Like Quentin, the reader must grasp the whole of Sutpen's life in order to grasp its effects upon his descendants.

To Quentin's grandfather, Sutpen narrates the events surrounding his family's move from what would eventually be named West Virginia to the Southern coast. This transplantation is important because with it young Sutpen, born and raised in a region of pioneer individualism, encounters civilization, "a country all divided and fixed and neat with a people living on it all divided and fixed and neat because of what color their skins happened to be and what they happened to own" (AA, p. 221). Sutpen's slide down the mountain entails a slow initiation into the inequalities which are the basis of Tidewater culture. However, when fourteen-year-old Sutpen carries a message from his father to the front door of a plantation house and is told by a black servant, "even before he had time to say what he came for, never to come to that front door but to go around to the back" (AA, p. 232), that gradual awakening becomes an epiphany.

The occasion of this affront marks Sutpen's startling

realization of his own insignificance, a realization that effects his "design." Retreating to the woods in order to think, Sutpen sees himself through the planter's eyes:

as cattle, creatures heavy and without grace, brutally evacuated into a world without hope or purpose for them, who would in turn spawn with brutish and vicious prolixity, populate, double treble and compound, fill space and earth with a race whose future would be a succession of cut-down and patched and made-over garments bought on exorbitant credit because they were white people . . . with for sole heritage that expression on a balloon face bursting with laughter which had looked out at some unremembered and nameless progenitor who had knocked at a door when he was a little boy and had been told by a nigger to go around to the back. (AA, p. 235)

Against this destiny, Sutpen dedicates himself to securing "land and niggers and a fine house" (AA, p. 238). Hence, he immediately embarks for the West Indies in order to make his fortune, believing "that all that was necessary was courage and shrewdness and the one he knew he had and the other he believed he could learn" (AA, p. 244). Sutpen's faith that his dream could be accomplished was childlike, but, as his subsequent actions reveal, there was nothing childlike about his will to actualize that dream.

At Haiti, Sutpen came close to fulfilling his ambition. He established himself on a sugar plantation, married well, and had a son. Yet, something went wrong. Thirty years after his first disclosure of personal history, Sutpen, sitting in General Compson's office, looking back, and needing to explain says of his first wife, "I found that she was not and could

never be, through no fault of her own, adjunctive or incremental to the design I had in mind so I provided for her and put her aside" (AA, p. 240). Ilse Dusoir Lind refers to this repudiation as Sutpen's "first crime against humanity."²⁹ It is such and it is the first of a series, all of which originate in Sutpen's inability to gauge any event or action in terms of its moral or immoral consequences, that is, in terms of its effects on others.

At the age of twenty-five, Sutpen arrives in Jefferson: his possessions include the clothes he wears, a pair of pistols, and a roan horse. Within a matter of weeks, he adds to that list the hundred square miles that constitute Sutpen's Hundred. Two months later, Sutpen imports a crew of Haitian slaves, takes a French architect prisoner, and begins building his "fine house." In five years' time, the plantation stands complete with opulent furnishings, formal gardens, and cotton fields. Lacking only a wife and heir, Sutpen marries Ellen Coldfield and begets Henry and Judith. Finally, the "design" is made real, as though accomplished by sheer force of will alone, by what Rosa Coldfield expresses as a god-like command to "Be Sutpen's Hundred" (AA, p. 9).

This creation, too, results from Sutpen's "purblind innocence" (AA, p. 265). As he explains his strategy to General Compson, his method of actualizing his dream was simple and allowed swift action:

I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family-- incidentally of course, a wife. I set out to acquire these, asking no favor of any man. (AA, p. 263)

And acquire them Sutpen did, viewing all as the trappings necessary to complete his "design" and thus circumvent that destiny that would have made him a "nameless progenitor" of a brutish line of descent. Yet Sutpen's "abstract approach to the whole matter of living," explains Brooks, is the design's inherent imperfection--one which predetermines its failure:

Sutpen would seize upon "the traditional" as a pure abstraction--which, of course, is to deny its meaning. For him the tradition is not a way of life "handed down" or "transmitted" from the community, past and present, to the individual nurtured by it. It is an assortment of things to be possessed, not a manner of living that embodies certain values and determines men's conduct. The fetish objects are to be gained by sheer ruthless efficiency.³⁰

Because of Sutpen's total reliance on his reason, the eventual destruction of his family comes as no surprise. For it was his subservience to reason that, as Poirier asserts, made him unable to "infuse humanity into the 'ingredients' of his 'design.'"³¹

Absalom, Absalom! includes few glimpses of Judith and Henry's childhood; nevertheless, this omission makes Mr. Compson's and Rosa Coldfield's information about these children's abnormal behavior all the more emphatic. Despite their materialistic security, Judith and Henry, like the Compson children, are left to themselves and, hence, develop, as

Mr. Compson describes, an unusual telepathic communion:

They seemed at times to anticipate one another's actions as two birds leave a limb at the same instant; that rapport not like the conventional delusion of that between twins but rather such as might exist between two people who, regardless of sex or age or heritage of race or tongue, had been marooned at birth on a desert island: the island here Sutpen's Hundred. . . . (AA, p. 99)

Rosa Coldfield, herself a "crucified child" (AA, p. 8) because of her father's strict adherence to a coldly calculated Puritan morality and her spinster aunt's personification of female umbrage, narrates two episodes indicative of Sutpen's and Ellen's failure to ensure the normal development of their children's sexual identities. According to Rosa, six-year-old Judith, and not her brother, is the one who instigates horse races to church on Sundays and then reacts hysterically once Ellen puts a stop to them. And later, she is the one who watches calmly as Sutpen and a Negro fight, "both naked to the waist and gouging at one another's eyes"--it is Henry who sickens at the sight and leaves the scene "screaming and vomiting" (AA, p. 29).

Like Benjy, Caddy, Quentin, and Jason Compson, Judith and Henry Sutpen are deprived of any parental nurturing. Thomas Sutpen, as Backman notes, wrenches the institution of family from its "traditional function as a source of affection and social stability and individual identity" and transmutes it into an "instrument of self-procreation and of the founding

of a dynasty."³² Ellen Sutpen removes herself from reality by remaining in a chrysalis state of non-involvement, one so complete as to allow her virtually no influence on the lives of her young children. Furthermore, the Sutpen children are no better equipped with a sustaining code of morality than are the Compson children. Thus, the children of The Sound and the Fury and those of Absalom, Absalom! labor under an "inherited doom," as Robert Penn Warren states, and it is one that differs only in its conception.³³ That is, whereas Jason and Caroline Compson pass on to their children a "perverted reverence" for past values, Thomas Sutpen bequeaths a "vision of the future falsely grounded" because of his corruption of morality into a utilitarian tool.³⁴ Such is the nature of the force against which the children of both novels must struggle.

Chapter II

Perversions of the Psyche

Jason and Caroline Compson and Thomas and Ellen Sutpen, the victims of their own personal obsessions and neuroses, are all so self-contained as to be unable to love their children; hence, they are incapable of providing them with a moral code solidly grounded on love, on an altruistic concern for others. The doom, then, that these parents bequeath their children is a "special consciousness."¹ Their children either never undergo or never complete that normal development of personality by which the individual child breaks out of his egocentricity and, as an adult, takes an active and responsible part in the human community. Each child in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! suffers, to some degree, from this inherited curse, but it is the nature of the suffering and not the curse itself that Faulkner makes all important in these novels.

Faulkner spoke of The Sound and the Fury as a "tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter."² Such remarks indicate Caddy's (and by extension her daughter's) special significance, proof of which exists within the novel. For Caddy's story is, as Catherine B. Baum argues, one of tragic loss.³ The very wasteland environment of the Compson family perverts the love and destroys the spirited independence that should

enable Caddy to act successfully as protectress--a role doomed from the onset. The children in The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! all fight to wrench from life something of sustaining power, but Caddy's fight differs on one important count. Only she acts out of a completely selfless motive. That is, she struggles on behalf of her family, not of self, and her reward, ironically, is her family's parasitic feeding upon the very love which compels that struggle.

As The Sound and the Fury progresses, much more becomes "muddied" than just the seat of Caddy's drawers. Because the Compson children are all but literally abandoned by their parents, whatever sustaining love Quentin, Benjy, and Jason receive, they receive from their sister. She is, as Edmund L. Volpe notes, the "only vibrant, warm, and loving person in the family."⁴ Her acquiescence to her father's "Are you going to take good care of Maury" typifies her willingness to take on the guardian role her parents, especially the too-delicate Mrs. Compson, refuse (TSAF, p. 92). When Mrs. Compson decides to change five-year-old Maury's name to Benjamin, in order to prevent any slur her son's idiocy might cast upon the Bascombs, Caddy attempts to comfort her brother, who is always sensitive to change. Mrs. Compson, on the other hand, refuses even to hold him. To Benjy, limited as he is to a world of sensation, Caddy is love. Lawrance Thompson points out that the reader's initial image of Caddy corresponds to the one which pervades Benjy's consciousness--"the sensitive

and mothering Caddy whose love for Benjy evoked his love for her and gave meaning to his life."⁵ Furthermore, Thompson explains, although Faulkner never allows this image to leave the reader's awareness, he does present an antithetical image of Caddy: she becomes, as seen through the eyes of her mother, Quentin, and Jason, the "member of the family whose fall from innocence is said to have brought a peculiar disgrace on the entire family," one "considered equal to, or even greater than, that of Benjy's idiocy."⁶ As Cleanth Brooks asserts, Benjy serves as a "symbol of the degeneration of the Compson family," but he serves also as a "symbol of the very helplessness of love"--"as a gauge by which others' capacities for love can be judged."⁷ Measured accordingly, none of the Compson children possess a capacity for love that will vie with Caddy's. Forced to depend solely upon her sensitive ministrings, Benjy remains pacified, his small world intact, so long as Caddy remains unchanged and continues to smell "like trees." This important motif in The Sound and the Fury hearkens back to two scenes, for Benjy, of idyllic childhood; during both the branch scene (TSAF, pp. 19-22) and the tree climbing episode (TSAF, pp. 45-47), that which threatens to disrupt Benjy's world has yet to occur.

Caddy, as much as she loves Benjy, cannot stay the blossoming of her sexuality. When eleven-year-old Benjy reacts violently to her playing "dress up" and her wearing perfume, Caddy restores peace by changing and bathing. At age

sixteen, however, she cannot wash away the changes that Benjy's and her growth entails. Thirteen-year-old Benjy, a "big boy," must sleep alone. And Caddy, though she at one point promises Benjy "I won't anymore, ever" (TSAP, p. 48), continues to be attracted to men. Only Mr. Compson realizes that Caddy "must do things for women's reasons" (TSAP, p. 113), that her search for affection outside the Compson home results naturally from her needs as a maturing human individual, one who innocently and mistakenly equates physical gratification with love. As for the remaining Compsons, certainly Mrs. Compson and Quentin, they are horrified by Caddy's sexual precociousness; hence, they shame and degrade her so convincingly that she eventually confuses her need for human contact with sin. When Caddy gives herself to Dalton Ames in the summer of 1909, she loses, along with her virginity, whatever unifying power she once possessed within the Compson household.⁸ She becomes, in fact, the scapegoat for a family already undermined by a festering morality.

Because the Compson children receive from their parents only a vestige of the Southern moral tradition (that is, one in which such tenets as honor and chastity have become hollow means of preserving appearances), all of their actions betray a separation of morality from experience--from the "total context of humanity."⁹ Benjy's idiocy exempts him from having to deal with questions of morality, Caddy initially adheres to a sort of instinctual naturalism, and Jason seems oblivious

to the value of anything that does not bring material comfort. Only Quentin pays homage to the Southern moral code. However, he, living as he does in an environment devoid of operative values, so thoroughly consigns morality to the world of absolutes that Caddy's sensuality forces him to see a paralyzing "abyss" between what is and what "ought to be."¹⁰

In the epilogue to The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner described Quentin Compson as one "who loved not his sister's body but some concept of Compson honor precariously and (he knew well) only temporarily supported by the minute fragile membrane of her maidenhead" (TSAF, p. 411). Caddy's retention of a state of childlike innocence stands, thus, as vital to Quentin's world as it does to Benjy's. Yet, as Brooks observes, "Better to love Caddy as Benjy loves her than as Quentin loves her."¹¹ Quentin cannot bear to think that, as his father contends, virginity, like all moral precepts, is just another word. Caddy, however, refuses to live according to Quentin's morality. Her involvement in the real world, notes Lawrence E. Bowling, violates Quentin's "favorite absolute."¹² Therefore, when seven-year-old Caddy, playing at the branch, immodestly removes her wet dress, Quentin slaps her; and, when, some eight years later, she is caught kissing "some darn town squirt" (TSAF, p. 166), Quentin again slaps her and then scours her head in the grass. Unlike Mr. Compson, who explains Caddy's actions as being governed by some law of nature, and unlike the enervated Mrs. Compson, whose most

dramatic reaction to Caddy's unladylike behavior is the donning of black dress and veil, the "trappings and the suits of woe,"¹³ Quentin assumes a Hamlet-like role of avenging moral arbiter. In psychological terms, he personifies the super-ego. As Freud explained, this part of the psyche developed naturally and directly out of an internalization of parental authority; nevertheless, a child's super-ego could attain a characteristic "relentless severity" even if that child's upbringing had been an unusually liberal one.¹⁴ Freud explained the cause of this discrepancy by referring to the intensity of "aggressiveness" felt by the child who quickly represses an extremely "powerful Oedipus complex."¹⁵ Whatever Quentin's initial attachment to his parents may have been, as an adolescent and as a young adult he is determined in his "attempt to defend the family honor,"¹⁶ a determination painfully aggravated by his love-hate relationship with his nihilistic father, his obsession that he has never really "had a mother" (TSAF, p. 213), and his sister's conduct.

Within his section of The Sound and the Fury, Quentin interlards the events of the present with those of the past. Just as he does in Absalom, Absalom!, Quentin, sitting in his dormitory room at Harvard in 1910, reconstructs history, but here (in The Sound and the Fury) his concern is to find the locus of meaning within the events of his own immediate past. Obsessed with this crusade, he particularizes what Melvin Backman identifies as an important character type in Faulkner's

major fiction: the "sick protagonist"--a young man "suspended in motion, suspended in time, suspended in life."¹⁷ Like the gull he repeatedly refers to, Quentin hangs toy-like from an "invisible wire"; and the wire that stays him is his tyrannizing memory of events centered around Caddy. Louise Dauner explains his plight as that of a "romantic, beset by the growing crudities of a naturalistic culture"; in other words, Quentin's dilemma arises from his inability to resolve the opposition between his "subjective values" and the "objective world" he inhabits.¹⁸ Circumscribed though he is by this personal dilemma, Quentin's progressive deterioration is but one aspect of that cancerous juggernaut affecting everyone within the Compson family.

Though Caddy's loss of virginity can indeed be cited as the knife that gives the fatal twist to Quentin's "grievous psychic wound,"¹⁹ Quentin's influence upon Caddy has an equally tragic effect. As Thompson states, "To a large degree, Quentin is represented as having been personally responsible for the change which occurred in the character of Caddy."²⁰ He, in fact, acting as a self-appointed emissary of his parents, plays a significant part in Caddy's demoralization despite his efforts to the contrary. The result of such inquisitions as that to which Quentin subjects Caddy after he learns of her affair with Dalton Ames (TSAF, pp. 187-90) is Caddy's belief that she is inherently evil. Hence, she tells Quentin, "I'm bad anyway you can't help it" (TSAF, p. 196) and she persists

in her trysts with Ames. Quentin, as a result, meets with Caddy's lover to demand with heroic bravado that he leave Jefferson--but it is Caddy who, fearing for her brother's safety, sends Ames away, a mistake Quentin will not let her rectify. Depriving herself of the one person who gave her the opportunity to give and receive love freely, Caddy yields to her brother's moral tutelage.

Ultimately, Mrs. Compson takes Caddy to French Lick in order to allow the scandal surrounding her daughter to dissipate and, hopefully, find Caddy a husband. Insofar as these purposes are concerned, the trip proves a success. The Caddy who returns from French Lick, however, bears little resemblance to the Caddy of Quentin's and Benjy's youth. Many have written about Candace Compson's licentiousness, but few comment that she resorts to sexual promiscuity only when her family leaves her virtually no other option. As Peter Swiggart explains, Caddy's destruction evolves not from her affair with Dalton Ames but from her "surrender to her brother's corrupt philosophy":

It must be remembered that Quentin, even as he rails against his sister and her lovers, is affirming what is at heart morally sound. His actions are evil, but their source is the perversion of moral truth and not its lack. A romantic conception of virtue and honor is better than no conception at all; but, corrupted by egoism, it can only destroy rather than induce moral consciousness in others.²¹

Denied the opportunity to find love and convinced that to

try is evil, Caddy becomes, as Baum describes, "cold, empty-eyed, and passionless."²² She is damned, she passively accepts her doom, and she accepts full responsibility for it. Having returned from her vacation, she tells Quentin, "I died last year I told you I had but I didn't know then what I was saying" (TSAF, p. 153). For this death, a spiritual and emotional one made evident by her subsequent loveless involvements with a host of nameless men, Caddy blames no one. Further, she offers Quentin only one explanation for those sordid involvements:

There was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me through their faces it's gone now and I'm sick (TSAF, p. 138)

No statement better reveals the tragic consequence of Quentin's moral instruction. As Faulkner explicitly states, Caddy accepts and loves in Quentin "that bitter prophet and inflexible corruptless judge of what he considered the family's honor and its doom"; and she does so "not only in spite of but because of the fact that he himself was incapable of love" (TSAF, p. 412). Caddy's "death," thus, is an act of self sacrifice--a result of the selflessness that, as Baum suggests, although once admirable, leads nonetheless to devastation.²³ That Caddy agrees to marry Herbert Head, a man she does not love, in order to give the illegitimate child she carries a father is cause enough for any sickness she feels. More important to Caddy, however, is the tortured awareness that her marrying constitutes

desertion of a father she fears will soon drink himself to death and of Benjy, who she rightfully fears will be sent to an asylum. Despite the wretched condition of her life, Caddy has one prevailing concern--to extract from Quentin a promise to protect both Mr. Compson and Benjy. Juxtaposed against such an assumption of total responsibility, Quentin's "If they need any looking after it's because of you" (TSAF, p. 138) indicates acutely the misappropriation of blame that typifies the Compsons.

Although she succumbs to what Swiggart calls Quentin's "rational puritanism," Caddy does not join her brother in his flight from reality.²⁴ She is simply too much a part of the real world. Quentin, as Bowling notes, "struggles to achieve isolation by escaping from the world of concrete reality and into the ideological, abstract, timeless world of pure absolutes."²⁵ To succeed in this struggle, he would have Caddy act as transport by retaining her virginity so completely as to become a flesh-and-blood representation of an other worldly ideal. Given such a task, Caddy can only fail her brother. She is by nature the very antithesis of Quentin, who is "'a virgin' not only sexually but psychologically" because of his constant refusal to immerse himself in the real world.²⁶ Intense though Quentin's struggle is, it proves self defeating.

Put simply, Quentin denies himself the capacity to act. He could not plunge a knife into Caddy's throat or force Dalton Ames to quit Jefferson any more than he can prevent Caddy's

marriage by convincing her to run away with him or to agree to a pretense of having committed incest. To Quentin, such a violation of morality as incest would condemn both himself and his sister to hell, somewhere "amid the pointing and the horror walled by the clean flame" (TSAF, p. 144), and would, then, substantiate the significance of moral values by negation. Upon such a pretense, the outcome of Quentin's struggle to invest life with meaning depends. That Quentin could feign such an unholy act (and feign is all Quentin could ever do because of his consistent inability to take action) is symptomatic of his diseased spirit--a condition which terminates with his decision to commit suicide. It is not the manifestation of an incestuous desire for Caddy.

At Harvard, on the day that he kills himself, Quentin looks back on his life and reflects:

I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of grey halflight where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had felt suffered taking visible form antic and perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who. (TSAF, p. 211)

The passage is, as Michael Millgate observes, a crucial one.²⁷ Faced with the apparent validity of his father's philosophy, that life is, to quote Macbeth, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing,"²⁸ Quentin despairs and seems to come close to achieving a recognition of the results

of his lifelong crusade. But Quentin remains too egoistic to undergo a dramatic reversal. Because he fears that even despair will prove "shadowy paradoxical"--that it too is temporary--Quentin jumps off a bridge and drowns in order to stave off this final confirmation that all is transitory. As Bowling concludes, "Having begun by refusing to communicate with and accept the world of actuality, Quentin ends by kicking the world out from under him and then kicking himself out with the world. . . ."29

Caddy fails both Benjy and Quentin because they ask impossibilities of her. That is, each would have her cloistered from the inevitable change that life itself necessitates. Though she is not the center of Jason's world as she is of Benjy's and Quentin's, Caddy also fails Jason. Herbert Head, Caddy's prospective bridegroom, promised a position in his Indiana bank to twelve-year-old Jason; however, when Head eventually learned that he was not the father of Caddy's child, he abandoned mother and daughter and, by not fulfilling his promise, left Jason to eke out those rewards in life that can be counted and weighed as best he could. For this, Jason never forgives Caddy. In fact, upon her and her daughter Quentin he exacts his revenge.

Jason Compson IV, "the first sane Compson since before Culloden" (TSAF, p. 420), represents what Vickery identifies as the "'rational' man"--his every action follows a logic based upon a demand for recompense.³⁰ The small boy who always walked

with his hands in his pockets (an early indication that someday he would be rich) grows up to be a young man whose ruthless and "inhuman rationalism," as Brooks concludes, leads to a self-induced sterility.³¹ Mrs. Compson tells Jason throughout his life "you are a Bascomb, despite your name" (TSAF, p. 225), and Jason's actions validate his mother's belief. Just as Quentin is heir to Mr. Compson's philosophy, as an adult, Jason best reveals the "kind of woman Mrs. Compson is and the values she accepts."³²

Mrs. Compson can be summarized as a woman whose avowed acts of self-sacrifice mask an extreme selfishness and a bitter contempt. In a like manner, Jason sees his being compelled to support what remains of the Compson family after his father's death as an act of great personal loss--it costs him his dream of prosperity. Jason tells his mother, "I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work" (TSAF, p. 224). Sold into bondage the day he began his employ at a supply store in Jefferson, Jason, in reality, bears toward his family a cold animosity; furthermore, like his mother, he attempts to preserve the family's honorable reputation because in doing so he preserves his own. The following confession makes clear the true nature of Jason's character:

I just want an even chance to get my money back. And once I've done that they can bring all Beale Street and all bedlam in here and two of them can sleep in

my bed and another one can have my place at the table too. (TSAF, p. 329)

As the preceding quotation suggests and as Brooks succinctly states, Jason becomes "a kind of monster, infinitely below his idiot brother as a human being."³³ Whereas Benjy's idiocy isolates him from the world, Quentin's quest for ideals divorces him from reality, and Caddy's great capacity for love leads to her damnation and exile, sheer rapacity--the desire for money and for a respected position in Jefferson--kills in Jason all that is humane. To illustrate, Jason is furtively responsible for Benjy's gelding (TSAF, p. 422); he sees Dilsey, a long-serving and totally dedicated slave to the welfare of the Compson family, as an interfering "old half dead nigger" (TSAF, p. 230); he preys upon Caddy's love for her daughter and devises a scheme that puts into his possession the money Caddy forwards to Quentin (TSAF, pp. 263-69); and he subjugates his niece, with no little enjoyment, to the harsh demands of his will (TSAF, p. 267). Once Caddy's daughter escapes Jefferson with her uncle's slowly accumulated hoard, Jason gradually begins to "free" himself from the controls exerted upon his life. And, as Robert Penn Warren notes, the action he takes reveals his calculated and unnatural repudiation of the human community and of the past--which "is to repudiate the long story of the human effort to be human, to create, as it were, a community."³⁴ With the death of his mother, the institutionalization of Benjy, the evacuation and selling of the Compson residence, and the

move to the floor above the supply store, Jason, by choice a "childless bachelor" (TSAF, p. 420), ends the Compson line and brings to a close its history.

In Absalom, Absalom! the Sutpen line also comes to an end, for in 1910 all that remains as physical evidence of Thomas Sutpen's "design" are a few gravestones, the charred skeleton of the plantation house, fallow fields, and the idiot Jim Bond, Sutpen's Negroid great-grandson. From 1910, the history of Sutpen's dream to establish a dynasty spans backward for nearly a century; and, as Backman effectively states, "Twisting in the coils of this past, Quentin Compson threshes in a paralyzing inner struggle with the moral horror of his heritage and the fascination of its giant maker--Sutpen."³⁵ Asked once to identify the central character of Absalom, Absalom!, Faulkner named Sutpen and then added that the novel is "incidentally the story of Quentin Compson's hatred of the bad qualities in the country he loves."³⁶ The Quentin of Absalom, Absalom! is, then, identical to that of The Sound and the Fury: he is still a young man desperately in search of a sustaining moral code. In Absalom, Absalom! Sutpen's story allows Quentin to delve for that code within the South's heroic past. He plays a crucial role. Quentin, like Rosa Coldfield and his father, acts as a repository for and interpreter of that segment of history surrounding Sutpen; but the story that Quentin, aided by Shreve McCannon, creates carries a relevancy absent in either Rosa's or his father's narration. Rosa clutches the belief

that the Sutpen story can be explained as some God-dispensed "fatality and curse" (AA, p. 261). Mr. Compson finds intellectual amusement in his scrutiny of past figures whose "acts of simple passion and simple violence" are "inexplicable" (AA, p. 101). Only Quentin, because of his personal stake in the re-creation, realizes that the Sutpen story--specifically, that part of it centering around Henry, Judith, and Charles Bon--embodies a tragic dilemma: Sutpen forces his descendants to choose between the tradition he tenaciously represents and their basic need for some human communion.

Just as it does in The Sound and the Fury, what passes for a moral tradition in Absalom, Absalom! brings chaos to the lives of its legatees. Sutpen bequeaths to Henry and Judith a way of life erected "not on the rock of stern morality but on the shifting sands of opportunism and moral brigandage" (AA, p. 260). Thus, when Henry and Judith attempt to infuse this manner of living with the human element of love, Sutpen's design crumbles from beneath him--and the catalyst for this sequence of events is, ironically, the arrival of the son Sutpen repudiated when he set aside his first wife. Quentin narrates the reunion of father and son as follows:

[Sutpen] stood there at his own door, just as he had imagined, planned, designed, and sure enough and after fifty years the forlorn nameless and homeless lost child came to knock at it and . . . even though he knew that Bon and Judith had never laid eyes on one another, he must have felt and heard the design--house, position, posterity and all--come down like

it had been built out of smoke. . . . And he not calling it retribution, no sins of the father come home to roost; not even calling it bad luck, but just a mistake. . . . (AA, p. 267)

The "mistake" Sutpen cannot acknowledge and cannot rectify is his inability to afford his family, the foundation of his dynasty, their rightful human ties. His tragedy, and theirs, results from "rejection and its moral consequences."³⁷

Not until Christmas Eve of 1860 does Henry learn from his father that the young man he befriended at college and whom Judith plans to marry is his half brother. Furthermore, not until some four years later does Sutpen disclose to Henry that Charles Bon is part Negro. Judith remains ignorant of all these facts; hence, she never knows that Henry killed Bon at the entrance to Sutpen's Hundred in 1864 not to prevent her being involved in an incestuous union but to prevent miscegenation. In their discussion of this imbroglio, critics tend to laud Henry and Judith as youths compelled to sacrifice their own lives in expiation of their father's inhumanity. As for Bon, none deal with him more harshly than does M. E. Bradford, who contends that both by blood and by nature Bon "is his father's son" and therefore "probably 'needs killing.'"³⁸

Neither Henry, Judith, nor Bon, however, can be so easily categorized.

To a large extent, Henry's murder of Charles Bon, which brought to a close a painful four-year period of unresolve, was not an action of Henry's free will, not completely at any

rate. Sutpen's confession regarding the future of his accomplishments to Quentin's grandfather in 1864 reveals a shrewd and effective exertion of influence:

I am now faced with a second necessity to choose . . . either I destroy my design with my own hand, which will happen if I am forced to play my last trump card, or do nothing, let matters take the course which I know they will take and see my design complete itself quite normally and naturally and successfully to the public eye, yet to my own in such fashion as to be a mockery and a betrayal of that little boy who approached that door fifty years ago and was turned away, for whose vindication the whole plan was conceived and carried forward to the moment of this choice. . . . (AA, pp. 273-74)

Until he told Henry about Charles Bon's ancestry, Sutpen followed the latter course, expecting the threat of incest to compel Henry to somehow deal with Bon's presence. When this failed, Sutpen followed the first plan of action and, thus, forced Henry to take action against a grave threat to Southern white supremacy--an interracial marriage.

Brooks makes the following assessment of the dilemma which Sutpen poses for his son:

Had Henry cared much less for Bon, or else much less for Judith, he might have promoted the happiness of one without feeling that he was sacrificing that of the other. Or had he cared much less for either and much more for himself, he might have won a cool and rational detachment, a coign of vantage from which even objections to miscegenation and incest would appear to be irrational prejudices, and honor itself a quaint affectation whose saving was never worth the price of a bullet. Had Henry been not necessarily wiser but simply more cynical or more gross or more selfish, there would have been no tragedy.³⁹

As Brooks suggests here, Henry is torn in three directions: he loves his sister; he loves Charles Bon; and he, because of his upbringing and inheritance, owes a strong allegiance to the Southern moral tradition. That Henry kills Bon immediately after Sutpen tells him about Bon's having Negroid ancestry indicates that the murder is an act committed out of moral rectitude and not out of love. Henry, in short, cannot escape his "Coldfield cluttering of morality and rules of right and wrong" (AA, p. 120). Sutpen knows this and manipulates his son accordingly. Thus, as Lind concludes, "Henry, for all his delicacy of conscience, succumbs ironically at the last to the simple murderous reflexes of his class: his brother may marry his sister, but a 'nigger' must be shot dead."⁴⁰

Regarding Judith's capacity to atone for Sutpen's crimes, Brooks argues that she "has in her the best of her father's traits"; her strength, iron will, and compassion, that is, enable her to act as "one of Faulkner's finest characters of endurance."⁴¹ Bradford concurs with Brooks's sympathetic evaluation of Judith's character and states, "If Henry's motives in his engagement with an inherited 'curse' are not subject to serious censure, Judith's in her confrontation of the ruin Henry and the elder Sutpen leave are even less so."⁴² What both critics seize upon as prime evidence of Judith's love, compassion, and self-abnegation is her "adoption" of her dead fiance's Negro son. However, both ignore the facts that point to Judith's having to face the same conflicting forces that

Henry faced--that is, the obligation to uphold a traditional code of behavior and the obligation to meet human individuals' needs.

Many of the descriptions that apply to Caddy once she reaches maturity apply also to Judith once she becomes a woman. While she waits through four years for Bon's return, when Henry tells her that he has killed her lover, and when she buries her father, Judith maintains a cool placidity. This same unnatural detachment and lack of warmth color her relationship with Bon's son. In 1870 Judith invited Charles Bon's octaroon mistress and son to Sutpen's Hundred so that they might visit Bon's grave. The visitors stayed one week and departed. In the winter of 1871, Clytie brought Charles Etienne Saint-Velery, who was by then both without mother or father, to Sutpen's Hundred to live. According to Mr. Compson, no one ever knew whether or not the decision to care for the boy was Clytie's or Judith's (AA, p. 195). Regardless, Bon's twelve-year-old son found himself the ward of a white woman who "looked upon and treated him with a cold unbending detached gentleness" (AA, p. 197) and a black woman who treated him "with that curious blend of savageness and pity, of yearning and hatred" (AA, p. 198). Kept in virtual seclusion and raised as though he were some being suspended between the racial barriers of black and white, Charles Saint-Velery eventually took his revenge by fighting with black men and consorting with black women, going so far as to vanish from his orphanage and return a year

later with "a coal black and ape-like woman and an authentic wedding license" (AA, p. 215). Envisioning the resultant confrontation between orphan and guardian, Quentin (who, like his father, believes "Because there was love") speculates that Judith would have made some attempt at moral restitution:

'I was wrong. . . . We will have General Compson sell some of the land; he will do it, and you can go. Into the North, the cities, where it will not matter. . . . I will tell them that you are Henry's son and who could or would dare to dispute--' and he standing there, . . . 'No, Miss Sutpen' . . . and she not daring to put out the hand with which she could have actually touched . . . 'Call me Aunt Judith, Charles.' (AA, pp. 207-08)

Because both are responsibilities assumed out of moral compunction, Judith's guardianship of Charles Saint-Velery can be likened to Henry's murder of Charles Bon. Further, Judith, like Henry, betrays in meeting that responsibility her acceptance of the "doctrines of racial supremacy."⁴³ She too makes a grand gesture, but she nonetheless violates a very basic human obligation. Charles Saint-Velery, like his father, wants and needs only one thing--recognition; the lack of it engenders in him as fatal a despair as it does in Charles Bon. Judith and Henry do not expiate Thomas Sutpen's crimes against humanity; rather, they are doomed by the moral tradition bequeathed them to repudiate the boy-symbol. Nevertheless, that they continue the cycle their father began does not negate the fact that they themselves suffer extensively. Henry's exile is his self-punishment, an exile he only partially ends

by coming home, barricading himself within an upstairs bedroom, and waiting to die. Judith also leads an austere life and seems to reach an awareness of her error and its consequences. Perhaps because she failed to appease her conscience, when Charles Saint-Velery was stricken with yellow fever, Judith nursed him, took the disease herself and died. Absalom, Absalom! is not a tragic novel because Sutpen and his descendants violate the bond that makes a family of all men; it is a tragedy because they do so never realizing that the code they believe justifies them is itself the cause of their destruction.

Millgate observes of Absalom, Absalom! that equally important to achieving a "satisfactory interpretation of the Sutpen story" is to come to terms with what significance the re-creation of that story carries for Quentin Compson.⁴⁴ Neither task is easily completed, and the latter is by far the more difficult. Critics themselves are somewhat divided as to whether Quentin finds significant knowledge in his and his roommate's collaborative reconstruction of Sutpen's history. Quentin's success or failure in his quest for sustaining moral truths, however, is relatively unimportant; what is important is that, just as he does in The Sound and the Fury, Quentin makes the effort.

Conclusion

Addressing an English Club at the University of Virginia in 1958, Faulkner identified what he believed to be the dilemma of the contemporary writer, whose task it is to give order and meaning to a chaotic world:

The young writer of today is compelled by the present state of our culture . . . to function in a kind of vacuum of the human race. His characters do not function, live, breathe, struggle, in that moil and seethe of humanity as did those of our predecessors who were the masters from whom we learned our craft: Dickens, Fielding, Thackeray, Conrad, Twain, Smollett, Hawthorne, Melville, James; their names are legion whose created characters . . . accepted and believed in and functioned according, not to angles, but to moral principles. . . .¹

Insofar as this "moil and seethe of humanity" is concerned, Faulkner's own fiction is apocalyptic: it attests to the urgency of individuals' participating in a joint strife to live harmoniously with each other. For to do otherwise, as Faulkner's characters frequently do, contributes to chaos and ends in destruction. In Absalom, Absalom! Judith Sutpen poignantly expresses the result of lives unguided by moral principles--by a moral tradition founded upon the necessity of struggling to attain those verities that are desirable not because they are absolute goods or because they guarantee fulfillment of some egotistic dream but because they give life order and meaning and hope:

You get born and you try this and you dont know why only you keep on trying it and you are born at the same time with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs and the others all trying and they dont know why either except that the strings are all in one another's way like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug; and it cant matter, you know that, or the Ones that set up the loom would have arranged things a little better, and yet it must matter because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's all over. . . . (AA, p. 127)

As Joseph Gold observes, the import of Judith's "'loom' metaphor" is that "only in a common respect for humanity can harmony, a single pattern, be achieved."² To Faulkner there can be no saving moral tradition without this respect. Judith's loom metaphor applies to her own family, and it applies to the Compson family of The Sound and the Fury as well. For the members of both families either fashion morality to suit their own individual needs or else become devotees of a traditional code of behavior no longer valid because it is untried in the realm of experience. Thomas Sutpen, eventually abetted by his wife Ellen, makes moral principles a utilitarian tool. He seizes those elements of the Southern aristocratic code he believes incremental to his establishment of a dynasty (such as, respectability, strength, valour) and discards those that are not (love, pity, and compassion). Henry and Judith Sutpen, then, inherit a moral tradition stripped of any concern for others' well-being. Thus, when that tradition is opposed by

love (worse still, love for a Negro), neither of Sutpen's children can act as traitor to that inheritance. Equally deprived of an unadulterated traditional code are the Compson children, for Mr. and Mrs. Compson place strength, courage, pity, and compassion within the Confederacy's tomb and thus allow the heroic code of the Old South no operability in the present. Quentin, enamoured of these gone-but-hardly-forgotten ideals, follows his parents precedent. Caddy and Jason, however, follow their own inclinations: the former acts out of her own instinctual love and need for love without regard for moral consequence; the latter governs his behavior by what will and will not procure worldly success. And Benjy, ruled solely by sensory perception, represents man at his lowest denominator.

Using these two families, Faulkner, as Amos N. Wilder concludes, creatively explores in Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury the "problem of a decadent or otiose order--the curse of a vestigial code."³ Within each novel, in fact, that exploration is so effectively horrifying that Faulkner has frequently been accused of nihilism. However, his handling of characters does not negate man's capacity to make choices or act according to his own free will; rather it emphasizes the difficulty and the significance of his doing so. When told during an interview that critics failed to see any evidence of his characters' choosing between right and wrong, Faulkner responded:

What time a man can devote to morality, he must take by force from the motion of which he is a part. He is compelled to make choices between good and evil sooner or later, because moral conscience demands that from him in order that he can live with himself tomorrow.⁴

Morality, in short, involves an incessant struggle to be moral--to live harmoniously with others. Faulkner's works do not offer morality in the form of an "intellectual construct"; rather, they are revelatory of the belief that morality is won only by a "life-effort."⁵

Cleanth Brooks explains this endeavor in terms of an initiation: "Man . . . must lose his innocence--be initiated--stand his trial of decision; he must accept the code or repudiate the code or transcend the code."⁶ In the Faulknerian sense, then, morality depends upon each individual's evaluative ability, and that ability must be constantly exercised. Regardless of their being the innocent recipients of a corrupted moral tradition (an inheritance which constitutes an abuse), both the Sutpen and the Compson children are themselves guilty of making one fatal error: they fail to exert their wills and judge the moral tradition bequeathed them according to the degree to which it sustains the human community. Henry, Judith, Quentin, Caddy, Jason, and Benjy--all victims and victimizers--exemplify the ravaging results of morality's being stripped of its base: each man bears a responsibility for the well-being of all men. The sin and the doom of the families in Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury are not that the members within each are

"deeply related," as Emmanuel Pierre argues, but that those members "remain partly unconscious" of their human responsibility to care for each other.⁷ None endure and none prevail because they, unlike Dilsey, will not cope with the exigencies of living, the greatest of which, in Faulkner's world vision, requires the individual to enter into the true human family.

Notes

Introduction

- ¹ William Faulkner, "Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature," Stockholm, 10 December 1950; rpt. in Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters by William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 120.
- ² Warren Beck, "Faulkner: A Preface and a Letter," Yale Review, 52 (1962), 158.
- ³ Malcolm Cowley, ed., The Faulkner-Cowley File (New York: Viking Press, 1966), p. 115, n. 3.
- ⁴ The Faulkner-Cowley File, p. 120.
- ⁵ Faulkner at Nagano, ed. Robert A. Jelliffe, 5th ed. (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1973), p. 13.
- ⁶ Jean Stein, "William Faulkner," Paris Review, 4 (1956), 119-41; rpt. in Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Viking Press, 1958), p. 139; and William Faulkner, "Interview with Loïc Bouvard: 1952," trans. Henry Dan Piper, in Lion in the Garden, ed. James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 71.
- ⁷ Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 133.
- ⁸ Faulkner in the University, p. 133.
- ⁹ Faulkner on Truth and Freedom (Philippine Writers Assoc., 1956); rpt. "Faulkner in Manilla: 1955," in Lion in the Garden, p. 201.
- ¹⁰ Faulkner at Nagano, p. 4.
- ¹¹ Faulkner, "Interview with Loïc Bouvard: 1952," p. 71.
- ¹² Stein, p. 132.
- ¹³ Faulkner at Nagano, p. 95.
- ¹⁴ Faulkner in the University, p. 245.

¹⁵ Beck, p. 160.

¹⁶ Cleanth Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis, and Robert Penn Warren, eds., "William Faulkner," in American Literature: The Makers and the Making (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), II, 2561.

Chapter I

¹ William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (1936; rpt. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1972), p. 261. Subsequent references to this work (abbreviated AA) are indicated in the text.

² Faulkner in the University, p. 139.

³ Faulkner in the University, p. 84.

⁴ Edmund L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (1964; rpt. New York: Octagon-Farrar, 1974), p. 24.

⁵ Volpe, p. 24.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality," in his New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1965), pp. 58-68.

⁷ Stein, p. 137.

⁸ William Faulkner, "Interview with Cynthia Grenier: 1955," in Lion in the Garden, p. 221.

⁹ Melvin Backman, "Sickness and Primitivism: A Dominant Pattern in William Faulkner's Work," Accent: A Quarterly of New Literature, 14 (1954), 65.

¹⁰ Pertaining to Faulkner's treatment of the family, an interesting but speculative observation comes from David L. Minter, who sees an autobiographical vein in Faulkner's fiction. Minter claims that in such works as The Sound and the Fury and Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner fell back upon his own wrecked childhood (having been forced by his mother's "fierceness" to choose between her "strength" and his father's obvious "weakness") in order to reveal the "deeper direction of his sympathy, which was toward children." David L. Minter, William Faulkner: His Life and Work (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 17.

¹¹ Faulkner in the University, p. 31.

¹² Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 326.

¹³ William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (1929; rpt. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1954), p. 421. Subsequent references to this work (abbreviated TSAF) are indicated in the text.

¹⁴ Amos N. Wilder, "Faulkner and the Vestigial Moralities," in his Theology and Modern Art (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 120.

¹⁵ Richard Poirier, "'Strange Gods' in Jefferson, Mississippi: Analysis of Absalom, Absalom!," in William Faulkner: Two Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1951), pp. 217-43; rpt. in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Absalom, Absalom!, ed. Arnold Goldman (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Spectrum-Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 12.

¹⁶ W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (1941; rpt. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1969), p. 89.

¹⁷ Volpe, p. 109.

¹⁸ Lawrence E. Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence," Kenyon Review, 20 (1958), 481.

¹⁹ Volpe, p. 109.

²⁰ Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence," p. 478.

²¹ Brooks, p. 334.

²² Volpe, p. 114.

²³ Lawrence E. Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation," Georgia Review, 18 (1964), 63.

²⁴ Faulkner in the University, p. 35.

²⁵ Poirier, p. 15.

²⁶ Faulkner in the University, p. 81.

²⁷ Brooks, p. 296.

²⁸ Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Innocence," pp. 466-67.

²⁹ Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of Absalom,

Absalom!," PMLA, 70 (1955), 887-912; rpt. in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (New York: Harbinger-Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963), p. 293.

30 Brooks, p. 298.

31 Poirier, p. 18.

32 Backman, p. 70.

33 Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: The South, the Negro, and Time," in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren, Twentieth Century Views, ed. Maynard Mack (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Spectrum-Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 252.

34 Warren, p. 269.

Chapter II

1 Warren, p. 252.

2 Stein, p. 130.

3 Catherine B. Baum, "'The Beautiful One': Caddy Compson as Heroine of The Sound and the Fury," Modern Fiction Studies, 13 (1967), 38.

4 Volpe, p. 99.

5 Lawrance Thompson, "Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury," in English Institute Essays, 1952, ed. Alan S. Downer (1954; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965), p. 91

6 Thompson, p. 91.

7 Cleanth Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," in English Institute Essays, 1952, p. 11.

8 Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation (n.p.: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), p. 37.

9 Vickery, p. 37.

10 Vickery, p. 30.

11 Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," p. 13.

- 12 Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation," p. 56.
- 13 William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, in The Complete Works of Shakespeare, ed. David Bevington, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott and Foresman, 1980), Act I, Sc. ii, l. 86 (p. 1077).
- 14 Freud, "The Dissection of the Psychological Personality," p. 62.
- 15 Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Super-Ego (Ego Ideal)," in The Ego and the Id and Other Works, trans. Joan Riviere, modified ed., Vol. 19 of The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), p. 34.
- 16 Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," p. 15.
- 17 Backman, pp. 61-62.
- 18 Louise Dauner, "Quentin and the Walking Shadow: The Dilemma of Nature and Culture," Arizona Quarterly, 21 (1965), 160-61.
- 19 Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 331.
- 20 Thompson, p. 100.
- 21 Peter Swiggart, "Moral and Temporal Order in The Sound and the Fury," Sewanee Review, 61 (1953), 226-27.
- 22 Baum, p. 44.
- 23 Baum, p. 38.
- 24 Swiggart, p. 226.
- 25 Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation," p. 55.
- 26 Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation," p. 56.
- 27 Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 87.
- 28 William Shakespeare, Macbeth, in The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Act V, Sc. vii, l. 26-28 (p. 1247).
- 29 Bowling, "Faulkner and the Theme of Isolation," p. 58.
- 30 Vickery, p. 30.

- 31 Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," p. 12.
- 32 Volpe, p. 110.
- 33 Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," p. 12.
- 34 Warren, p. 256.
- 35 Backman, p. 70.
- 36 Faulkner in the University, p. 133.
- 37 Volpe, p. 211.
- 38 M. E. Bradford, "Brother, Son, and Heir: The Structural Focus in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!," Sewanee Review, 78 (1970), 81-82.
- 39 Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 318.
- 40 Lind, p. 295.
- 41 Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 319.
- 42 Bradford, p. 84.
- 43 Lind, p. 295.
- 44 Millgate, p. 153.

Conclusion

- 1 Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters by William Faulkner, ed. James B. Meriwether (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 163-64.
- 2 Joseph Gold, William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism, From Metaphor to Discourse (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p. 36.
- 3 Wilder, p. 116.
- 4 Stein, p. 139.
- 5 Warren, p. 269.
- 6 Brooks, "Primitivism in The Sound and the Fury," p. 23.

⁷ Pierre Emmanuel, "Faulkner and the Sense of Sin," Harvard Advocate, 135 (1951), 20; rpt. in Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 291-92.

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