

THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF ARCHETYPAL PATTERNS
IN THE WORK OF FAULKNER

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PREFACE

Anyone who chooses to study an author must try to come to some understanding of what that author is doing. In the case of Faulkner, this is rendered more difficult because one must first separate the sense from the nonsense that has already been written in the wealth of criticism already completed on his work. This study attempts to suggest another possible perspective on Faulkner's work by using mythopoeic criticism, which is neither new nor completely alien to Faulkner criticism, but which has never been used to the extent that it might be truly helpful.

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CHAPTER I

IN A MAN'S MIND A DESIRE TO EXPRESS

SOME UNIVERSAL TRUTH

The literal bulk of the books and essays of criticism of William Faulkner's work demonstrates that he has been considered an important, and often fashionable, subject for criticism almost since any notice was taken of him at all. He has been read as a primitivist and as a Calvinist, with any number of interpretations in between. A detailed account of the vicissitudes of Faulkner criticism is given by Frederick J. Hoffman in his introduction to William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism.¹ Although this previous criticism is certainly worthwhile and of lasting value, one approach, the mythopoeic, has been relatively little used, and this study will attempt to apply this perspective. At any rate, for many years Faulkner was critically misinterpreted as a chronicler of the American South, mostly because of his use of his fictional Yoknapatawpha County, but the tendency in the last twenty years, and especially in the last decade, has been to stress his universality. G. M. O'Donnell was one of the first to start the move away from regionalist interpretation, defining the basic conflict in

¹Frederick J. Hoffman, "Introduction," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, pp. 1-50.

Faulkner's work as the battle between tradition and invading amorality:

. . . there are two kinds of characters; they are Sartorises or Snopeses, whatever the family names may be. And in the spiritual geography of Mr. Faulkner's work there are two worlds: the Sartoris world and the Snopes world . . . The Sartorises act traditionally . . . with an ethically responsible will, but the Snopeses act "only for self interest."²

Backman recognizes the oversimplification in such a division, for it ignores the inner conflicts of characters like Quentin Compson.³ Rather, he sees the spiritual sickness of the heroes, especially those whose alienation is emphasized by being of mixed negro and white blood, as the "crux" of Faulkner's works.⁴ Gold finds, in the early works at least, "a scathing indictment of a world dominated by meaningless materialism and devoid of real values."⁵ Faulkner's own comments on his work at any given time served less to resolve conflicting opinions on interpretations than to add to the ambiguity.⁶ Faulkner was notorious for making

²George M. O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," The Kenyon Review, I (1939), 286.

³Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years, pp. 90-91.

⁴Melvin Backman, "Sickness and Primitivism: A Dominant Pattern in William Faulkner's Work," Accent, XIV (1954), 62.

⁵Joseph Gold, "William Faulkner's 'One Compact Thing,'" Twentieth Century Literature, VIII (April, 1962), 3.

⁶James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, (eds.), Lion in the Garden.

contradictory statements about his work, but there are some ideas that are to be found again and again in his interviews with reporters and critics and in his conferences with students at West Point, Nagano, and the University of Virginia. One of these is his "desire to express some universal truth."⁷ When asked if he was attempting to portray the entire South or just Mississippi, Faulkner replied, "I wasn't writing sociology at all. I was trying to write about people."⁸ He also wrote to Malcolm Cowley:

I am telling the same story over and over, which is myself and the world . . . I'm trying to say it all in one sentence, between one Cap and one period . . . I'm inclined to think that my material, the South, is not very important to me. I just happen to know it, and dont [sic] have time in one life to learn another one and write at the same time . . . man stinks the same stink no matter where in time.⁹

Too often many of the critics who supposedly recognize him as a true artist, not as an artistic social critic, ultimately analyze his characters only in terms of contemporary American social problems. Faulkner explained the source of universality in any art when he stated,

. . . art is simpler than people think because there is so little to write about. All the moving things are eternal in man's history and have been written before,

⁷Robert A. Jelliffe, (ed.), Faulkner at Nagano, p. 94.

⁸Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, (eds.), Faulkner in the University, p. 10.

⁹Malcolm Cowley, The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-62, pp. 14-15.

and if a man writes hard enough, sincerely enough, humbly enough . . . he will repeat them, because art like poverty takes care of its own, shares its bread.¹⁰

In this statement, made in 1944, is the premise of a critical approach that was not used extensively with Faulkner's work until after 1950; that is, the "moving things" that are eternal and are repeated in art, that which some psychologists and literary critics call "archetypal," "mythic," or "mythopoeic."¹¹ With this approach, Faulkner's characters have been recognized as what one critic calls

. . . great symbolic beings, participating in actions that are intense, violent, and compulsive and which suggest Jung's racial unconscious. They loom larger than life. They become vast, almost phantasmagorical figures, outlined against grim skies and marching down long lanes of live oaks to vast white columns behind which are re-enacted the fate of the House of Atreus and the bloody deeds of Aeschylus's Oresteia trilogy.¹²

The recognition of the possibilities of archetypal analysis as a useful and valid approach to literature is not new, and it has been used in reading Faulkner, but until relatively recently it has been confined mainly to analyses of "The Bear."¹³ This approach can reconcile seemingly

¹⁰Ibid., p. 16.

¹¹For the purposes of this study, these terms will be considered interchangeable.

¹²C. Hugh Holman, Three Modes of Modern Southern Fiction, p. 32.

¹³Essays utilizing this type of treatment of "The Bear" form a large section of Utley, Bloom, and Kinney's collection of critical essays entitled Bear, Man, and God.

opposing "artistic" or contemporary social interpretations because the mythopoeic critic maintains that literature and society are interdependent and literature

. . . exists simultaneously in two temporal dimensions: (1) It exists as a historical fact in particular moments of recorded time. (2) It exists as a continuum over and beyond historic time as the eternal and recurrent expression of archetypal characters, images, symbols, scenes, and plots.¹⁴

The work of C. G. Jung is widely known and is recognized as the source of several terms and concepts fundamental to the mythopoeic approach.¹⁵ However, a brief summary of its background will make clearer the definitions of the terms to be used and will be helpful in establishing the basis for connections with Faulkner.

In the nineteenth century Darwin suggested the need for studies of the evolution of human culture that would further his studies of organic evolution, and in 1871 Edward B. Tylor's Primitive Culture was published, propounding the thesis that cultural institutions and artifacts were repetitive of those of earlier societies; James G. Frazer's The Golden Bough (1890), which became the most basic source for the mythopoeic method, greatly extended knowledge of myth and ritual, and "demonstrated the affinity between ritual,

¹⁴Sheldon N. Grebstein, Perspectives in Contemporary Criticism, p. 312.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 315.

myth, dream, and literature and asserted the importance of myth to any larger understanding of human culture."¹⁶ Ernst Cassirer, in The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms and Language and Myth, explained that art was a form needed by man, in addition to his reason, to portray time, place, and social customs symbolically. Cassirer also believed that the language of myth was the first form of man's intuitive comprehension of reality, coming before his rational apprehension.¹⁷ A number of critics and scholars have since written on the definitions and purposes of myth, many of them concerned with the relationship between myth and literature. Two of several representative definitions of the term "myth" are: the language used by the imagination to connect and comprehend basic mental images, and the means of expression of "ultimate reality," and, therefore, truth but not fact.¹⁸ In Jung's words, "myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes."¹⁹ Neither can myth be

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 313-314.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 315.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 316.

¹⁹Walter K. Gordon, (ed.), "Introduction," Literature in Critical Perspectives (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 504.

defined as any type of "legendary history associated with real persons or events in the remote past."²⁰ Jung posited the existence of a second psychic system in addition to the consciousness, that is, one which has a

. . . collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.²¹

Three major categories of archetypes can be delineated: characters, situations or themes, and symbols or associations.²² Although these archetypes are preconscious forms, Jung adds that they are still "living psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously" and man is therefore confronted,

. . . at every new stage in the differentiation of consciousness to which civilization attains, with the task of finding a new interpretation appropriate to this stage, in order to connect the life of the past that still exists in us with the life of the present, which threatens to slip away from it.²³

Art is this constant reinterpretation of the past and the collective memory in the terms of the present. It is conceivable, and in some cases probable, that an artist can create without being aware that his work has some of its

²⁰Grebstein, op. cit., p. 316.

²¹Gordon, op. cit., p. 501.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 512.

sources in an unconscious which is the same in himself as it is in every man, but Faulkner, at least, understood art and the human mind in much the same way as Jung, for, when asked about his audience, he answered:

They found symbolism that I had no background in symbolism to put in the books. But what symbolism is in the books is evidently instinct in man, not in man's knowledge but in his inheritance of his old dreams, in his blood, perhaps his bones, rather than in the storehouse of his memory, his intellect.²⁴

As he said, he had no intellectual training in the use of symbolism, but this statement agrees with Jung that symbols are natural. Thus, the purpose of this study on Faulkner, as with any application of myth criticism, is not to force Faulkner into predetermined patterns, but to discover how and which of these patterns are inherent in his works. The archetypal analyses of the characters is important in discovering the true nature of the character's personal conflict, what Faulkner calls his "human conflict."²⁵ One might also note that, if the archetypal forms are naturally inherent in Faulkner from his early works down to the last, he also seems early to have become aware of the possibilities of the deliberate use of symbols, as he did in The Sound and the Fury. Louise Dauner has carefully delineated

²⁴Jeliffe, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁵Joseph L. Fant and Robert P. Ashley, (eds.), Faulkner at West Point, p. 50.

a number of symbolic motifs, like Quentin's shadow, that are repeated so frequently in this work that they must have been carefully and consciously worked out.²⁶ Richard Chase notes that the symbolism in Light in August is more complicated than in The Sound and the Fury or As I Lay Dying, and that the most obviously deliberate symbols are the least successful; the most "profoundly organic" symbol in the novel is the circle, the wholeness of self, which was probably "half consciously intended by the author but has implications within the book of which he could not have been, at the moment of composition, perfectly conscious."²⁷ Gold adds that, after 1948, "Faulkner created Christ-figures instead of Christ-like figures" and traces the beginning of this tendency back to 1942, when Faulkner added the debate between Ike and his cousin McCaslin to "The Bear."²⁸ Allen Tate maintains that Faulkner's seven greatest books were completed within a period of eleven or twelve years, and that although the later novels add to the Yoknapatawpha saga, no one would know them if it were not for the earlier

²⁶Louise Dauner, "Quentin and the Walking Shadow: The Dilemma of Nature and Culture," Arizona Quarterly, XXI (Summer, 1965), 159-171.

²⁷Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition, p. 217.

²⁸Joseph Gold, William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism From Metaphor to Discourse, p. 7.

ones.²⁹ Michael Millgate agrees that Absalom, Absalom! is the last of Faulkner's best work, that the others "are all patterned in accordance with a deliberate and preconceived intention to enforce some kind of moral or social statement."³⁰ A Fable marks the greatest change from the use of symbol to allegory, when Faulkner's use of symbol seems to have completely turned into emblem using Faulkner. The Reivers, his last novel and published the same year he died, lacks the heavy-handed allegory of A Fable and the turgid preachiness of Requiem for a Nun, but it also lacks the depth of the earlier novels. Perhaps he had already written everything he had to say and had become too conscious of the characters, images, and themes he had already culled and shaped from his unconscious. Gold would argue that he had become increasingly aware of his role as an "artist" for an audience and was therefore increasingly concerned with affirming his faith in mankind.³¹ This study will attempt to trace the archetypal patterns and the development of their conscious use through Faulkner's work. Ideally, all the works should be considered, but such a large project is beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, only certain of

²⁹Allen Tate, "William Faulkner: 1897-1962," The Sewanee Review, LXXI (January - March, 1963), 161.

³⁰Michael Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 61.

³¹Gold, William Faulkner, p. 18.

the novels will be examined: Soldiers' Pay (1926) because it was the first novel; The Sound and the Fury (1929), As I Lay Dying (1930), Sanctuary (1931), Light in August (1932), and Absalom, Absalom! (1936) because they are generally acknowledged by most critics as his masterpieces and have received some good and much useless criticism. "The Bear" section of Go Down, Moses (1942) will be considered as a transitional point in the works because enough critical notice of its use of myth and ritual has been taken to make it almost a model, and because it also contains the beginnings of Faulkner's tendency to instruct. A Fable will be examined because even Faulkner admitted that it had reached the realm of almost pure allegory. It was begun in 1948 but not published until 1954, so in a sense it precedes Requiem for a Nun, which came out in 1951.³² Requiem will be studied briefly both because it is a sequel to Sanctuary and because it has a stylized form that is a structure for direct discourse on the theme instead of a depiction of it. The last book to be considered is The Reivers (1962) because it is Faulkner's final novel and because it marks a modification of his didactic, emblematic period.

Before beginning an examination of these works, it is important to clarify the varying definitions that might be

³²Robert Penn Warren, (ed.), "Chronology of Important Dates," Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 305.

given to the manifestations of the archetypes. Therefore, a brief summary of the terms to be used with the novels is necessary in order to avoid confusion. The system used here will basically be Jung's as elaborated and explained by P. M. Martin.

There are four basic figures or types of characters, each with a positive (or good) and a negative side:

The Wise Old Man is "the embodiment of the age-old experience, wisdom, logos of mankind;" giving advice, he appears perhaps in the role of priest, king, god, lawyer, philosopher, counselor, or in a role of a similar nature.³³ His advice may be very wise, or if ruled by the negative side, extremely foolish. This figure has a characteristic theme: "the great work, the discovery of the hidden treasure of wisdom, the knowledge that can miraculously transform."³⁴ In painting, folk-lore, literature and life, the Wise Old Man is often accompanied by a young maiden, the anima or Great Mother.³⁵

The anima is the feminine principle, the life force, and although she has great power, she is also diffuse and

³³P. M. Martin, Experiment in Depth, p. 95.

³⁴Ibid., p. 98.

³⁵Ibid., p. 97. Actually, Martin makes a distinction between the anima and the Great Mother, but for the purposes of this study it is unimportant.

paradoxical: She is both virgin and earth mother, queen of the underworld, goddess of nature, love, war, and other things.³⁶ When dominated by the negative side, she can be extremely destructive even through her love, for she can become "capable of mothering to death anyone unfortunate enough to come into her clutches . . . hers is a love with talons."³⁷ There are several themes associated with the anima, many of which are related to the key theme of death and rebirth; sometimes the theme of the "marvelous impregnation of the Great Mother and the birth of the hero," or the protection of the child-hero from danger, or sometimes the Great Mother accompanied by the dying and reviving god-hero.³⁸

The Hero is the figure of action, the one who gets things done, and, consequently, his characteristic themes are the quest, the adventure, and the great deed. The negative side of the figure is ineffectual or absurd in his actions.³⁹ The Hero is usually either the son or companion of the Great Mother, but is also connected with both the Wise Old Man and The Miraculous Child.

The Miraculous Child is more symbol than a personality figure. "The Miraculous Child is the archetype of the

³⁶Ibid., p. 99.

³⁷Ibid., p. 101.

³⁸Ibid., p. 102.

³⁹Ibid., p. 104.

new possibility, the new attempt. It is that which brings the good news to man, of the possibility of regeneration, the promise of the Christmas eve."⁴⁰

Gordon gives a more specific, longer list of figures found recurring in literature, including the Scapegoat, the Wandering Outcast, the Devil, the Star-crossed Lovers.⁴¹ To the archetypal themes already mentioned, he would add the Task, the Initiation into Maturity, the Journey, the Fall from Innocence.⁴²

These archetypes are important both in coming to an understanding of the characters and themes in Faulkner's work and in tracing his use of them.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 103.

⁴¹Gordon, op. cit., p. 502.

⁴²Ibid., p. 503.

CHAPTER II

THE RECREATION OF MYTH

Soldiers' Pay is commonly acknowledged to have all the obvious faults that one ordinarily expects to find in any author's first novel, and all the promise of the good things that were to come later from Faulkner. The novel lacks unity, the tone and style are erratic, and there seems to be more than one possible center of interest.⁴³ Vickery, along with a number of other critics, has noted that another problem is in the characters, for they are only types, not people.⁴⁴ Longley admits that the book is faulty, but he maintains that the plot, motivation, and characterization are "adequate."⁴⁵ Vickery finds the character-types divided into two basic groups which are in conflict: ". . . one immersed in the violence of war, the other scarcely touched by it."⁴⁶ Longley believes that, as individuals, Donald typifies the tragic hero, Joe Gilligan the comic hero, and Jones the villain.⁴⁷ Donald is actually almost non-existent as a

⁴³Hyatt H. Waggoner, William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World, p. 7.

⁴⁴Olga Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner, p. 2.

⁴⁵John L. Longley, Jr., The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes, p. 27.

⁴⁶Vickery, loc. cit.

⁴⁷Longley, loc. cit.

character, however, and it is difficult to label "tragic hero" (in any sense of the term) a man whose actions are never seen and whose horrible situation is wholly a matter of accident. Vickery sees him as the center of action for the other characters, stating that their actions and motives come from their reactions to the contrast between what Donald was and what he now is.⁴⁸ Yet, what Donald was before the war is seen only in very brief descriptions of him by his father and Emmy, and Joe and Margaret begin taking care of him on the train before they know anything about him.

Perhaps Margaret assumed the responsibility of caring for Donald as an expiation for the sympathy and sense of permanence that she had been unable to give her husband, Dick Powers.⁴⁹ Still, she hardly seems to fit the role of a guilt-driven woman; she says herself that she cannot seem to be moved by any emotion except pity, and her firmness, strength, and competence are emphasized repeatedly. In fact, in many respects she hardly seems to be a woman at all. Although she is young and attractive, her lipsticked mouth is more than once described as looking like a scar, suggesting that she might have more in common with Donald than a feeling of pity. Just what her "scar" is is hard

⁴⁸Vickery, op. cit., p. 4.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 6.

to determine. She is only twenty-four, but she seems much older because she always has a half-smile and calm, patient facial expressions that make her appear world-weary and maybe even wise. She is patronizing--when she and Gilligan have finally seen Donald safely through death's door and she knows that Gilligan is in love with her, she says, "You're a nice boy, Joe" (p. 209). She is always dressed in dark clothes, and even though her skin is described as pallid, she is constantly referred to as "that dark woman" or even "that black woman." After she and Gilligan have delivered Donald to his father, they stay on to help him and eventually Margaret is virtually running the household and everyone associated with it. She persuades Mr. Saunders to insist that Cecily visit Donald, but when she decides that Cecily and Donald should not be married, she does not hesitate to try to stop it, as if it is any of her business. She tells Emmy that she should marry him, and is eventually ordering the rector himself to be careful of what he says in front of Donald because no one ever knows whether he is listening and understanding or not. Her name, Powers, ultimately becomes strikingly appropriate as she presides over Donald's welfare.

Margaret, as well as the other characters, embodies some archetypal characteristics. She fits well into Jung's concept of the dark side of the anima. Millgate notices that she seems

. . . almost to become a priestess of a cult--there may be some significance in the reason she gives for refusing to marry Gilligan at the end of the book: "If I married you you'd be dead in a year, Joe. All the men that marry me die, you know"--while Cecily is apparently the virgin who is to restore the hero to health.⁵⁰

Donald's vagueness as a character and as a person aids this "cultishness" and it seems to indicate that he is deliberately made an abstraction, the mythic figure of the Wounded Hero.⁵¹ It might also be significant that the name Mahon is quite similar in pronunciation to "man." After Donald's funeral Margaret is referred to as "Margaret Mahon-Powers" rather than "Margaret Mahon" (p. 204). The effect of the inversion of the sequence of her married names might be connected with her reasons for marrying Donald when she knew that he was dying, and when she admitted that she did not even know if he realized whom he had married.

If Margaret and Donald seem to be something other than purely realistic figures, Jones, the "sub-embryonic villain,"⁵² is even more noticeably unrealistic. He is constantly described as having yellow, goat-like eyes, and Vickery associates him with the goat and satyr of Greek mythology, both traditional symbols of lust.⁵³ The parallel

⁵⁰Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner, pp. 64-65.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 64.

⁵²Longley, op. cit., p. 142.

⁵³Vickery, loc. cit.

is an apt one, for the satyr is connected with the god Pan, who was ". . . always in love with one nymph or another, but always rejected because of his ugliness."⁵⁴ Jones has the same problem. He is also an orphan, named Januarius because he was born in January--under the astrological sign of Capricorn, the goat. He often seems comical because of his appearance and ineptitude, but he is seriously willing to do evil if he gets a chance.⁵⁵ He is an archetype of the Devil, but an ineffectual one.

The rector, too, lives in a dream world.⁵⁶ He is both wise and naively innocent--his failure to recognize Jones's true nature is an innocence that borders on downright slowness. He is often simply referred to as "the divine." Cecily is sprightly and always associated with nature, especially trees, but she is anything but natural herself, always conscious of how she looks in every move she makes.

The story actually should belong to Joe. The narrative begins and ends with him. Although his motives are never really clear, he is the only character who interacts with each of the others. He starts out as a raucous,

⁵⁴Edith Hamilton, Mythology, p. 40.

⁵⁵Longley, loc. cit.

⁵⁶Millgate, Achievement, p. 65.

drunken soldier called Yaphank, but explains later that his name is really Joe Gilligan without giving any reason for the change. He becomes devoted to Mahon and falls in love with Margaret, but his involvement with them leaves him with nothing. Of Mahon he says, "I tried to help nature make a good job out of a poor one without having no luck at it" (p. 210). He comes to a false resolution when he decides to follow Margaret and try to convince her to marry him, but he misses her train. The rector reminds him that even heart-break does not last forever, and they walk out of town together into the country where they hear hymns coming from a negro church. In the music they recognize ". . . all the longing of mankind for a Oneness with Something, somewhere . . . and they turned toward under the moon, feeling dust in their shoes" (p. 221). This recognition of mortality and longing cannot be mistaken for affirmation or even acceptance, but it does seem to be a resignation without despair.

Waggoner finds the theme of the book in the rector's statement to Joe that ". . . all truth is unbearable. Do we not both suffer at this moment from the facts of division and death?"⁵⁷ The alienation that each of the characters experiences supports this theme, and the figures as archetypes underscore Joe's alienation and discovery. However,

⁵⁷Waggoner, op. cit., p. 4.

the archetypes are not fully developed in a meaningful pattern. There are hints of a pattern, but the theme and the relationships of the characters are still ultimately ambiguous. This is true not only of the archetypal figures; Millgate has noticed that "Faulkner appears to be fascinated with the symbolic possibilities of natural phenomena" in this work.⁵⁸ But he also recognizes that all the references to Greek mythology and other literature and the attempts at symbol do not fit together in any organized pattern.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the story cannot be read with any understanding at all without some attempt at recognizing the symbols, for the plot is almost nonexistent, and taken literally, is unbelievable, if not ridiculous. The awkward use of symbol in this first novel has matured marvelously within three years in Faulkner's fourth novel, The Sound and the Fury.

A look at the criticism on The Sound and the Fury would reveal an impressive list of choices as to whom and what the novel is really all about. One critic sees Caddy as the heroine in conflict with Jason, with the climax of the story in her defeat as she admits, "I have nothing at stake. . . ." ⁶⁰ Others, like Dauner, see Quentin as the

⁵⁸Millgate, Achievement, p. 62.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 65.

⁶⁰Catherine Baum, "'The Beautiful One': Caddy Compson as Heroine of The Sound and the Fury," Modern Fiction Studies, XIII (Spring, 1967), 33-34.

tragic hero. Perhaps there is no one protagonist, but each character's actions contribute to what Backman calls the theme of ". . . the decline and fall of the House of Compson."⁶¹ He and most other critics are quick to add that there is more than one conflict, and more than one theme.⁶² The style and structure have presented problems for analysis too, and it is difficult to find a suitable place to start dissecting the novel, sorting it all out, so that it can all be understood while it is being fitted back together.

Waggoner points out that ". . . all the main characters in the book . . . live in a world in which time is the most significant dimension."⁶³ Each section has a death and burial take place or recollected in it, as death is what makes time meaningful.⁶⁴ The problem of time would also explain the jumbled sequence of the narratives by the three brothers, and the structure would be an expression of the theme.

Benjy is unable to distinguish past from present and has no concept of the future, so time for him is a constant present because he is unaware of its passing.⁶⁵ Events that

⁶¹Backman, Major Years, p. 29.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 50.

he recalls from the distant past are not really memories, they are actually relived; nothing ever changes because it is all now. Dilsey lives in the present for the opposite reason--she is aware of time without being obsessed by it and can use the past to function constructively in the present.⁶⁶ Jason is obsessed by the future, when he will be able to get rid of Benjy and the girl Quentin and make a killing on the stock market. In his section, his interpretation of the world is ". . . largely wishful thinking, almost as much fantasy as Quentin's."⁶⁷ Mrs. Compson is unable to deal with the present, so she retreats into invalidism and a fantasy world she has created about her gentility.⁶⁸ Mr. Compson gives Quentin a watch, warning, "I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it" (p. 95).

Quentin is dominated by the negative side of the archetypal Hero because he is completely ineffectual when he tries to act. Quentin tries to kill Dalton Ames to avenge Caddy's honor, but faints before Ames ever touches him. He cannot actually commit incest or carry out a murder-suicide

⁶⁶Backman, Major Years, p. 37.

⁶⁷Waggoner, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 50.

pact with Caddy even though she consents to both. The only action he completes successfully is his own death. As Foster sees him, Quentin is subjected to two forces--his incestuous love for Caddy and his desire for death.⁶⁹ Howe agrees that Quentin's obsession with Caddy's virginity is personal, rather than that of the defender of a social code, as several critics have suggested, for he is both attracted to Caddy and repulsed by sex.⁷⁰ Quentin's love is a regressive one, he cannot accept changes in Caddy as she grows up and he does not mature emotionally and sexually himself. He wants to stop Caddy's sexuality more than he wants to possess it, and this lack of physical desire fits in with his death wish.⁷¹ This reasoning leads again to the conclusion that Quentin's most basic conflict is with time.⁷² Dauner explains that Quentin's experience is given in several symbolic motifs that are emphasized many times in his section, including shadow, water and time.⁷³ The implications of the shadow symbol are closely related to the others, and an archetypal symbol interpretation "reveals much about

⁶⁹Ruel E. Foster, "Dream as Symbolic Act in Faulkner," Perspective, II (Summer, 1949), 188.

⁷⁰Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, p. 168.

⁷¹Backman, Major Years, p. 23.

⁷²Ibid., p. 37.

⁷³Dauner, op. cit., p. 159.

Quentin's character and his real motives for suicide."⁷⁴ Anthropologically, the shadow is connected with the soul, with injury or loss of the shadow causing illness or death, and there are many instances where Quentin seems to want to destroy his shadow: "I could see a smoke-stack. I turned my back to it, tramping my shadow's bones into the concrete with hard heels."⁷⁵ Besides being associated with this kind of self-punishment, the sight of a shadow often recalls associations in Quentin's mind of other times and events with Caddy, as when he remembers the shadows of Caddy and her lover joining, and relates the memory to his obsession with sex and Caddy's virginity.⁷⁶ Jung hypothesizes the existence of an archetypal Shadow figure which would unify and complement the associations just mentioned. The archetypal Shadow is the Double, the alter ego, the "dark brother," and is the subconscious embodiment of all the negative, repressed qualities of the self.⁷⁷ Thus Quentin is denying part of himself when he tries to get rid of his Shadow, his dark side. Quentin is all mind and introversion, so Caddy is truly his opposite side because she fulfills the

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 168.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 165.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 163.

⁷⁷Martin, op. cit., p. 73.

functions of feeling or sensation.⁷⁸ Quentin's denial of Caddy, his anima, in the instinctual nature of his Shadow is self-destructive, which is why he needs to get out of time.⁷⁹ His breaking of the watch is a symbolic gesture that allows him into a time without clocks, just as Benjy's idiocy puts him out of clock time.⁸⁰

Jason, too, is an ineffectual Hero. He is always blustering about what he is going to do. He is going to outsmart the stock-market, but somehow he always manages to lose. He thinks he could handle the girl Quentin properly if given a chance, but when he chases her around town he gets nothing but a headache from the gasoline fumes of his car.

Mr. Compson is a failure in his role as Wise Old Man. He is given to making pronouncements and explaining life, especially to Quentin, but his advice does not help Quentin, has no effect on the others, and the old man drinks himself to death. His wife, even though physically fertile enough to give birth to four children, is anything but an Earth Mother. She is not a source of life and is incapable even of affection. She is too busy being an invalid even to

⁷⁸Dauner, op. cit., p. 166.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Jean-Paul Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, p. 83.

perform the outward duties of a wife and mother and is actually a destructive anima.

Caddy and Dilsey become substitute mothers. Caddy loves Benjy and supplies the motherly care that Mrs. Compson could not give, and she knows how to pacify him when he cries.⁸¹ She is also beautiful, miraculously ageless, sensual, and constantly associated with earth and water, symbols for fertility.⁸² She does produce life in the physical sense by having a daughter, but her archetype is not wholly that of positive anima. She is a false anima for Quentin, that is, she is unable to complement his character because she is his sister. She has only physical relationships with other men and is not a happy combination with her short-term husband. Only Dilsey becomes what Brooks calls a "sustaining" female principle, because in her the instincts, emotions, rationality and values of life are all meaningfully related.⁸³

Along with the other inverted archetypes, Benjy is the perennial Miraculous Child, but he hardly embodies possibilities for regeneration. He is a castrated idiot. He does have certain special powers: the ability to "smell"

⁸¹Lawrance Thompson, "Mirror Analogues in The Sound and the Fury," English Institute Essays, 1952.

⁸²Martin, op. cit., p. 34.

⁸³Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 42.

death and to sense Caddy's loss of virginity.⁸⁴ He also wields a certain amount of power. He does not want Caddy to change any more than Quentin does, so when he smells perfume instead of trees or sees her with a boy, his bellowing can make her try to be, at least temporarily, the old Caddy.⁸⁵ It is significant that the action centers around Easter of Benjy's thirty-third year. In his natural innocence he becomes an impotent Christ-symbol whose Easter will bring no resurrection.⁸⁶ He is not a Christ-figure in any allegorical sense, however, because there is no one-to-one correspondence between the idea of the historical Christ and Benjy as another representation of him. At the end of the book, when Luster takes Benjy on his weekly pilgrimage to the cemetery, he decides on a whim to turn left around the square instead of taking the usual right turn. In folklore, left is associated with the sinister, and Benjy immediately bellows in protest.⁸⁷ He is not satisfied until they have turned around and ". . . cornice and facade flowed smoothly once more from left to right; post and tree, window and doorway, and signboard, each in its ordered place" (p. 336).

⁸⁴Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 343.

⁸⁵Peter Swiggart, The Art of Faulkner's Novels, p. 180.

⁸⁶Waggoner, op. cit., p. 44.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 60.

He does establish an order and a right way and a wrong way, but the order is absurd--it has no meaning except that he wants things as he is accustomed to having them.

When assigning the roles of comic villain to Jason and tragic hero to Quentin, Backman, like most critics, never even mentions Quentin IV, the girl.⁸⁸ Yet she is the only character who acts as a successful Hero in the novel. She makes a decision to steal Jason's money and run away, and she does it. She gets away from Jason, her grandmother, and Jefferson because she chooses to. Like Huck heading for the Territory, her decision may not bring her happiness, but she has made the decision and, in doing so, refuses to be the victim of pure circumstance.

The complexity of the symbols and imagery in this novel would require a volume larger than the book itself to explicate fully. For instance, the image of water recurs frequently as a symbol. Associated with Caddy, it can have its traditional meaning of physical fertility. Associated with Quentin and with shadows, it can suggest the unconscious, or even the ". . . waters of death and rebirth into which he escapes in a final ritualistic purification."⁸⁹ There are several other symbolic motifs that simply cannot

⁸⁸Backman, Major Years, p. 40.

⁸⁹Dauner, op. cit., p. 159.

be taken up in this study, but they all fit together to create a theme that is most concisely defined as a quest for the meaning of time, but which cannot be defined in one sentence (or two, or three) because it took The Sound and the Fury to create it. In this novel Faulkner truly achieved the language of symbol that makes the story timeless and universal.

Swiggart insists that As I Lay Dying lacks the social "myth" that he finds in The Sound and the Fury and that the ". . . absence of mythological themes in As I Lay Dying is all the more striking in view of the atmosphere of family loyalty and epic heroism which dominates the action."⁹⁰ On the other hand, most critics have found the action of this novel to be more readily suggestive of some version of archetypal themes than the previous one. Chase sees it as a ". . . comic fable about piety towards the dead and the sacredness of promises to the dead, . . ." carried by the themes of the Strenuous Journey and the Quest.⁹¹ Backman, too, reads it as a fable, but one ". . . about Addie's quest for salvation . . ." and the ". . . testing of three sons by fire and water."⁹² Chase's reading seems to be even more

⁹⁰Swiggart, op. cit., p. 110.

⁹¹Chase, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

⁹²Backman, Major Years, pp. 62-63.

of an oversimplification than any summary or generalization is bound to be. He does add that the quest is a search for identity, as exemplified particularly by Darl.⁹³ Backman's analysis perhaps sentimentalizes Addie, since one of the first things the reader learns about her is how thoroughly she has become convinced that the only salvation is the grave. He adds that the story is finally that of the triumphant love of Addie and Jewel for each other, of the two people who are committed to action and not words.⁹⁴ This may seem a rather questionable triumph. According to Waggoner, the story depends on a structural metaphor which is ". . . a journey through life to death and through death to life, . . ." as a search for a lost center of value.⁹⁵ Brooks suggests that one of the principal themes might be the nature of the heroic deed and an examination of the motivations behind it--Anse, Dewey Dell, and even Cash have their own reasons for wanting to go to Jefferson besides the stated purpose of burying Addie, and they are all death drives, as will be shown.⁹⁶

⁹³Chase, op. cit., p. 208.

⁹⁴Backman, Major Years, p. 66.

⁹⁵Waggoner, op. cit., p. 62.

⁹⁶Brooks, Hidden God, p. 143.

One critic considers Anse the central character.⁹⁷ However, Anse does not change, does not develop. He feels bound to keep his promise to bury Addie in Jefferson, but he is also ready to take advantage of the opportunity to go to town to buy some false teeth, imitations of living matter. Addie's death is an interruption in the routine passage of time for the whole family, but it is only a temporary stop until she is buried and Anse remarries.⁹⁸ As head of the family, he is a foolish Wise Old Man. He does not seem to have the vaguest understanding of what has gone on in Addie's mind during all their marriage, and it is difficult to tell whether Anse really regards his promise too sacred to break come hell or high water, or if what Samson says of him is true, that

. . . it takes a lazy man, a man that hates moving, to get set on moving once he does get started off, the same as he was set on staying still, like it ain't the moving he hastes to much as the starting and stopping. And like he would be kind of proud of whatever come up to make the moving or the setting still look hard (p. 417).

O'Connor views Dewey Dell and Vardaman as ". . . something less than human, one characterless, the other close to idiocy."⁹⁹ This seems to be another clumsy reading. Dewey

⁹⁷Charles Allen, "William Faulkner: Comedy and the Purpose of Humor," Arizona Quarterly, XVI (Spring, 1960), 63.

⁹⁸Waggoner, op. cit., p. 73.

⁹⁹William Van O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, p. 50.

Dell may be ignorant, but she is hardly characterless. She would be a perfect Earth Mother, ". . . a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth, . . ." (p. 384) but the lack of a husband makes her want to abort her pregnancy. She is basically strong willed, and although she says she would like to have time to worry about her mother's death, time to grieve, her first concern is to get to Jefferson so that she can buy a drug to cause the abortion. This motive is obviously connected with a death drive. She keeps reminding her father of his promise to Addie so that he will not give up and bury the body before they make it to town. She also realizes that Darl has figured out her situation and she hates him for it, enough to turn him in for burning a barn in his attempt to destroy their mother's stinking corpse, and deeply enough to pounce on him and beat him when the authorities come.¹⁰⁰ Vardaman is a child, not an idiot. In fact, he is a Miraculous Child. He catches a fish just before his mother dies. Waggoner explains the fish in terms of the symbol of Christ, and as Vardaman associates his mother with the fish, the cutting up and eating of it becomes a ritual whereby she will live on--". . . she will be him and Pa and Cash and Dewey Dell and there won't be anything in the box and so she can breathe, . . ." as Vardaman says.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Waggoner, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 66.

Addie herself is an enigma.¹⁰² She is at the center of the novel, since the action revolves around her body. Even alive, Addie cannot be a life force when she believes that ". . . the reason for living is getting ready to stay dead, . . ." (p. 467) but she does exert a power over her family even after she is dead, and they refer to her in the coffin as though she were still alive. Backman points out that, when they try to cross the river,

Addie in the coffin seems a life-in-death symbol, like one of Frazer's drowned gods . . . and the fish symbolism (the fish is a life symbol of immemorial antiquity) suggests that she is fundamentally still alive for her family.¹⁰³

But Frazer's "drowned gods" are the dying and reviving gods, and this dip in the river does not lead to rebirth. This Strenuous Journey does not lead to salvation for anyone. There can be no rebirth without death, and the Bundren family seems unable to recognize the full import of Addie's death, at least they refuse to give in to circumstance and common sense and do not get her buried for nine days. Thus the death and rebirth pattern becomes ironic.

The death and rebirth pattern usually carries with it the identity theme.¹⁰⁴ Darl is troubled by the problem of

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 83.

¹⁰³Backman, "Sickness and Primitivism," p. 65.

¹⁰⁴D. G. Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction, p. 355.

establishing or finding an identity.¹⁰⁵ He becomes, then, the unheroic hero. He becomes insane trying to discover what he is, perhaps because, in a way, he knows too much. He is very conscious of identity and seems to know somehow that Anse is not Jewel's father. His madness actually makes him an objective observer because he is past caring about the events and the family; he merely turns them over in his mind, trying to discover what he does not know--"I don't know what I am. I don't even know if I am or not."¹⁰⁶ He becomes a seer, ". . . a Tiresias who foresuffers all."¹⁰⁷ His is a ". . . poetic madness, the isolated self."¹⁰⁸ The hero can be isolated from society in two ways: he is somehow different from other people, and his quest takes him away from home.¹⁰⁹ Darl is different from his family because he recognizes that the rotting corpse needs to be disposed of without waiting to get to Jefferson, promise or no promise, and he burns a barn down trying to do it. Because of this attempt to do something, he is permanently taken away from home to an asylum in Jackson.

¹⁰⁵Chase, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁶Waggoner, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁰⁸Backman, Major Years, p. 55.

¹⁰⁹Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence, p. 104.

Cash and Jewel are also two unsuccessful parts of a Hero: Cash with his work and physical suffering endured without complaint, and Jewel with his heroic actions in saving Addie's body.¹¹⁰ But both kinds of action become ironic, for Cash's suffering is ridiculous, if not masochistic--he must have known that it was stupid to try to set his broken leg with cement, and Jewel's saving of Addie seems absurd when all he saves is decaying flesh. Cash does seem to develop as a character, in some ways. His narration in the early part of the book is fragmented and concerned only with the mechanics of things--his list of meaningless reasons for making the coffin on the bevel, for instance, as if it really makes any difference how he makes it, and his repeated insistence that, "It [the coffin] wasn't on a balance. I told them that if they wanted it to tote and ride on a balance they would have to . . ." (p. 458). After they have reached Jefferson, Cash begins to notice what is going on around him:

. . . it seemed to me that when Jewel worked so hard to get her outen the river, he was going against God in a way, and then when Darl seen that it looked like one of us would have to do something, I can almost believe he done right in a way. But I don't reckon nothing excuses setting fire to a mans [sic] barn and endangering his stock and destroying his property. That's how I reckon a man is crazy. That's how he can't see eye to eye with other folks. And I reckon they ain't nothing else to do with him but what the most folks says is right (p. 510).

¹¹⁰Brooks, Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 143.

Later, he adds, ". . . it is better so for [Darl]. This world is not his world; this life his life." This seems to be Cash's answer to what Waggoner was cited earlier as calling the search for a center of value. Although he has an inkling that Darl was right, practical Cash believes that property must be more important. The majority opinion decides what is right, so there are no absolutes for him, not even death. If the majority of the Bundren family sets the standard for sanity, then Darl has little choice but to go crazy. Thus the entire story pattern becomes ironic, and only Vardaman ends up with anything. He recognized death, but resolved it in his own mind but creating a belief, a faith--". . . my mother is a fish." He instinctively connects himself with Darl, who also recognized death, by repeating, ". . . my brother is Darl."

In Sanctuary, O'Donnell believes that Faulkner has created an allegory, with Temple Drake representing "Southern Womanhood Corrupted but Undeiled" accompanied by Gowan, who is "Corrupted Tradition," until she falls into the hands of Popeye, who is "amoral Modernism," and every other character is also a type or a caricature.¹¹¹ Popeye may be amoral, and he is described in the mechanical images that lead O'Donnell to dub him Modernism, but it is difficult to see

¹¹¹O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 28.

Temple as anything but Corrupted and Defiled. Cowley also reads the book as an allegory, that of the Rape and Corruption of the South, although he does not think it is so completely connected and patterned as O'Donnell would have it.¹¹² Reading this novel as any such allegory makes a rather trite story of it and ignores important facts about the characters, such as Raped, Corrupted, Undefined Temple's nymphomaniacal lust for gangster Red and her indirect murder of Goodwin by her false identification of him as the rapist. Waggoner, on the other hand, finds little social criticism in Sanctuary, even though that type of theme is what Faulkner chose to emphasize twenty years later in the sequel, Requiem for a Nun.¹¹³ Waggoner considers Sanctuary ". . . a novel of pure despair whether or not it was so intended."¹¹⁴ This novel, as Faulkner's work often does, shows ". . . man's initiation into the nature of reality . . ." through the discovery of evil, as when Horace Benbow finds out that evil penetrates ". . . every kind of rational or civilized order."¹¹⁵

¹¹²Cowley, "Introduction," The Portable Faulkner, p. 13.

¹¹³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 96.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 97.

¹¹⁵Brooks, Hidden God, p. 25.

Benbow's ". . . struggle with the forces of evil . . ." is the central conflict of the novel.¹¹⁶ Millgate identifies Benbow as the protagonist because he undergoes the greatest change,¹¹⁷ for he ". . . finds the ultimate outrage in the discovery that there is a 'logical pattern' to evil."¹¹⁸ Some insight into Horace's character is given by Ruby when she first hears him speaking--". . . a quick, faintly outlandish voice, the voice of a man given to much talk and not much else" (p. 10). He is another archetypal Hero who cannot succeed at anything. He is run by the women in his family, and his idealistic, heroic attempt to save Goodwin fails as completely and ignominiously as it possibly could.

Vickery points out similarities between Horace and Popeye: society is "intolerant" of both of them and, as impotent Popeye watches Temple and Red do what he cannot do, Horace has fantasies about Little Belle's sexual experiences in the grape arbor.¹¹⁹ Both men are "incomplete human beings," for Popeye ". . . is seen only through his actions, violent, reflexive, destructive; in contrast Horace is all thought, sensitivity and perception but without the ability

¹¹⁶Leonard Doran, "Form and the Story Teller," Harvard Advocate, CXXXV (November, 1951), 12.

¹¹⁷Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 43.

¹¹⁸Waggoner, loc. cit.

¹¹⁹Vickery, op. cit., p. 132.

to act effectively."¹²⁰ Popeye is afraid of many things, like animals and the woods, but yet he is so dangerous, so evil, that he seems like an archetypal Devil. Temple is instinctively afraid of him, but when she is running about, trying to find Gowan while they are at Frenchman's Bend, she

. . . met Popeye halfway to the house. Without ceasing to run she appeared to pause. Even her flapping coat did not overtake her, yet for an appreciable instant she faced Popeye with a grimace of taut, toothed coquetry. He did not stop; the finicking swagger of his narrow back did not falter. Temple ran again (p. 29).

Popeye is described as having breath "hissing through ragged teeth," (p. 44) which serves to make him appear diabolical, but the passage just cited shows that he had some kind of charisma for Temple. It is also revealing of Temple's character. While at the Old Frenchman's place, she cannot quit playing her role of college flirt even though it is dangerous to play it there, for she is both repelled and attracted by real sexuality.¹²¹ Temple is a good example of the power of the destructive anima. She is sexually attractive, but she is an emasculating force on Gowan, is the cause of the murders of Goodwin and Red, and is actually the final cause of Popeye's constantly impending doom. Magny has commented on the names "Temple" and "Sanctuary" as significant in

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 130.

recognizing the religious implications of the novel,¹²² but Waggoner expresses some doubts as to whether the "violated" Temple ever held anything sacred in the first place.¹²³

Temple undergoes no more change than that of becoming more intensely and openly what she started out as--a shallow, vain young girl who has little understanding of her own motives, and who is therefore dangerous to those around her.

Horace's wife, step-daughter, and sister also fit into the pattern of the wicked anima. Belle and her daughter seem to regard Horace as not terribly important to their lives, and help keep him in the role of the nonentity that he has become. Narcissa's need for social respectability leads her to betray Horace's case to the District Attorney, resulting in Goodwin's murder and another blow to Horace's masculinity. Ruby is the only life force in the entire story. She tries to care for her sickly child and is faithful to Goodwin when he is in trouble. Her relationship with him shows that she does not regard sex purely as a commodity, even though she expects to have to sleep with Horace in payment for his services as lawyer.

Aunt Jenny plays the role of Wise Old Man. She knows that Narcissa is foolish, but she knows people well enough

¹²²Robert Penn Warren, (ed.), "Chronology of Important Dates," Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, 70.

¹²³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 94.

to know that Horace's case is futile, and so she advises him to forget it. Even though what she predicts occurs, she does not provide any hope, because her advice is basically that people who go against the established system are bound to get hurt. And Horace's initiation into this reality does not lead to success or make him a stronger man. He ends up back with Belle, essentially ignored. Waggoner's analysis of the novel as "pure despair" seems accurate.

Light in August is also susceptible to interpretation as an allegory, especially because part of the story centers around a character called Joe Christmas, an orphan who grew up to meet a violent death at the age of thirty-three. Besides Joe's name, other charactonyms are so obvious as to be almost ridiculous.¹²⁴ Joanna's symbolic role is suggested by her last name, Burden, for she ". . . accepts the burden of working for human betterment."¹²⁵ Gail Hightower's name suggests his problem, the way he set himself apart from genuine contact with the people around him, and Joe is finally murdered by a man appropriately named Grimm.¹²⁶ Kazin believes that the characters become only generalized

¹²⁴Charles Shapiro, (ed.), "The Stillness of Light in August," Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels, 261.

¹²⁵Waggoner, op. cit., p. 112.

¹²⁶Shapiro, op. cit., p. 262.

symbols instead of complex human beings.¹²⁷ He adds that "Joe Christmas, then, is really 'man' trying to discover the particular man he is."¹²⁸ Gold, however, argues that Joe's name could be anything and the story would still be the same because he is an individual as well as a type.¹²⁹ This estimate seems the most valid because Faulkner spends many pages depicting Joe's childhood, which is that of an individual, and the development of his actions and motives. Chase adds that Joe is a Christ-figure only in a distantly symbolic way, but he never quite explains the connection.¹³⁰ Millgate agrees, explaining that the Christ-imagery used to portray Joe is not to make him a Christ-figure, rather, it is to emphasize his role as a sacrificial victim.¹³¹ Although Joe definitely has an archetypal character in addition to his own personal traits, his life does not parallel that of the historical Christ, nor is it a simple inversion of the role. Christ developed from Miraculous Child to Hero to Scapegoat. Joe is not the type of man who brings new meaning to life, but is an ". . . incarnation of

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 161.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 150.

¹²⁹Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 40.

¹³⁰Chase, op. cit., p. 213.

¹³¹Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 47.

human suffering."¹³² He is consistently the Scapegoat, and ". . . we are asked to see Christmas's death as a crucifixion despite the fact that Christmas is in every imaginable way different from Jesus . . . we are asked to feel . . . that he epitomizes the human situation."¹³³ Although Gold considers Joe a tragic hero,¹³⁴ he is incapable of functioning as an archetypal Hero, because his actions are either ineffectual or absurd. Like Darl, he is on a Quest for identity, and his wanderings are evidently completely haphazard, uncalculated, and therefore useless. But according to Kazin, Joe is only the ". . . man things are done to, the man who has no free will of his own . . . and who looks for an identity by deliberately provoking responses that will let him be someone. . . ."¹³⁵ This statement is only partially true, for Joe, at least, believed that he did have free will. When Joanna is pressing him to marry her, almost gives in, then thinks: "No. If I give in now, I will deny all the thirty years that I have lived to make me what I chose to be" (p. 251). One critic draws a parallel between Oedipus and Joe in the theme of a search for identity. This

¹³²Shapiro, op. cit., p. 153.

¹³³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 103.

¹³⁴Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 40.

¹³⁵Shapiro, op. cit., p. 151. Italicized in the original.

can be only a superficial comparison, however, for Oedipus did not realize that he did not know his true identity, and it is the discovery of identity that causes his downfall.¹³⁶ Joe never does know for certain who he is and whether or not he has any Negro blood, and the uncertainty is on his mind almost constantly. Campbell connects Joe and Hightower as ". . . they are both led into a realm of disastrous fantasies by their brooding over a world out of joint."¹³⁷

Hightower is the protagonist in the sense that he is the character most changed by the events in the story--he has been withdrawn, "immune from human feeling," and until too late, refuses to try to save Joe, but he does help Lena, and in doing so begins to become aware of ". . . his inescapable responsibility for all his actions and of his essential 'oneness' with his friends . . . and everyone he has known."¹³⁸ He has played the Wise Old Man, with no one to listen to him for years but Byron, and eventually Byron turns down Hightower's advice and judgments. After Christmas's death, Hightower remembers his past, his congregation, and his dead wife, and for the first time he realizes that he caused the failures and was not just a

¹³⁶Longley, op. cit., p. 165.

¹³⁷Campbell, op. cit., p. 214.

¹³⁸Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 50.

victim of them:

I came here where faces full of bafflement and hunger and eagerness waited for me, waiting to believe; I did not see them . . . I brought with me one trust, perhaps the first trust of man, which I had accepted of my own will before God; I considered that promise and trust of so little worth that I did not know that I had even accepted it. And if that was all I did for her, what could I have expected? what could I have expected save disgrace and despair and the face of God Turned away in very shame? Perhaps in the moment when I revealed to her not only the depth of my hunger but the fact that never and never would she have any part in assuaging of it; perhaps at that moment I became her seducer and murderer, author and instrument of her shame and death. After all, there must be some things for which God cannot be accused by man and held responsible. There must be (pp. 461-462).

Like, Horace, this recognition is not a pleasant one, but a horrible one which does not necessarily promise good changes in the man's life.

Byron Bunch, in his quiet way, plays the Hero. He does all he can to help Lena, and by the end of the novel he has even given up the kind of religion that he has practiced faithfully for years when he tries to seduce Lena in order to be a man for her. Unfortunately, Lena will not treat him as a man, will not even turn him down as a man, but treats him like a naughty child, saying "You go and lay down now, and get some sleep. We got another fur piece to go tomorrow" (p. 477). Chase recognizes her as a "bovine earth mother" and remarks that she brings ". . . echoes of ancient myth and ritual, . . ." but never says how or which.¹³⁹

¹³⁹Chase, op. cit., p. 212.

Lena is "all fertility" in contrast with the other main characters, who are "all barrenness."¹⁴⁰ Yet even Lena is not a wholly sympathetic character. She is always saying that she does not want to be any trouble to anybody, but she always is. She is either dangerously mentally slow to catch on to things or she just refuses to. After Lucas has obviously run away from her for the second time, she tries to follow, not even knowing which way he went, and all the while taking advantage of Byron's dog-like devotion to her. She would not dream of imposing on the furniture dealer that they hitch a ride with, but she ends up sleeping in his truck and he is the one who ends up on the ground. She just always knows that someone will always take care of her, and she simply expects it.

In contrast with Lena, Joanna Burden is a virgin until she is forty-one and remains childless after she takes Joe as a lover. Her frustrations battle with her Calvinist conscience until she becomes insane. She does manage to exert a power over Joe. He knows that he must get away from her, and decides to leave. "But that was all. When Saturday came, he did not go . . . 'I'll go next Saturday'" (p. 252). And he does not get away until they are simultaneously ready to kill each other. Joanna is Joe's false

¹⁴⁰Shapiro, op. cit., p. 149.

anima, leading him to his own death by driving him to kill her. She accepts him because she believes he is part Negro, not just because he is a man.¹⁴¹ She and Joe and Hightower are death-driven figures, in contrast with Byron and Lena.¹⁴² All the characters in this novel are thoroughly developed as individual personalities, so much so that they are necessarily archetypal rather than allegorical.

Of Absalom, Absalom!, one critic has stated:

This is the story of Thomas Sutpen, stripped of its savagery and complications, and with no hint in terms of myth, tragedy, or allegory. Regardless of its meaning, Absalom, Absalom! is one of the most extraordinary psychological mysteries of all time, because its method is frankly experimental.¹⁴³

This reading is definitely a minority opinion. Backman draws parallels with the Oedipus story because the characters in the story fail to recognize blood relationships between themselves.¹⁴⁴ Thompson believes that Faulkner emphasizes the theme of the violation of family ties by using specific mythic analogies--the Oresteian trilogy and the biblical story of David and Absalom.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Campbell sees the theme of the book as the curse on the

¹⁴¹Waggoner, op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁴²Backman, "Sickness and Primitivism," p. 68.

¹⁴³Allen, op. cit., p. 211.

¹⁴⁴Backman, Major Years, p. 106.

¹⁴⁵Thompson, op. cit., p. 63.

house of Sutpen, and incest and miscegenation are instrumental in its downfall.¹⁴⁶ Lind also finds the plot analogous to Greek legends, but qualifies his statement by stating that the comparisons are loose.¹⁴⁷ This qualification is important to keep from over-emphasizing the pattern of the plot outline.

Again there is the usual disagreement among critics as to what actually happens and whose story it is. As Foster sees it, ". . . the central dramatic situation involves Henry Sutpen's love (verging on the homosexual) for his half-brother, Charles Bon."¹⁴⁸ Others see Sutpen both as a source of evil and as the only heroic figure.¹⁴⁹ But it is the process of Quentin Compson's imagination and reconstruction of events that endows ". . . relatively meaningless facts with significant and useful meanings."¹⁵⁰ The "truth" about the Sutpen family is never certainly presented, for the few known "facts" of the story are subject to interpretation by the narrators, Rosa Coldfield and Quentin's

¹⁴⁶Harry M. Campbell, "Structural Devices in the Work of Faulkner," Perspective, III (Autumn, 1950), 215.

¹⁴⁷Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!" PMLA (December, 1955), 880.

¹⁴⁸Foster, op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁴⁹Backman, Major Years, p. 108.

¹⁵⁰Thompson, op. cit., p. 56.

father, and ultimately by Quentin himself.¹⁵¹ Backman states that Quentin, in recreating the story, ". . . is like the victim of a nightmare, frozen into paralysis and rapt attention by the horror and fascination of his dream."¹⁵² Backman may have touched on something beyond that which he meant to imply in this statement. The archetypal figures can not only be expressed individually by dominating characters in literature, they can all be present in one character's personality, just as they are all present in the subconscious of every living human being.¹⁵³ According to Jung, these archetypes must be in accord with one another, or the individual is in trouble, just as Quentin was when he tried to repress or eradicate his instinctive nature in the Shadow in The Sound and the Fury. The archetypes make their conflicts felt in the consciousness by making the individual unhappy or by making him create difficulties for himself. The figures may be confronted "face to face" in dreams or even in waking fantasy. The individual must come to terms with these archetypes, the various facets of his subconscious self, even though it may be a painful process.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 54.

¹⁵²Backman, Major Years, p. 111.

¹⁵³Carl G. Jung, The Integration of the Personality, pp. 17-24.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 20.

As Quentin recreates the Sutpen story in his own mind and becomes emotionally involved, it may well be that he is unconsciously reshaping the characters in terms of the conflicts among the archetypes in his own psyche, and the characters as the reader knows them exist only in Quentin's mind until it becomes impossible to tell how much relationship they bear to the historical characters. Millgate does not deal with this type of interpretation, but he makes some statements that are indirectly useful, as when he states that the questioning by Shreve helps Quentin in ". . . exorcising the Southern ghosts which inhabit his body and mind, . . ." and ". . . at least brings Quentin to a fuller knowledge both of himself and his region."¹⁵⁵ This is a reasonable reading on the level in which Quentin might be in conflict with his society, but it also might well be that it holds true for Quentin's personal South, his unconscious "region." As Lind comments on the style, ". . . the unceasing flow of language gives the effect, as in Moby Dick, of being tapped under pressure from unconscious or supraconscious sources."¹⁵⁶

Miss Rosa, the first narrator to Quentin, is an appropriate character to become, as he listens, a figure

¹⁵⁵Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 157.

¹⁵⁶Lind, op. cit., p. 289.

who can introduce him to his troubled unconscious. She is a physically and psychically misshapen spinster.¹⁵⁷ She has remained staunchly in her past, always dressed

. . . in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew . . . talking in that grim haggard amazed voice until at last listening would renege and hearing sense self-confound and the long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration would appear, as though by outraged recapitulation evoked, quiet inattentive and harmless, out of the bidding and dreamy and victorious dust (p. 8).

And as she related the story of Sutpen, Quentin thought:

. . . she resembled a crucified child; and the voice not ceasing but vanishing into and then out of the long intervals like a stream, a trickle running from patch to patch of dried sand, and the ghost /Sutpen/ mused with shadowy docility as if it were the voice which he haunted where a more fortunate one would have had a house (p. 8).

Rosa tells Quentin that she tells him the story because he is going away to school and that perhaps he will want to write it up and sell it to a magazine. "Yessum," Quentin said. "Only she dont mean that," he thought. "It's because she wants it told." (p. 10).¹⁵⁸ She is the destructive anima, full of the past and bitterness, never producing anything, but she tries to tell Quentin something about her conflict, her resentment for Sutpen, who for her was "evil's source and head" (p. 18).

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 282.

¹⁵⁸Italicized in the original.

Sutpen, a Devil of archetypal stature for Rosa, also has the qualities of the Hero. He is definitely the man of action, but he succeeds and then loses everything. He "tears" a plantation out of the untouched wilderness, but the wilderness eventually reclaims the land. His wife is not a successful earth mother, but she avoids conflict by progressively becoming more childish than her own daughter. The daughter, Judith, is quiet, reserved, and invariably calm, even when her lover is killed by her brother. She is hardly a conventional woman; she seems to know somehow what will happen before it happens. Henry, the son whom Sutpen had planned for should be the Miraculous Child who grows up into a Hero. But Henry meets Charles Bon, and both he and his sister become enamored of him. Henry both loves and eventually destroys Charles. Charles is everything Henry is not--sophisticated, world-weary, and distinctly un-Puritan in his moral standards. He is Henry's Shadow figure, and literally as well as symbolically his "dark brother." And Henry eventually kills him for, he thinks, the sake of the sister, and must run away. If Henry could fully accept his Shadow uniting with his anima, he would not have to run away. He can accept incest, because he can accept the fact that Bon is his brother and that Judith is their mutual sister, but he cannot accept miscegenation because of Bon's inferior, "Negro" blood and heritage.

Quentin's Wise Old Man father tells what he knows of the story, but, like Miss Rosa, leads the way to fantasy when he begins assuming things--"perhaps" it happened this way, "probably" they, . . . she "must have" . . . When Quentin in his turn relates the story to Shreve, Shreve too, begins filling in events. They both become so absorbed in creating the story that they do not even know who is talking:

Shreve ceased. That is, for all the two of them, Shreve and Quentin, knew he had stopped, since for all the two of them knew he had never begun, since it did not matter (and possibly neither of them conscious of the distinction) which one had been doing the talking. So that now it was not two but four of them riding the two horses through the dark over the frozen December ruts of that Christmas Eve: four of them and then just two--Charles-Shreve and Quentin-Henry . . . (p. 334).

And finally, ". . . both of them [Quentin and Shreve] were Henry Sutpen and both of them were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither . . ." (p. 351).

Quentin is making the face to face confrontation with his unconscious, and it is indeed a painful experience as he becomes associated and then absorbed in Charles and Henry, the two halves of one archetype. There is no one of the characters in the reconstructed story, and therefore no archetype in Quentin's personal unconscious, who exerts the positive side of the figure. A successful journey by an individual into his unconscious leads to the "deep center" where he can accept his own death, and the acceptance leads

immediately to a symbolic rebirth.¹⁵⁹ Quentin fantasizes the fire in which his double dies, but there is no emergence of hope. Shreve tells Quentin,

You've got one nigger left. One nigger Sutpen left.
 [Jim Bond] Of course you can't catch him and you don't even always see him and you never will be able to use him. But you've got him there still. You still hear him at night sometimes. Don't you?

"Yes," Quentin said (p. 378). Bond is the last blood connection with all the other characters, and he is the only one who remains alive, completely retarded and degenerate. Shreve's presence both in actuality and in the fantasy serves as the link between the two kinds of reality, but he cannot help Quentin reconcile or escape either one of them. He asks Quentin, "Why do you hate the South?" "I don't hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; "I don't hate it," he said. I don't hate it, he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark; I don't. I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it! (p. 378).¹⁶⁰ Of course, Quentin's protests indicate that he does hate, or perhaps fear "the South," simultaneously his social background and his unconscious. Again, like Sanctuary, Absalom, Absalom! is a book filled with despair.

It has been established in the beginning of this chapter that a significant number of critics have concluded

¹⁵⁹Martin, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁶⁰Italicized in the original.

that Absalom, Absalom! was Faulkner's last truly great novel. The short stories are another matter and will not be considered here. But there is one quite long short story that is often anthologized as a complete work in itself, without the other stories that make it a part of the novel, Go Down, Moses. The story is "The Bear," and it can be shown to be a transitional work in the development of Faulkner's use of myth at the same time his conclusions begin to shift from despair, or at best, resignation, to affirmation. O'Connor declares that in "The Bear" and the works following it, ". . . in place of the sense of doom, of tragic inevitabilities, or of an Old Testament harshness, one finds a sense of hopefulness, a promise of salvation."¹⁶¹ This statement is true if Ike can be seen as a positive Hero. As for the use of myth, Gold believes that Faulkner has definitely changed from the creation of myth and has ". . . adopted here the characteristics of allegory and essay and that several participants in the action are emblems rather than characters--a situation which never occurs in the work of the previous two decades."¹⁶² This statement seems to hold true for the characterizations of Sam Fathers, Eon, and the two animals, Lion and Ben, but the main character,

¹⁶¹O'Connor, op. cit., p. 125.

¹⁶²Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 49.

Ike, is fully developed as an individual, especially in the controversial fourth section. What does seem to be happening is that the events and characters parallel archetypal patterns, rather than individual archetypes, much more than they have in any of Faulkner's previous works. The hunters and the animals meet each year, ". . . like the opposing forces of life and death, gods of the waxing and waning year, . . ." to fight for a "mother-bride-destroyer" goddess who is greater than either group--the wilderness itself.¹⁶³ It is also the archetypal Initiation into Maturity for Ike.¹⁶⁴

Everywhere the mystery [of initiation] begins with the separation of the neophyte from his family, and a 'retreat' into the forest. In this there is already a symbolisation of death; the forest, the jungle and the darkness symbolise the beyond, the Shades.¹⁶⁵

There is usually a hut or cabin in the forest which symbolizes the maternal womb.¹⁶⁶ This fits the story of Ike's journey and gradual initiation into the ways of the forest. Lewis points out that Jung has found that the Hero's rebirth often comes from an animal usually thought of as male, and that

¹⁶³W. R. Moses, "Where History Crosses Myth: Another Reading of 'The Bear,'" Accent, XIII (1953), 22-23.

¹⁶⁴John Lydenberg, "Nature Myth in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" American Literature, XXIV (March, 1952), 62.

¹⁶⁵Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries, p. 197.

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

Ike first shares in Old Ben's 'furious immortality' during that extraordinary episode, like a dream in color, when he penetrates the heart of the forest, finds the (sacred) tree . . . [and] stands in the presence of the wilderness God. It is a liberating experience.¹⁶⁷

This interpretation of Ben as a "wilderness god" should be taken as complementary to the analysis already cited in which the "mother-bride-destroyer" goddess is the wilderness itself, for if Ben is the god of the wilderness, as more than one critic has made him, then he could not be destroyed. He must surely be the representative of a wilderness that is something more than the physical forest or even the idea of one that can be literally destroyed by loggers or anything else. Like Absalom, Absalom!, the important theme is the one that happens in the mind of Ike, and what he discovers is not merely that real land should not be owned or that the forest should not be cut down. This is why Sam Fathers and the animals are not realistic. This point should be clearer after an examination of Ike's character.

When he comes to the wilderness at the age of ten, Ike is a Miraculous Child. He instinctively knew what the hunting camp would be like before he had ever seen it. He gets his first lessons in hunting for big game, but he cannot see Old Ben until he goes out on his own. Again, this

¹⁶⁷R. W. B. Lewis, "The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" Kenyon Review, XIII (Autumn, 1951), 658.

fits the archetypal pattern of the initiation rite.¹⁶⁸

Ike's leaving of the gun, and finally also his watch and compass, in order to be able to see Ben has been discussed in terms of putting aside corrupting mechanical things.¹⁶⁹ One might also add that these items might be associated with the identity theme. Ike must leave his premature, artificial masculinity, which gives him identity as a hunter, but he must also lose himself in time and place in order to see Ben. These Journeys and Tasks from the hunting camp lead to his rebirth as a Hero, for Ike ". . . must attain the sense of being and of the unity of his being with the wilderness . . . In learning of the wilderness, [he] had learned of God."¹⁷⁰ Ultimately then, the land itself is recognized as the Earth Mother in Ike's mind, and in the death and rebirth initiation he discovers his own deep center. The wilderness is not an emblem that is used in creating what Labudde and others have called ". . . an affirmation of Primitivism. Civilization is evil . . ."¹⁷¹ Ike said himself that he did not hate the dog Lion, even though it killed Ben, and Sam Fathers trained the dog to kill even though he seemed to know that he would have to die when Ben did.

¹⁶⁸Eliade, op. cit., p. 198.

¹⁶⁹Moses, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁷⁰Kenneth Labudde, "Cultural Primitivism in William Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" American Quarterly, II (1950), 327.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

Sam is the positive Wise Old Man who guides Ike's initiation and who seems truly wedded to and part of the wilderness Anima. He has been called the High Priest of the nature rite, and this seems to be another valid title.¹⁷² He does seem to be an emblem rather than the developed character that Ike is, for nothing is known about him apart from his association with the wilderness. In this story, he seems to exist for the express purpose of initiating Ike and preparing Lion for the kill. As soon as his purpose is fulfilled, he is ready to die.

The fourth section of the story breaks the chronological flow of events and shows Ike's discovery of the evil that his purification by blood and his initial Journey to the deep center have prepared him for.¹⁷³ Lewis recognizes the possibility, but not the necessity, of reading section IV as a projection into the future, a dream of events to come, intuited by Ike the same way that he knew the camp before seeing it.¹⁷⁴ In support, Lewis notes that the setting and dialogue become hazy and incomplete in this section, suggestive of a dream-vision. This is an interesting conjecture, and would complement an interpretation

¹⁷²Lydenberg, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁷³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁷⁴Lewis, op. cit., p. 648.

of the first three sections as a psychic journey, as well as an adolescent initiation rite, without being absolutely necessary to it.

There are numerous other symbols in the story, but the point being made here does not require that they be sorted out and analyzed completely. What is important is to recognize that although the first three sections of "The Bear" mark a subtle change in Faulkner's use of myth patterns because this one is such a direct transference, it is not yet the allegory that will be found in The Fable. The fourth section does have some of the preachiness (in the dialogue between Ike and McCaslin) that will show up in full force in Requiem for a Nun, but that is not to say that it is not a vital part of Ike's story. After The Sound and the Fury Faulkner used myth and symbol in a masterful way to recreate universal myths in each novel. For the most part this is true of "The Bear," but it does prefigure the total lifting of a myth pattern for A Fable and the repetitions of his own earlier themes that came in the later novels.

CHAPTER III

"THEN IT BECAME TOUR DE FORCE . . ."

After Go Down, Moses, Faulkner's output slowed down considerably. Between 1942 and 1951 he published only one novel and one collection of new short stories.¹⁷⁵ Although A Fable was not published until three years after Requiem for a Nun, Faulkner worked on it from 1944 to 1953.¹⁷⁶ It is just what its title indicates--an allegory or fable. During World War I, a thirty-three year old Corporal, aided by twelve friends, tries to stop the war by convincing the regular soldiers not to fight anymore. The mutiny spreads until even the enemy soldiers have quit fighting. The Corporal performs "miracles" of sorts, turns out to be the son of the commander-in-chief of the Allied armies, is betrayed by one of his twelve friends and finally is tied to a post and shot between two other men. He even has a sort of resurrection when his body is blown out of its grave by a shell and is chosen for the grave of the Unknown Soldier. The parallels between the events in the lives of the Corporal and Jesus go on and on. Faulkner explained what he was trying to do:

¹⁷⁵Robert Penn Warren, (ed.), "Chronology of Important Dates," p. 305.

¹⁷⁶Waggoner, op. cit., p. 219.

That was tour de force. The notion occurred to me one day in 1942 shortly after Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the last great war, Suppose--who might that unknown soldier be? Suppose that had been Christ again, under that fine big cenotaph with the eternal flame burning on it? That He would naturally have got crucified again, and I had to--then it became tour de force, because I had to invent enough stuff to carry this notion.¹⁷⁷

His critics have noticed his obsession with the "notion" rather than the "stuff" of fiction in this work, what Millgate calls "the domination of the idea."¹⁷⁸ The meaning of the novel is made so schematic and the abstract meaning is so much the most important concern of the book that it becomes ". . . an intricate . . . massively documented and sustained imaginative statement of Faulkner's opinions on the possibility of salvation for man."¹⁷⁹ A theme so abstract as the triumphing spirit of humanity is ". . . tantamount to having no theme at all."¹⁸⁰ This is related to another commonly noted problem in the book, the fact that there are no real characters. All the major characters in the Gospel story appear in A Fable, but it is not the true nature of the characters or the events that they are involved in that make them like the Christian figures, but only their arbitrary designations, ". . . as though Dilsey had been

¹⁷⁷Gwynn, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁷⁸Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 107.

¹⁷⁹Waggoner, op. cit., p. 226.

¹⁸⁰Vickery, op. cit., p. 191.

given Jason's character and outlook and then labeled Mary and called a virgin."¹⁸¹ This is where the recreation of myth turns into the creation of allegory. The Christian myth itself is an embodiment of the archetypal Hero's Journey, death, and rebirth, but the wholesale transformation of the events in the life of the historical Jesus into the life of the Corporal does not make more than a superficial hero of him, an allegorical hero rather than a mythic one. Even so, the Corporal's "resurrection" is not the same as the rebirth of Jesus from the grave anyway. Perhaps what the allegory does is give a humanistic interpretation of the Christian Gospels,

. . . preaching that Christ is ever with us and may at any time be resurrected, or in other words, that man is continuously faced with the responsibility of choosing between good and evil and must take the consequences of his choice.¹⁸²

This analysis sounds even more trite than it would have to. Faulkner was always a moralist, but here he is more obviously and more specifically dealing with the problem of hope for salvation.¹⁸³ Although his social pessimism is unchanged, it is now expressed in a positive, yet ambiguous, moral faith.¹⁸⁴ Instead of the promise of salvation offered by

¹⁸¹Waggoner, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁸²Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 116.

¹⁸³Waggoner, op. cit., p. 229.

¹⁸⁴Vickery, op. cit., p. 194.

orthodox Christianity, the world of A Fable has only a sort of "hopeless hope."¹⁸⁵

However, there is a fable besides that of the Christ-figure Corporal; there is also the story of the three-legged racehorse which the Runner hears from the Negro minister.¹⁸⁶ The horse is unlike any other horse in a number of ways. He and his English groom have an exceptional relationship, to say the least:

It was because there had developed apparently on sight between the man and the animal something which was no mere rapport but an affinity, not from understanding to understanding but from heart to heart and glands to glands, so that unless the man was present or at least near by, the horse was not even less than a horse; it was no longer a horse at all . . . worthless, letting none save the one man enter the same walls or fence with it to groom or feed it . . . (p. 152).

The groom and a negro hostler-minister steal the horse after it has been injured and lost the use of a leg, and they continue racing it while pursued by police and detectives commissioned by the horse's owner. The horse wins most of the back-country races on his three legs, and the story has the credibility of a tall tale. The groom's relationship with the kidnaped and pursued horse is now described as ". . . the doomed glorious frenzy of a love story" (p. 154).

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁸⁶Robert L. Dorsch, "An Interpretation of the Central Themes in the Work of William Faulkner," Emporia State Research Studies, XI (September, 1962), 27.

The three--horse, groom, and hostler--always disappear from one race and show up in another town a few days later magically, leaving no trace. Finally, after five years, the groom gives up and kills the horse so that it will not have to become a stud. The negro man is called a man of God, and the white man is one ". . . to whom to grant the status of man was merely to accept Darkness' emissary in the stead of its actual prince and master" (p. 158). The negro is then representing good, the white man is evil, and the horse becomes ". . . the natural and indomitable spirit of man."¹⁸⁷ After they are separated, the Negro hostler tries to find the groom in the war in France, believing that he can show him the way of belief. The groom had believed in the horse, which was for him a sort of anima. The whole episode becomes a pagan and rather absurd fable of a Journey in a Quest for faith as embodied in the mortal horse. No one finds faith in anything, however, as the hostler simply states, "I can believe," and the Runner to whom he has told the story observes:

Maybe what I need is to have to meet somebody. To believe. Not in anything: just to believe. To enter that room down there, not to escape into something, to flee mankind for a little while . . . Do you know what the loneliest experience of all is? But of course you do: you just said so. It's breathing (p. 203).

¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 28.

The whole structure and style of the racing tale, with miraculous happenings and the strange inexplicable love between the groom and the crippled horse seems to exist and be told for the sole purpose of making the Runner come to some sort of realization. The Negro hostler-minister's speeches draw questions from the Runner as the Runner questions himself. The Negro speaks with the serenity and authority of a prophet; indeed he says that God has told him when the war will be over. He also explains to the Runner:

Evil is a part of man, evil and sin and cowardice, the same as repentance and being brave. You got to believe in all of them, or believe in none of them. Believe that man is capable of all of them, or he ain't capable of none. You can go out this way if you want to, without having to meet nobody (p. 203).

He is a Wise Old Man trying to deliver some kind of faith that must be "discovered" by his listeners. He seems to play the kind of role that Mr. Compson tried to play for Quentin, but Compson lacked the belief or the will to believe that the Negro has, even though the source of his faith is nebulous and undefined.

A Fable is unlike Faulkner's previous novels in that, although it is slightly more subtle than something like Aesop's fables, it is more obvious in its themes and lacks the full characterization of his other novels. It is openly didactic in its plea for the need to believe.

In Requiem for a Nun Faulkner uses a form that is not really like a drama or a novel. It is more like a

"Socratic dialogue with stage directions."¹⁸⁸ The formal, ritualistic nature of the language and structure emphasizes the problems of guilt and justice that Cowan and Temple were introduced to in Sanctuary.¹⁸⁹ The long prose prefaces to each act of the "drama" show how justice loses any real meaning and becomes abstracted and symbolized by a court house or a jail.¹⁹⁰

This time Horace Benbow is missing from the action and the story is Temple's, centering around her "crisis of belief."¹⁹¹ Temple is still the destructive anima that she was in Sanctuary, less concerned about her husband and children than her passion for the brother of Red, the lover who was killed in Sanctuary. Temple finally recognizes the need to believe, to have some sort of faith and values.¹⁹² After her confession in the governor's office she goes to visit Nancy, saying

And now I've got to say "I forgive you, sister" to the nigger who murdered my baby. No: It's worse: I've even got to transpose it, turn it around. I've got to start off my new life being forgiven again. How can I say that? Tell me. How can I? (p. 327).

¹⁸⁸Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 96.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., p. 97.

¹⁹⁰Vickery, op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁹¹Waggoner, op. cit., p. 224.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 225.

Nancy shows her the faith without question that gives Nancy the courage to face hanging with no real regret. Nancy does not even know exactly what it is she believes, or what kind of life she expects after death. Like the Negro minister in A Fable, all she can say is, "I don't [sic] know. I believes" (p. 334). Such faith does not come easily to Temple, who asks,

What about me? Even if there is one and somebody waiting in it to forgive me, there's still tomorrow and tomorrow. And suppose tomorrow and tomorrow, and then nobody there, nobody waiting to forgive me-- (p. 335).

According to Nancy, the only recourse is to believe anyway. Temple seems to find that she, too, needs to believe, whether or not there is actually anything to believe in, in order to be able to go on living. She begins to hope for her soul,

Anyone to save it. Anyone who wants it. If there is none, I'm sunk. We all are. Doomed. Damned (p. 336).

What effect, if any, this realization will have on her actions is uncertain. This would be a logical place to stop the story, but, as Millgate has pointed out, Temple's character is never really developed in this story, except by brief summaries of the events in Sanctuary.¹⁹³ This lack of development is even more true of Gowan, Nancy, and especially true of Gavin. This kind of weakness in the book has also

¹⁹³Millgate, William Faulkner, p. 96.

been noted by Thompson, who finds too much argument and narration, too little action, and not enough

. . . flesh to conceal the underlying skeleton of the allegorical morality play: Temple is cast in an awkward role of Everyman; Gowan Stevens plays the role of Conscience; Nancy is an uncomfortable Christ; and the Governor only clumsily symbolizes the ultimate Judge.¹⁹⁴

This seems to be a valid evaluation, although Gavin, not Gowan, is the only logical figure to play Conscience. It is because these characters are not well-developed as individual personalities that they belong more in the realm of allegory than archetype. Nancy is never known well enough for her personal motives to be as clearly understood as they should be. She can hardly be seen as an avenging Fury, but her action is not heroic, either, when she kills one child in an attempt to save an unhappy home for another. She and Stevens seem to exist to save Temple. Little is known about him except that he wants Temple to face the truth about herself for her own good, knowing that it will not save Nancy from hanging. He is much less important as a person and character than he is as an emblem.

The characters and events that were stylized and dreamlike in Sanctuary are transferred to Requiem as though they were entirely realistic, so when Gavin believes that Popeye ". . . should have been crushed somehow under a vast

¹⁹⁴Lawrance Thompson, William Faulkner, p. 132.

and mindless boot, like a spider, . . ." he makes him a realistic demon so that Temple was not entirely responsible for her own sins.¹⁹⁵ She tells Gavin, ". . . I could have climbed down the rainspout at any time, the only difference being that I didn't" (p. 258).

The characters and themes of guilt and faith are not only reminiscent of Sanctuary and A Fable, because the previous themes of an imbalanced sense of time and of identity are present again, as they were in several of the earlier novels. Gowan explains to Temple: "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (p. 229). Temple thinks she can distinguish herself as two different people in the past and in the present, as Temple Drake and Mrs. Gowan Stevens, saying "Temple Drake is dead" (p. 226). The explicit presentation of familiar themes in this novel is, according to Howe and most other critics, a worthy effort but an ultimate failure because of the lack of real dramatic action and characterization.¹⁹⁶

In The Reivers, Lucius Priest goes on a Journey of Initiation, but instead of going into the wilderness as Ike does, he finds his maturity in a brothel in Memphis. One way to lose innocence and reach maturity is through the loss

¹⁹⁵Vickery, op. cit., p. 182.

¹⁹⁶Howe, op. cit., p. 140.

of virginity, and Lucius learns about this through observation at Miss Reba's. Like Quentin, Lucius seems almost obsessed with honor and chastity. Otis explains to him about sex, and about how he (Otis) has set up a peephole and charged a dime to let men watch his aunt Corrie practice her prostitution trade. Lucius is not disgusted or even outraged, but emotionally anguished, and he starts trying to beat Otis. It is his influence that persuades Miss Corrie to get out of the business. Even when reflecting on his theft of the car for the trip with Boon and Ned, Lucius as an old man telling the story says

. . . I had bartered--nay, damned--my soul; that, or maybe the exposing of the true shoddy worthlessness of the soul I had been vain enough to assume the devil would pay anything for: like losing your maidenhead through some shabby inattentive mischance, such as not watching where you were going, innocent even of pleasure, let alone of sin (p. 58).

Yet Lucius's Journey does not actually threaten dire consequences.¹⁹⁷

Gold calls The Reivers Faulkner's only "thoroughly comic novel."¹⁹⁸ Another critic sees the story as a Marvelous Quest Journey with three heroes, Boon, Ned, and Lucius.¹⁹⁹ Only Lucius qualifies for the title "Hero,"

¹⁹⁷Brooks, Yoknapatawpha Country, p. 350.

¹⁹⁸Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 174.

¹⁹⁹Elizabeth M. Kerr, "The Reivers: The Golden Book of Yoknapatawpha County," Modern Fiction Studies, XIII (Spring, 1967), 105-106.

however, for it is his Initiation and he undergoes the most change as a result of the events of the story. Boon is more the perennial Miraculous Child. He is extremely simple and lacking in common sense, but he does know how to plan the trip, and he probably would have gotten away with everything if Ned had not lost the car. Although Gold argues that all the characters end up where they began, with no movement or change,²⁰⁰ Lucius does experience a change--that vicarious loss of virginity that makes him no longer an eleven year old child, and his grandfather acknowledges this too. Because this is an Initiation rite, it invites comparison with Ike's story in "The Bear."²⁰¹ Ned, in supervising the races for Lucius and knowing how to make the horse run, plays the role that Sam Fathers played for Ike.²⁰² However, that seems to be the only similarity between those two characters, and although Lucius struggles with his conscience over the theft of the car and encounters evil in the form of Otis in the brothel, his recognition is hardly the catharsis that Ike experiences. Otis and Butch are the only thoroughly uncomic characters in the story, and Otis, undersized,

²⁰⁰Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 178.

²⁰¹Swiggart, op. cit., p. 208.

²⁰²Kerr, op. cit., p. 108.

cold, and detached, is reminiscent of a young Popeye or Flem Snopes.²⁰³

This novel, with some of Faulkner's best humor, is the most successful story for the Hero, who seems to have gained more than he lost, and with less pain than Ike, Hightower, Benbow or the others. Although it has obvious connections with the archetypal Hero and Journey, it would almost be a parody of his previous uses of the theme if it were not for the seriousness of the threat presented by Butch and Otis to Miss Corrie or anyone else whom they can profit from. The Reivers is unusual for Faulkner because of its simplicity. Faulkner uses a first-person narrator who is remembering events in his own childhood, and there is no overworked symbolism or the didacticism that marked Requiem. This last novel is reminiscent of some of the earlier works, although it does lack the depth of symbolism that could be found in The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom! or some others.

²⁰³Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 182.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Faulkner's art has undergone almost every type of critical reception, from condemnation in his early career to attention from the public and "slick" magazines, and international acclaim by scholars, including a Nobel Prize and two Pulitzer Prizes. Also, his works have been interpreted or explicated in almost every possible way, and some explanations that have been given do not even seem possible. His work has been subjected to almost every method of critical analysis. The one method that has been most neglected in examining a broad range of his work is the mythopoeic approach. The validity of mythopoeic, or archetypal, criticism has already been well established with many other literary works over a number of years and needs no defense here, but it has special value for Faulkner simply because it has been used relatively little in explicating his work. The recognition of archetypal characters in fiction is helpful in understanding the inward, personal conflicts of the individual characters. As shown earlier, the full implications of Quentin's mental associations in his section of The Sound and the Fury are clearer when one understands the psychological meaning of the shadow and Quentin's association

of it with Caddy.²⁰⁴ Then the reader can understand the cause of his conflict and insanity, and not merely recognize that he is insane. He becomes a person with universal characteristics instead of someone who is inexplicably obsessed with the decline of the American South's code of honor. The recognition of archetypal themes in a novel such as As I Lay Dying is important in understanding the full significance of the action as it is linked with something in the unconscious mind of all people everywhere. When Absalom, Absalom! is read as a story or drama within the psyche of Quentin as well as a historical story that he retells, it takes on new importance as an insight into Quentin's character, and it is easy to see that the story is really about him, not Sutpen and his children, any more than it is about Miss Rosa. Soldiers' Pay makes more sense when it is seen that Margaret Powers is a destructive anima who wants power than it does when it is read with Donald Mahon in the role of a tragic hero whom she tries to save. The book is still inconsistent, a mixture of good style and cliches, with some symbols which are effective and some which are imposed on the material of the story rather than inherent in it, but there are still archetypal, universal characteristics and it is not quite so trite and part of an American 1920's pattern as most critics read it and dismiss it.

²⁰⁴Dauner, op. cit., p. 159.

Also, as noted previously, almost every critic who has studied all of Faulkner's novels has noticed that not only did his production diminish after 1942, but the quality of the work changed too.²⁰⁵ It moved from the realm of universal myth to an abstract speculation with a cast of undeveloped characters.²⁰⁶ Whether this happened because Faulkner was aging, because he had become too aware of his audience and his role as an artist and was becoming desperate to ". . . say it all in one sentence, between one Cap and one period, . . ." ²⁰⁷ or because he had simply written everything he had to write and could only try to elaborate on or explain more explicitly the ideas he had already depicted in the lives of his earlier characters, is impossible to determine definitely. It is noticeable that, in his best work, Faulkner's characters had a vitality that made them exist artistically both as individuals in a social milieu and as timeless, archetypal beings. Joe Christmas has an individual "life" within the world created in the novel, but unique as his situation might be, he has characteristics that link him with every other human being. Benbow faces a dilemma in his discovery of evil and his

²⁰⁵Gold, Metaphor to Discourse, p. 4.

²⁰⁶Vickery, op. cit., p. 120.

²⁰⁷Cowley, op. cit., p. 14.

attempts to cope with it that everyone has to face, whether or not one is as aware and sensitive as he is. Later, particularly in Requiem for a Nun and A Fable, his characters became less archetypal because he seemed to be stressing the universality of their conflicts and themes so obviously that they no longer existed as portraits of individuals.²⁰⁸

Jung's work, which was probably one of the most important contributions to mythopoeic criticism in this century, may have been known to Faulkner. When asked if he was familiar with Jung, he would not answer directly, simply stating:

A writer is completely rapacious, he has no morals whatever, he will steal from any source. He's so busy stealing and using it that he himself probably never knows where he gets what he uses . . . he is so busy writing that he hasn't time to stop and say, "Now, where did I steal this from?" But he did steal it somewhere.²⁰⁹

Actually, whether he had read Jung's works or knew about them in some way or not does not change the essential point. Gavin Stevens never has the individual and archetypal existence that Quentin, Joe Christmas, Darl Bundren, or even slow-minded Lena Grove had, and the characters in A Fable never really come alive.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸Waggoner, op. cit., p. 222.

²⁰⁹Gwynn, op. cit., p. 23.

²¹⁰As has already been discussed, the sub-plot of A Fable may attempt some pattern that borders on the mythic, but it cannot fit into a truly archetypal pattern.

In The Reivers Faulkner seemed to begin to recapture the old ability to create a world between the covers of a book, but even though this last novel received a Pulitzer Prize, it would be difficult to find a critic or anyone who has studied Faulkner who would rank it with any of the novels he produced between 1929 and 1942 (with the possible exception of Pylon, which was not chosen for examination in this study). Lucas Priest's experiences in The Reivers is like a comic recapitulation of the Initiation process Ike went through in "The Bear," and is not really a new direction for Faulkner.²¹¹ All of Faulkner's novels and even the short stories could profitably be analyzed from the archetypal approach, but that was not possible in this study. This paper has attempted two things: to examine a broad enough selection of novels from the first to the last to show, from a relatively little used perspective, what did happen in Faulkner's development of character and theme, and to begin explications of the individual novels in the process of tracing that development.

²¹¹Millgate, op. cit., p. 109.

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