MAN AND NEGRO

A STUDY OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S

ABSALOM, ABSALOM! AND GO DOWN, MOSES

by

Patricia Speneder

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APPROVAL

NAME: Patricia Speneder

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE: Chairperson: Professor Michael Steig

Professor Peter Buitenhuis
Senior Supervisor
Professor of English, SFU

Professor David Stouck
Associate Professor of English, SFU

Professor James A. Hart
External Examiner
Associate Professor of English, UBC

Date Approved: 18 July/1983

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Man and Negro: A Study of William Faulkner's

Absalom! Absalom! and Go Down, Moses

Author: ______________________

(signature)

Patricia Speneder

(name)

18 July 1983

(date)

ABSTRACT

Man and Negro is both a real and spurious division to evoke when examining the sensibilities of William Faulkner's Southerners. For although in the Yoknapatawpha saga, there is much to support W.J. Cash's observation that, in the antebellum South, "Negro entered into white man as profoundly as white man entered into Negro," there is also much evidence that this synthesis of being was vehemently denied by Southerners.

Faulkner makes the elemental and repudiated bond between white and black one of his major themes. In Absalom, Absalom! and in Go Down, Moses, the co-existence of black and white Southerners is of paramount importance. The socio-economic denial of the Negro, as well as the tragedy of such a denial, are central concerns in the novels. In both narratives, miscegenation becomes emblematic of the white South's refusal to grant equal status to all its people. Hence the offspring of miscegenic couplings - the colored Sutpens and McCaslins - are characters who labor under a tragedy which is private and provincial, yet which also seems resonant with universal overtones.

And yet, naive students and experienced critics alike are left wondering about the ultimate meaning of miscegenation in Faulkner's novels. There are two reasons why a definitive interpretation of miscegenation evades the reader: Firstly, the miscegenation theme is never dealt with directly or in isolation; secondly, the central intelligence of the narrative, be that writer or narrator or both combined, remains non-committal, ambivalent throughout.

In <u>Absalom, Absalom!</u> the miscegenation theme is yoked to incest; in <u>Go Down, Moses</u> it is linked not only to incest, but also to ownership of the land - ownership of the land, like incest, being a sin. This strange yoking together of issues proves problematic. For while it is readily evident why miscegenation is employed to delineate the socio-economic shortcomings of the South, one cannot understand exactly why miscegenation is linked to 'sins'. Here the central voice of the narratives is needed. And it is exactly here that this voice cannot be detected. This causes no end of guesswork. Is miscegenation a sin by association with known sins? Or is it sinful because of the South's denial of the Negro? Or could it be that miscegenation is a sin for no other reason than the fixed concept of the Negro's ineligibility to cohabit with white? There are no definite answers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Approval Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Introduction	1
The Sutpen Family Album	14
The McCaslin Family Album	43
Conclusion	64
Notes	72
Bibliography	83

Introduction

Today it seems a pseudo-dichotomy bordering on the ridiculous: Man and Negro. But within the borders of the antebellum South, within the historical Mississippi, or the legendary Yoknapatawpha, or the ungeographic South of the human psyche, the apparent divorcement of white and black people from human fellowship seems more alarming than ridiculous, and more tragic than either. To speak of a pseudo-dichotomy and the apparent divorcement is to suggest that there is a spurious division here - to hint at an undermining irony, one which lends itself to the absurd element of the division.

The plantation ethos of the old South is partially responsible for the division. Southern historians, following the path cleared by W.J. Cash with his study The Mind of the South, all seem to agree that within the boundaries of the plantation, the Negro "occupied the position of a mere domestic animal, without will or right of his own."[1] And yet, while this was obviously the case, the chroniclers of Southern history and Southern myth (in the latter instance I am thinking particularly of William Faulkner), repeatedly draw our attention to the elemental bond between black and white Southerners. Indeed at times it seems to be done unwittingly. For instance, Cash defines the Negro as "one of the world's greatest romantics and one of the world's greatest hedonists." And of the white Southener, especially the poor, he writes: "the poor white turned his energies almost wholly to elaborating the old backcountry pattern of amusement and distinction - became ... one of the most complete romantics and one of the most complete hedonists ever recorded."[2] So it appears that under the skin, black and white Southerner shared romantic and hedonistic characteristics

particular to their nature. Externally, in the milieu of the plantation, white infants were being suckled by black mammies, and old Negroes were, for the white boy, his "most loved story-tellers", while the young robust blacks were "among the chiefest heroes and mentors of his boyhood." Cash observes that this togetherness fostered by plantation life made the relationship between black and white "nothing less than organic." His next remark - assuming it is correct - should put an end to the concept of Man and Negro, and insofar as that concept can be applied to the fiction of Faulkner, render this study invalid: "Negro", Cash says, "entered into white man as profoundly as white man entered into Negro ..."[3]

While Faulkner did not sum up his observation of the black-white union in quite those words, he showed, throughout the vast body of his Yoknapatawpha saga, that the bond was a reality. One thinks of Dilsey and the Compsons, Molly and the McCaslins, Louvinia and the Sartorises.... And if it can be argued that these figures are all faithful servants, whose function is to orchestrate the households of their masters, and as such cannot be called forth as representatives of some elemental bond between the races, then we can readily marshal up the likes of Lucas and Zack - who spent their boyhood fishing, hunting and sleeping on a pallet together; or we may call on John and Ringo, who not only engaged in these activities, but went a step further to take pot-shots at Yankee troopers together, and to shout after the same troopers: "The bastuds! ... The bastuds! The bastuds!"[4] Never mind that the Yankees were in the South to liberate Ringo. Yes, in the light of all such evidence, the argument put forth here should be fallacious. But it is not. For if one is inclined to believe Cash when he writes that the relationship between the two races on the plantation came to be "nothing

less than organic," and find in Faulkner's fiction much to support such an observation, the reader also finds much evidence to the contrary. And so the situation may best be described as a paradox, one which reads like this: In the Old South black and white lived together on the plantation, where "Negro entered into white man as profoundly as white man entered into Negro." There was no acceptable synthesis of being however, for, like the progeny of black and white, the bond was repudiated by those who experienced it first hand. Understanding this is a prerequisite to understanding the Southerner's perspective.

And some knowledge of the Southerner's perspective, the forces which combined to inform or influence his sensibility, is of cricial importance to the student of William Faulkner. It is, after all, from the Southerner's point of view that the reader sees the comic and tragic experiences of the characters of Yoknapatawpha - the "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice"[5] in the lives of all those who inhabit the county. For the interested reader, a journey through Faulkner's mythic land, a view of the fantastic goings-on of its inscrutable populace, a weary search for an elusive answer to an almost overwhelming Why of circumstance and being - all this propel one out of legend into life for an understanding. And while the reader must always be on guard when venturing outside the world of fiction to gather material for that world form the world of fact, there are times when such a trip must be made. This is such a time. The student of Faulkner must look to the inhabitant of the antebellum South for clues to understanding the behaviour of his fictional counterpart. Such historical studies as those made by Cash, Genovese and Woodward, to name but a few, are invaluable when setting out to tackle the black-white relationship of Faulkner's characters,

and that troublesome issue so central to Absalom, Absalom! and Go Down, Moses: miscegenation.

Any attempt to comprehend the Southern view is aided by first considering the basic Southerner. Peeling away the layers of mannerisms and affectations Cash finds the Southerner, at the dawn of the plantation era, "an exceedingly simple fellow." After outlining the origins of the Old South, he invites the reader's evaluation of the man at the center:

> Strike the average of all that I have said, and you get as the basic Southerner, or rather more exactly, as the core about which most Southerners of whatever degree were likely to be built, an exceedingly simple fellow - a backcountry pioneer farmer or the immediate descendant of such a farmer. A man indeed, who, because of one, two, or more generations in the backcountry was an even more uncomplex sort than had been the original immigrants from Europe. In some respects, perhaps as simple a type as Western civilization has produced in modern times.[6]

Cash goes on to paint a convincing picture of just such a rustic: a man who, long before he decided to emulate the English squirearchy, was fond of hunting, wrestling, drinking "Gargantuan quantities of raw whiskey ... because the thing was already in his mores when he emerged from the backwoods." At his best, as the planter, he was "the natural flower of the backcountry grown prosperous"; at his worst, as the poor white, he was quite capable of lying "on his back for days and weeks, storing power as the air he breathed stores power under the sun of August, and then to explode, as that air explodes in a thunderstorm, in a violent outburst of emotion ...."[7] Since the planter, the yeoman, and the poor white often shared the common heritage of the backcountry (Cash goes to considerable length to point out that the planter and the poor white were frequently related by blood as well), it is by no means difficult to conceive of the basic Southerner as a simple fellow. What distinguished the planter from the poor white can be given in one word: ambition.

It seems that while ambition drove one sort of simple backcountry man to acquire large slices of land from the Indian, the lack of it left the other to settle down to heavy drinking and grandiloquent dreams - such dreams that made it possible for him to participate vicariously in the growing prosperity of the planter. Nor did his identification with his successful neighbour stop here. All reports indicate that the poor white shared the planter's evolving sense of superiority over the black man, as the rich lands and the cotton gin ushered in the plantation era. Soon this sense of superiority became the prevalent feeling of white supremacy, which consolidated rich and poor, even while the socio-economic gap between whites, caused by the plantation, increased. This movement, with its attendant superciliousness, cannot be missed in the following:

> Robbing him [the poor white] and degrading him in so many ways, [the plantation] by singular irony, had simultaneously elevated this common white to a position comparable to that of, say, the Doric knight of ancient Sparta. Not only was he not exploited directly, he was himself made by extension a member of the dominant class - was lodged solidly on a tremendous superiority, which, however much the blacks in the "big house" might sneer at him, and however much their masters might privately agree with them, he could never publicly lose. Come what might, he would always be a white man. And before that vast and capacious distinction, all others were foreshortened, dwarfed, and all but obliterated.
>
> The grand outcome was the almost complete disappearance of the masses.[8]

There is the most lethal double irony at work here. For if the black servant in the planter's manor sneered at the poor white because he lacked his master's affluency (which he, the servant, shared in by virtue of the fact that he was in "the big house"), the poor white could, and did, bask in the planter's economic glow with the sense of participation in "the common brotherhood of white men."[9] Clearly, this sense of participation in a common brotherhood, and in the real and imagined glory of the plantation, went a long way in

forming a Southern perspective - one in which the enslaved Negro appeared alien, unequal to the white man, since everything about his existence on the plantation claimed him for a beast of burden, or at best, a "dressed up nigger" in the big house.[10] Once such an outlook took shape, the Southerner, as tenacious as he was romantic, could not let go of his perception of blacks as inferior, perhaps not even quite human but a sub-species. And it did not matter how many white infants were suckled by black mammies, or how many boys played with and were entertained by Negroes, the idea of racial supremacy and racial inferiority crystalized. "One race cannot systematically enslave members of another," writes Eugene Genovese, "without acquiring a conscious or unconscious feeling of racial superiority."[11]

Other forces also nurtured racism. Genovese observes that: "Color prejudice, blood pride, and other forms of ethnocentricity preceded slavery and prepared the way for racism, understood as an ideology of oppression and subordination."[12] One emotional attitude which did not precede slavery, but which nonetheless informed the Southern perspective, arose directly as the result of the planter's spatial isolation. Obviously, if one owned a hundred square miles of land the nearest neighbour would be some distance away. It follows then that the lonely planter, thrown constantly in on himself, became a law unto the planter. The isolation of the plantation fed rather than starved his power. We learn that

> ... the plantation tended to find its center in itself: to be an independent social unit, a self-contained and largely self-sufficient little world of its own. In its beginnings, to be sure, it often required some degree of communal effort, particularly if the would-be planter had few or no slaves. But once the forest was cut and the stumps grubbed up, once the seed were in a few times and the harvest home a few times, once he had a Negro or two actually at work - once the plantation was properly carved out and on its way, then the world might go hang.[13]

The plantation and its inhabitants then became symbolic of economic autarky - a tangible microcosm of what would become the Southern ideal of a prosperous, self-sufficient state (a notion which was, we remember, the first cause of the Civil War), cut off from the rest of America. As the very heart of the South, sustaining its inhabitants on riches pumped from the earth, the plantation not only brought the planter the glow of economic health, but, as if the very cotton that made him possible brought with it intoxicating opiates, the plantation quickened his sense of supremacy as effectively as it deadened his moral response to the Negro. As life all around him conspired to make him cotton King, how on earth could "an exceedingly simply fellow" not believe that he must have done something right, that his was the right way, that he had the right to be superior?

If a moribund morality occasionally stirred itself, the planter could find solace in the propaganda of such proslavery spokesmen as George Fitzhugh: "To secure true progress," he told his fellow slaveholders, "We must unfetter genius, and chain down mediocrity. Liberty for the few - Slavery, in every form, for the mass!"[14] Such an elitist, quasi-liberal ideology not only presupposes that genius is not to be found among the mass, it seems an odious trapping from the Old World, not fitted to the American Adam.[15] But insofar as the planter aspired to aristocratic status, it was an ideology that fitted him well. Genovese examines the ratiocination of Fitzhugh and his followers when called upon to justify the slaveholder: "Repeatedly, if inadvertently, he returned to the matter of chaining down. Like Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, he saw his fellow slaveholders as guardians of a mystery: Man wants the security of those chains but does not know it. Man must be chained down for his own good - to realize his own inner will."[16] Indeed there

is a shrewdness here, a perspicacity that rivals that of the Grand Inquisitor of The Brothers Karamazov, when he reasons that: "They will marvel at us and look on us as gods, because we are ready to endure the freedom which they have found so dreadful and to rule over them - so awful it will seem to them to be free." When this reasoning is applied, not simply to proslavery propaganda, but to the plantation ethos, which of course informed all proslavery tracts, one discovers what amounts to a Sartrean inauthenticity deliberately being fostered by the slaveholder. For he recognizes man's reluctance to assume responsibility for his freedom, and nurtures that reluctance to keep him submissive for his, the slaveholder's, advantage. And all along procaliming to the slave, to society, to the world, that it is for the slave's own good. "To have heard them talk," Cash says, "you would have thought that the sole reason some of these planters held to slavery was love and duty to the black man, the earnest, devoted will not only to get him into heaven but also to make him happy in the world."[17] It is all so shrewd, so cunning, that the reader begins to lose sight of the simple rustic from the backcountry, and to gaze in awe - right along with every yeoman and poor white - at what seems nothing short of a most prodigious metamorphosis. Acquisitive coon-hunter dons riding coat, surveys his hundred acres - which he got by hook or by crook, perhaps by giving an old Indian a few picayunes, a red man who, never having believed that the earth was his or any man's to sell or buy, and liking the way the light caught the metal - or knowing that his wife or daughter would - took the coins and went on his way. Left with one hundred acres of prime land, our rustic friend immediately set his band of Negroes to work. So that now, one generation later, he sits on his horse, surveys his estate, nods contentedly as the balmy breeze comes off

the blooming cotton, and rides off, a fine figure of a man, into the ranks of the Confederate army. How easy for his admirers, and all those who participate vicariously in his marvelous transformation, to join forces with him against the Yankee; to make his way their way, to unite, to forge a unique perspective, a Southern sensibility, to take pride in a real and mythic achievement! How easy to pass from fact to fiction, to tell tall tales, romances, legends, of that fine figure in the fine coat! The Southerner did just that. Cash brilliantly encapsulates the legend of the antebellum South and the planter - his second metamorphosis, as it were:

> It was a sort of stage piece out of the eighteenth century, wherein gesturing gentlemen move soft-spokenly against a background of rose gardens and dueling grounds, through always gallant deeds, and lovely ladies, in the farthingales, never for a moment lost that exquisite remoteness which has been the dream of all men and the possession of none. Its social pattern was manorial, its civilization that of the Cavalier, its ruling class an aristocracy coextensive with the planter group - men often entitled to quarter the royal arms of St. George and St. Andrew on their shields, and in every case descended from the old gentlefolk who for many centuries had made up the ruling classes of Europe.
>
> They dwelt in large and stately mansion, preferably white and with columns and Grecian entablature. Their estates were feudal baronies, and their social life a thing of Old World splendor and delicacy.[18]

Such is the legend of the Old South that bubbled into being in the imagination of the Southerner. Against such a resplendent vision, it is readily apparent how low the earthy Negro - dressed as he was in nothing but the primitive garb of his innocence and simplicity - must have appeared to a mind capable of such grandiloquent conjuring. Little wonder that, as the planter put on layer upon layer of aristocratic clothing, and saw to it that the Negro remained as close to the earth as a mule or an ox, that he found it impossible to view the black man as his brother. It was a denial - not simply the denial of the Negro, but a denial of innocence and simplicity, of man's fundamental

nature: a repudiation of his bond to the earth, of which the Negro was emblematic. The white Southerner seemed content to trade his genuine coon-hunter's garb for fake aristocratic finery, to swell with all the false dignity and all the false pride such dress gives rise to.

One should bear in mind the beliefs, attitudes and affectations, made possible by the plantation, when reading the work of William Faulkner. For the plantation ethos is everywhere in evidence in the thinking of his characters. It is partially responsible for the conflict between the races; it is what makes the acknowledgement of familial ties between black and white impossible for the sires of the Sutpen and the McCaslin dynasties, and it is certainly what makes the act of miscengenation a sin, one which resounds like the last taboo. But since the plantation ethos only partly explains the white Southerner's negative response to the Negro, we are left with the question: what other contributing factor is there? What other element causes miscengenation to be viewed as a sin? Naive students and experienced critics alike tend to throw up their hands in desperation at this point, or to nod in agreement with Shreve when he expresses to Quentin his own incomprehension, agreeing that "we dont live among defeated grandfathers and freed slaves ... to be always reminding us to never forget"; or to nod with Quentin when he so accurately states exactly what the reader experiences as he or she wearily, if fascinatingly, wanders through Yoknapatawpha: "you would have to be born there." Yes: while the non-Southerner may sympathize with the Southerner (and Faulkner often makes it next to impossible not to), the outsider can never quite comprehend the Southerner's frame of mind, or fully appreciate his anguish. In this may well lie the power and the efficacy of the novels. For while the reader may be fascinated by such

portraits as those of Thomas Sutpen and old Carothers McCaslin, those tangled, web-like relationships that ensnare all around them, and all who come in their wake, even while fascination at times gives way to weariness, as the reader breathlessly mounts hill after hill of convoluted prose, and even when sympathy for the Southerner stirs; yet such sympathy does not spring from, or give way to, any sense of complete understanding. So that long after one reads the last word of, say, Absalom, Absalom! the enigma which fascinated in the first place, remains.

What is easily understood is this: The Southerner's anguish, which occasionally renders him or her unintelligible, even lugubrious, frequently appears to be the hysterical horror of a tormented psyche. Consider Rosa Coldfield's soliloquy, when Clytie tries to stop her from discovering the body of the murdered Bon:

> I know only that my entire being seemed to run at blind full tilt into something monstrous and immobile, with a shocking impact too soon and too quick to be mere amazement and outrage at that black arresting and untimorous hand on my white woman's flesh. Because there is something in the touch of flesh with flesh which abrogates, cuts sharp and straight across the devious intricate channels of decorous ordering, which enemies as well as lovers know because it makes them both - touch and touch of that which is the citadel of the central I-Am's private own:not spirit, soul; the liquorish and ungirdled mind is anyone's to take in any darkened hallway of this earthly tenement. But let flesh touch with flesh, and watch the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too. Yes, I stopped dead - no woman's hand, no negro's hand, but bitted bridle-curb to check and guide the furious and unbending will - I crying not to her, to it; speaking to it through the negro, the woman, only because of the shock which was not yet outrage because it would be terror soon, expecting and receiving no answer because we both knew it was not to her I spoke: 'Take your hand off me, nigger!'[19]

For all the flow of language, "something monstrous and immobile," is never fully articulated. It remains an unyielding, mysterious "it" that provokes the frustrated Miss Coldfield to a racist response. This nebulous, irksome,

subterranean "it" surfaces elsewhere in Absalom,Absalom! and always it surfaces during a black-white confrontation.[20] The outcome is that the focus shifts from the ostensible conflict between the races to some impenetrable plane deep within the Southerner's mind.

Bernard De Voto, in his essay "Witchcraft in Mississippi," gives expression to his sense of bewilderment over the relationships of the Sutpens in a series of questions:

> Why do the children suffer so?
> Why did Rosa's father treat her that way?
> Why did Judith and Clytie treat Etienne that way?
> Just what revenge or expiation was Etienne wreaking on whites and Negroes in that Joe Christmas series of attempts at self-immolation? ... Just what emotion, compulsion, obsession, or immediate clairvoyant pattern of impotence plus regeneration plus pure evil may be invoked to explain the behavior of Charles Bon, for which neither experience nor the psychology of the unconscious nor any logic of the heart or mind can supply an explanation?[21]

Such critical befuddlement is not uncommon among Faulkner's audience. Within the context of Yoknapatawpha, where one is forced to climb steep prose hills, to watch characters surface on waves of rhetoric, the mind of the Southerner remains inexplicable. And it is deep within the mind, that ungeographic South of the psyche, that the complete answer to our overwhelming Why is locked away. It is this region which De Voto, despite himself, attempts to investigate. Observing that "Mr. Faulkner is exploring the primitive violence of the unconscious mind," De Voto asserts that the mind here is: "the world of subliminal guilt and revenge." Eventually, he gives way to Faulkner's own incomparable description of the psyche: it is a "shadowy miasmic region," "amoral evil's undeviating absolute," "quicksand of nightmare," "the seething and anonymous miasmal mass which in all the years of time has taught itself no boon of death."[22] But naming the region, asserting

that Faulkner is exploring a psyche, which he himself describes to us in such unflattering terms that we cannot help but see it as a terrible place, all this does not illuminate what is going on, or offer up the answer which that region holds. Ultimately, it can only be said that this territory seems a horrific seat of horrors, a place where no rational analysis is applicable.

This study then will not attempt to speculate about the "shadowy miasmic region." Rather, the focus will be on miscegenation, and the way it is employed in Absalom,Absalom! and Go Down, Moses to delineate the social and moral shortcomings of the South in its dealings with the Negro. For miscegenation, repeatedly yoked to incest and viewed as a sin, betrays just how vehement was the denial of an organic relationship, a denial rooted in the fixed concept of the Negro's ineligibility to cohabit with white.

They are as chimerical, as fantastic, as the prodigious visions of children and geniuses of inscrutable intent, and so they seem large, inhabiting a time and space of a particular psyche, or a legendary land - one which is beyond the horizon - out of reach of the mean understanding of mere men: they are the Sutpens of Yoknapatawpha. Four evolve out of the issue of miscegenation, which, combined with fratricide and attempted incest, form the centripetal force of Absalom, Absalom! Indeed it can be said that miscegenation, in particular, is the life force of Charles Bon and Clytie, Charles Etienne de Saint Velery Bon, and Jim Bond. And so the transformation from issue to character is realized.

Such transformation is not an uncommon approach among novelists. But in Absalom, Absalom!, when the issue is personified, the personification remains as enigmatic as the issue. Observing Bon or Clytie, Etienne or Jim, the reader cannot overlook the importance of miscegenation here. Yet, while the importance of the issue is apparent, while the reader can easily grasp its centrality in the Sutpen drama, its ultimate meaning is not as easily discernible from the text. Melvin Seiden puts the problem to the reader this way:

> Faulkner, notorious for his "decadent" preoccupation with incest has taken us down a blind alley with the putatively crucial theme of the Bon-Judith incest, only to subvert that theme and transform it into the racist obsession with miscegenation. But what exactly is he saying about miscegenation?[1]

And Bernard De Voto observes that:

> In spite of his enormous labour to elucidate these two mulattoes [Christmas and Charles] and their feelings and their symbolism in society, they are never elucidated. What is it that bubbles through those minds, what is it that drives them, what are they feeling, what are they trying to do, what do they mean? You cannot tell, for you do not know. A fair conclusion is that you do not know because Mr. Faulkner does not know.[2]

This kind of critical questioning and response is predictable. It does appear that after giving form and shape to the denial of the Negro - through the miscegenation theme - even after the theme is embodied in characters, Faulkner does not give us meaning.

One cannot help but wonder if his reluctance, or his inability, to make a statement in his own voice is responsible for the narrative technique - a technique devoid of an omniscient eye - and where authoritative intrusions virtually do not exist. While such a form invites the reader's active participation in the story, it also encourages guesswork, a kind of hide-and seek game in which the reader scurries about, looking for the writer among the narrators, over and above the others. Such activity is dangerous. To try to equate Faulkner with any of his narrators is as risky as trying to equate the elusive Jonathan Swift of "A Modest Proposal" with his narrator.

There are, of course, advantages to be gained by creating personas to tell a story - especially when the thematic concern of that story is as volatile an issue as miscegenation. Objectivity through distance and an unbiased presentation of biased points of views of the populace are two benefits which immediately come to mind. Also, the technique should - though, strangely enough, here it seldom succeeds - ensure the writer protection from the wrath of the audience. Because he is immediately

accessible, the persona, the middle man, should take the heat, the blows, should violence erupt in the crowds: the persona, not the writer, is in line for abuse as surely as the poor messenger who brought bad tidings to hot-headed monarchs of old. Faulkner sends not one but four messengers with the tale of Absalom,Absalom!, and the indignant members of his audience should look closely at these messengers before hurling verbal abuse at the writer, like so many rotten eggs and tomatoes.

First there is Miss Rosa Coldfield: an indomitable Southern spinster whose narration, for the most part, is a strange amalgam of the Gothic and the Shakespearean. Her voice is so shrilly dogmatic that it alone is enough to make her the most formidable spinster of Yoknapatawpha. Then there is Mr. Compson, who learnt the Sutpen story from his father. Like Miss Coldfield, Mr. Compson represents a type: he is the genteel Southerner, and he has, among his qualifications as a narrator, not only geographic proximity, but a keen intellect and a gift for oratory. Then come Quentin Compson, Mr. Compson's son, and Shreve McCannon, the Canadian. Quentin and Shreve are representatives of youth, of Northern and Southern thought and perception. As sensitive young men they are well equipped to narrate the Henry-Bon segment of the Sutpen story, for they possess an immediate understanding of the reality of the young male - an understanding impossible for Miss Coldfield - and one which Mr. Compson may have forgotten.

The four narrators can just as easily be termed photographers as they can be termed messengers. Listening to them tell of Thomas Sutpen, his wives, children and all those associated with him, we discover that sound becomes vision, and in each of the four instances, sound becomes vision differently. These are by no means amazing or unique discoveries. Sound,

the word, inevitably becomes vision, the image. It is impossible to narrate a story without this process taking place. Similarly, since no two tellers are exactly alike, no two stories can be. The reader is given four versions of one tale, or one tale filtered through four pairs of eyes, four lenses.[3] Each in turn provides the reader with pictures of the Sutpens. Obviously, no one provides a 'true' set of images. All the pictures are biased, incomplete. And it is sheer folly to believe that because we can - indeed must - combine the images offered, we will arrive at a complete and accurate view of the Sutpens. No such perception is possible. A few images caught and fixed on a page can only tell the reader that, at one moment in time, the subject appeared to the viewer just so. The moment passes; the subject moves, strikes another pose, makes another face or gesture that goes unrecorded, along with a myriad of such movements. It is somewhere among the countless expressions that the truth is to be found. The escapability of 'true character' then is evident. Consequently, it follows that in dealing with the issue of mixed blood - an issue so central to characterization in this novel - one must tread cautiously. And this is precisely why the reader yearns for omnipotent guidance, longs to get beyond the personas to the writer, feels at times annoyed, at times frustrated on realizing that no omniscient guide will point the way. But finally, hopefully, the reader comes to terms with the narrative, with the mute photographs and the conflicting voices.

The photographs which concern us here are those of Thomas Sutpen and his Negro progeny - that "ironic fecundity of dragon's teeth" (p. 62). We must begin by viewing Sutpen himself, for not only is he the father, the one responsible for the miscegenation, he is also the larger-than-life

protagonist of the novel. In him we find an excellent example of the backwoodsman grown prosperous, the planter who, regardless of how 'different' the Compsons and the Coldfields and all the county folk think he is from themselves, is totally imbued with the values and affectations of the planter community. Indeed, had Sutpen not existed in the grip of fanaticism, he may well qualify as the quintessential Southern planter. Far from being as atypical of the planter class as such influential critics as Cleanth Brooks hold him to be, we find Sutpen, the most obvious, the most ostensible product of his society in all of Yoknapatawpha.[4]

Consider the facts: before the young Sutpen's fateful encounter with the Negro at the front door of a Tidewater mansion, he lived an Arcadian existence with his family in the mountains of West Virginia

> ... where he had never even heard of, never imagined, a place, a land divided neatly up and actually owned by men who did nothing but ride over it on fine horses or sit in fine clothes on the galleries of big houses while other people worked for them; he did not even imagine then that there was any such way to live, to want to live, or that there existed all the objects to be wanted which there were, or that the ones who owned the objects not only could look down on the ones that didn't, but could be supported in the down-looking not only by the others who owned objects too but by the very ones that were looked down on that didn't own objects and knew they never would. (p. 221)

Added to this is the fact that he is innocent to the reality that "a certain few men not only have the power of life and death and barter and sale over others, but they had living human men to perform the endless repetitive personal offices, such as pouring the very whiskey from the jug and putting the glass into a man's hand or pulling off his boots for him to go to bed...." (p. 222) Sutpen's Adamic innocence when he lived in the mountains is clearly apparent from the above, and so it need not be belabored here. It is sufficient to acknowledge that Sutpen was innocent of a world in

which slavery was a reality "until he fell into it." It is with the descent into the world of the slaveholders, a steep, steady decline from the mountains, past doggeries and taverns and hamlets into villages, into towns, down to where "the country flattened out now with good roads and fields and niggers working in the fields while white men sat on fine horses and watched them," to finally arrive here, in the wagon with his father and sisters, in an attitude of "sober static country astonishment"; it is now that the awareness of men divided among themselves begins to dawn on Sutpen.

Yet it is not until two years later, when his father settles down to sharecropping on a Tidewater plantation, that Sutpen is made fully aware of the plantation hierarchy, and his place in that world. The incident at the front door of the mansion, when the "monkey nigger" tells Sutpen to go around to the back door, triggers his awareness and acts as a catalyst to the revelation. For it is now that he sees himself, and his family, through the planter's eyes. He sees them "as cattle, creatures heavy and without grace, brutely evacuated into a world without hope or purpose for them, who would in turn spawn with brutish and vicious prolixity, populate, double treble and compound, fill space and earth with a race whose future would be a succession of cut-down and patched and made-over garments .... (p. 235) And it is that night, lying on his pallet, that Sutpen has his epiphany:

> ... that innocence instructing him as calm as the others [his inner voices] had ever spoken ... If you were fixing to combat them that had the fine rifles, the first thing you would do would be to get yourself the nearest thing to a fine rifle you could borrow or steal or make, wouldn't it?' and he said Yes. 'But this aint a question of rifles. So to combat them you have got to have what they have that made them do what the man did. You got to have land and

> niggers and a fine house to combat them with. You see?' and he said Yes again. He left that night He waked before day and departed just like he went to bed: by rising from the pallet and tiptoeing out of the house. He never saw any of his family again. (p. 238)

Simply stated, Sutpen decides that, in order never to be turned away from another plantation front door, he had to acquire "land and niggers and a fine house." In his innocence (and it should be noted here that throughout the narrative all, except Miss Rosa, insist upon Sutpen's innocence, a quality which even though it is corrupted, he never quite loses), without knowing it, he enters into the consciousness of the class of planters, he partakes in their ambition to rule, to be lord of the manor. What sets Sutpen apart from other planters - what would always set him apart for the reader, is the quality, and the intensity of his ambition: the blind, potent, amoral force of his determination to succeed. But the reader must ask whether or not this brand of ambition is enough in itself to make Sutpen different, in any significant way, from his neighbours. When Cleanth Brooks argues that Sutpen is atypical of the planter class, because of his abstract, though tenacious adherence to his "design," he seems to overlook the fact that what drives Sutpen is what drove many a backcountry man: ambition, the desire to be somebody, and so earn the respect of the community. Granted, in Sutpen's case we find that ambition directly results from the incident at the Tidewater plantation. But who is to say what snub or humiliation or vision fired the ambition of that Tidewater planter? Chances are, we know, he or his father came, like Sutpen, from the backcountry. It is at once too much and too little to say that "what makes Thomas Sutpen special is his optimism, his abstraction, and his innocence."[5] Optimism is, by necessity, a by-product of ambition, and innocence seems the common

heritage of most Southerners: it is only Sutpen's abstraction then that would appear to set him apart from other planters. But it is in the nature of ambitious undertakings to exist, for the most part, in the abstract.

Yet, abstraction aside, one may argue, as Brooks does, that the narrators insist on Sutpen's difference from the members of the community, and offer us evidence of this otherness in Sutpen's hand-to-hand combats with his slaves, spectacles which amazed the decorous Miss Rosa. Yes, this is true: these wrestling or boxing events are spectacles. We are told by Miss Rosa that when the county folk gather at Sutpen's Hundred (she is careful to let us know that the guests are comprised of "gentlefolks," "scum and riffraff"[6]), "... that on [these] occasions, perhaps at the end of the evening, the spectacle, as a grand finale or perhaps as a matter of sheer deadly forethought toward the retention of supremacy, domination, he [Sutpen] would enter the ring with one of the negroes himself." (p. 29). Even from Miss Rosa's jaundiced view, the reader can conclude that this is Sutpen's way of proving to his slaves, and to all those who observe, that he is the fittest, the superior man. (It must not be forgotten that these slaves are considered "wild niggers," a term which undoubtedly connotates tremendous brute strength.) While his methods appear to differ from those of other planters - planters who most likely would not think twice about having their slaves flogged - it serves the same end: "the retention of supremacy, domination." So how is Sutpen fundamentally different from other members of the planter class?

It is also interesting to note that while the onlookers remain in "an acute state of indigestion" over the arrival of Sutpen, while some superstitiously hold "that the wild niggers which he had brought there had

the power to actually conjure more cotton per acre from the soil than any tame ones had ever done" (p. 72); despite this and other kinds of speculation, Sutpen is eventually accepted. Why? Because he 'got ahead,' he embraced the planter's ideology, because "... he obviously had too much money now to be rejected" (p. 72). So Sutpen accomplishes part of his goal; he has "land and niggers and a fine house," and grows "a little pompous" to boot:

> He accomplished this - got his plantation to running smoothly ... and now he acted his role too - a role of arrogant ease and leisure which, as the leisure and ease put flesh on him, became a little pompous.... he was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony - the stage manager, call him what you will - was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one. (p. 72)

Once again, the reader glimpses the Tidewater planter at his ease, glimpses him behind this image of Sutpen, glimpses too, all those poor ambitious Southerners grown prosperous and unaware of their impending doom.

Most critics agree that Sutpen's downfall is emblematic of the South's. To say this is to say that Sutpen is symbolic of the slaveholding class, that his tragedy is theirs. Regardless of how abstract his design and his approach appears, how much his existence seems devoid of paternalism on any warm and human level, the facts remain: Sutpen decided to be a dominant figure, to gain, not only a foot-hold in Mississippi, but to establish a respectable dynasty, and so - to borrow from his innocent analogy - "combat them that had the fine rifles". Only Sutpen never successfully combats the class he sets out to transcend, rather he is caught fast by its ethos. He fails where other members of his adopted class failed: on the

racial frontier. He sees that in his society, the Negro is simply the white man's chattel, and he embraces the concept without question. He decides that the success of his plan requires a legitimate white male heir. Charles Bon, his first son, is legitimate, but he has Negro blood! And so Sutpen repudiates him. Denial of the Negro, more than any other single factor, is responsible for his tragedy.

The repudiation of Charles Bon is that simple. Bon however is not. Occupying a prominent position in the Sutpen drama, Bon has received much critical attention over the last four decades, and while he may be - like any major protagonist of any major work - in danger of overexposure, he remains as enigmatic as the rest of his kin. Critical appraisals are mixed. For instance: Brooks considers Bon an aristocrat because, as he points out, Bon "lives for honor and is willing to die ... in order to vindicate what he regards as his only honorable course of action."[7] Backman, on the other hand, apparently overlooking the fact that Bon is Sutpen's legitimate son, states that "Bon embodies both the most favored of whites, a New Orleans scion, and the lowliest of blacks, the white man's bastard."[8] Generally, critical opinion falls within the two polarities offered by Professors Brooks and Backman, with the occasional curiosity about the miscegenation issue by such critics as De Voto and Seiden. There can be little doubt that what makes for critical variation here is the conflicting images of Bon offered by the narrators - images which cause the picture of Bon to appear seriously problematic to the viewer.

In the Quentin-Shreve narration, Bon is, as Lynn Levins observes, "elevated to the stature of a protagonist of medieval romance."[9] For while Shreve accepts Mr. Compson's view of Bon as the hedonic New Orleans scion,

he proceeds to embellish the picture until Bon becomes: "the esoteric, the sybarite, the steel blade in the silken tessellated sheath ... the object of art, the mold and mirror of form and fashion which Mrs. Sutpen ... accepted him as and insisted ... that he be". To this he adds Judith's possible response: "(And the girl, the sister, the virgin ... who to know what she saw that afternoon when they rode up the drive what prayer, what maiden meditative dream ridden up out of whatever fabulous land, not in harsh stove iron but the silken and tragic Lancelot nearing thirty ... sated with what experiences and pleasures, which Henry's letters must have created for her)" (p. 320). And so we find Bon courting Judith in the garden among the "myriad scentless unpickable Cherokee roses" (p. 295). But in the Compson picture, Bon's engagement to Judith exists in the mind of Ellen Sutpen, Judith's mother, "a myth," and Bon himself is "a phantom: something which they engendered and created whole themselves; some effluvium of Sutpen blood and character, as though as a man he did not exist at all" (p. 104). Juxtaposing the images of Bon offered by Mr. Compson and by Shreve, the reader wonders if the courtship of Judith functions the way a red herring does in a detective novel.

For the reader soon detects that Bon's first concern is not love for Judith, but a yearning for parental acknowledgement from Sutpen. This becomes increasingly obvious after that metaphysical transcendence catapults Quentin and Shreve through time and space to experience the Henry-Bon relationship. It is now that we hear Bon's plaintive lament, now that we discover something of his ethical code with regards to his father: "I was fair and honorable with him," he tells Henry. "I waited. You know now why I waited. I gave him every chance to tell me himself. But he didn't

tell me. He just told you, sent me a message like you send a command by a nigger servant to a beggar or a tramp to clear out" (p. 341). This willingness to exile himself, to make no claim on Sutpen once acknowledged, supports the interpretation that Bon lives by a code of honor. More important here, however, is Bon's view of himself. He clearly thinks of himself no more a Negro than he considers himself a beggar or a tramp. In his eyes, he is simply Sutpen's son. This self-image is partially responsible for the problem the reader is up against when studying Bon, and we will return to it shortly. But first, another look at his lament, the dazed, melancholy questioning of Henry: "... he sent me no word? ... He did not ask you to send me to him? No word to me, no word at all?" (p. 356). Such pathetic anguish can move the reader to sympathy. One is likely to view Sutpen's callous indifference to Bon as repugnant, and this forces the reader to take a moral stand, to conclude that Sutpen's inability to accept Bon is due to an acute case of moral deficiency. Like his features, which Bon perceives as "expressionless and rocklike"(p. 348), Sutpen is a hard man, one who is hell-bent on establishing his dynasty, status in quo, and he will suffer no obstacle, no deterrent of any kind.

But while we sympathize with Bon's desire for Sutpen's acceptance, we are disturbed by what amounts to nothing short of an ironic inauthenticity in his character. In all fairness to Bon however, we must acknowledge that this inauthenticity may well originate with the conflicting photographs offered by the narrators, or perhaps it has its source in his symbolic nature - the idea of Bon as being black and white and neither.[10] Consider Mr. Compson's picture of him as a wealthy young man, "an elegant and indolent esoteric hothouse bloom" (p. 97); the wealthy young scion with "... the eighth part

negro mistress and sixteenth part negro son, granted even the morganatic ceremony - a situation which was as much a part of a wealthy young New Orleansian's social and fashionable equipment as his dancing slippers...." (p. 100). What troubles the reader is that Bon himself shares this commonplace disregard for his mistress, his son, and "the morganatic ceremony". Both he and society reduce his mistress and child to fashionable possessions: they are simply part of a wealthy young man's entourage. For seventeen pages later we find Bon claiming that the marriage to his octoroon is little more than "a formula, a shibboleth meaningless as a child's game" (p. 117). While such an attitude certainly paves the way for his exclamation to Henry that his mistress and child are "niggers", implying that as such they do not matter, it certainly does not prepare the reader for his hysterical announcement to Henry: "I'm the nigger that's going to sleep with your sister" (p. 358). Nor can it ever be reconciled to the lamenting Bon brooding over his father's denial. It seems far too simplistic an answer to such a complex problem to conclude that Bon's hysterical announcement is a taunt to Henry, or a desire for self-immolation, or an example of no quiet desperation. How is it, one must ask, do we leap from wealthy young aristocrat to nigger? What fantastic yellow-wheeled buggy spirited the Byronic Bon, the sybarite with "more watches and cuff buttons and finer linen ... than most others" (p. 304) away from his elegant New Orleans habitat? What whispered spell broke to leave him desolate, minus his fashionable equipment, his dancing slippers? What dreadful toxin transformed this "mold and mirror of form and fashion" to little more than an audacious nigger threatening to mongrelize the white race? Two words, one concept: mixed blood - miscegenation.

It is the fear of miscegenation which drives Henry to kill Bon. Incest he can tolerate. After all, he reasons, "Kings have done it! Even dukes!" (p. 342). But miscegenation is definitely out of the question. On this issue, he is not so much his father's "illusion" (p. 347), he is a genuine chip off the Sutpen block. One recalls that it is Sutpen who introduces the miscegenation theme, when he relates the story of his sojourn in Haiti and his first marriage to Bon's mother. On discovering that his wife has Negro blood, he repudiates her. It is easy to overlook, or misunderstand, this first reference to miscegenation, because of Sutpen's vagueness. He chooses simply to tell us that his wife's family deliberately withheld "a fact" from him:

> Yet they deliberately withheld from me the one fact which I have reason to know they were aware would have caused me to decline the entire matter, otherwise they would not have withheld it from me - a fact which I did not learn until after my son was born.... (p. 264)

And after a ratiocinative, self-righteous aside, during which "the one fact" is never elucidated, Sutpen concludes: "I merely explained how this new fact rendered it impossible that this woman and child be incorporated in my design" (p. 264). Miscegenation then remains nebulous for over a hundred pages. And so, when Bon announces to Henry that he is "the nigger" who is going to marry his sister Judith, and blatantly asserts that "it's the miscegenation, not the incest" which he, Henry, cannot stomach, the reader experiences a jolt of surprise, a latent amazement which should have been experienced when Sutpen goes groaning to General Compson about the failure of his design.

Perhaps it is this reluctance to confront squarely the issue (miscegenation, though central to the drama, is no where else in the text mentioned

specifically) which cause narrators and critics alike to allude to "fate" or "destiny" when examining Sutpen's downfall, to evoke forces suspiciously like Olympian deities, who, when motivated by some malicious whim or inscrutable fancy, wreck vengeance on man. Mr. Compson evokes just this kind of maliciousness when he tells of Sutpen's journey to New Orleans to discover Bon's identity:

> You would almost believe that Sutpen's trip to New Orleans was just sheer chance, just a little more of the illogical machinations of a fatality which had chosen that family in preference to any other in the country or the land exactly as a small boy chooses one ant-hill to pour boiling water into in preference to any other, not even himself knowing why. (p. 102)

While Mr. Compson is speaking specifically of the element of chance in Sutpen's trip to New Orleans, it is viewed as "just a little more of the illogical machinations". And "the illogical machinations" of a capricious fatality, is a concept which provides an excellent umbrella under which to shade or dispose of troublesome issues like miscegentaion, and the grief and destruction which results from the moral and humanistic denial of the Negro. Such a concept provides the narrator, or the critic, with the opportunity to contemplate the more abstract or academic concerns; it diverts attention from the meat of the matter. Lynn Levins' study entitled Faulkner's Heroic Design may well prove a case in point. Enlightening at times, her study of Absalom,Absalom! nonetheless seems to force the text into a straightjacket. Basing her thesis on the theory that each of the four points of view of the novel is fashioned after a different literary genre, "the Gothic, the Greek tragedy, the chivalric romance, and the tall tale", she discusses the Quentin-Shreve narration of the Henry-Bon relationship in terms of chivalric romance, mentioning miscegenation only in passing:

"Faulkner has chosen", she writes, "to introduce the miscegenation motive into a tale of chivalry, and in so doing, he ingeniously reminds his audience that the drama, however romantic, is not of the long ago and faraway, but is a drama of the present and peculiarly of the South."[11] That is all. As an intricate, thematic concern of Absalom,Absalom!, miscegenation is too important to be dismissed as a motive introduced into a chivalric romance. For then it appears as if the romance, not the miscegenation, is the preponderant concern.

Still, the question remains: what can be said about this important issue with Sutpen vaguely alluding to "the fact", Mr. Compson evoking "a fatality", and the picture of Bon, for all the dramatic presentation of Quentin and Shreve, remaining stubbornly enigmatic? Not much. Only the obvious can be stated with certainty: Bon is emblematic of the miscegenation concern. He is presented as the wealthy and fashionable young scion, one who is first idolized by his younger brother Henry, then killed by him. Shortly before the fratricide occurs, Bon is transformed from aristocrat to nigger. Yet, alive or dead, black or white or neither, he continues to loom large in the drama, to bear a striking resemblance to his half-sister Clytie, for he too looks very much like "a presiding augur" of Sutpen's downfall.

One finds such a harmony of sound and vision when the focus is on Clytie that it appears as if all four narrators viewed her through the same lens. This begs the question: Why then is Clytie no more comprehensible to the reader than her brother Bon? The answer is simple: Clytie, while appearing so flat, so one-dimensional that the few critics who have paid her any attention conclude that she is little more than a shadowy presence, this Clytie is nothing short of a three-dimensional symbolic paradox, one

who, in her journey from creator to reader, seems a metamorphic mirage: a servant, yet not simply a servant; a sister, yet not a sister; a daughter, yet most certainly not a daughter, and finally, by the time she arrives before us, the narrators all agree that she is Sutpen's "presiding augur".

It is a term Mr. Compson employs when he introduces her. We are told that:

> He [Sutpen] named Clytie as he named them all, the one before Clytie and Henry and Judith even, with that same robust and sardonic temerity naming with his own mouth his own ironic fecundity of dragon's teeth. Only I have always liked to believe that he intended to name Clytie, Cassandra, prompted by some pure dramatic economy not only to beget but to designate the presiding augur of his own disaster, and that he just got the name wrong through a mistake natural in a man who must have almost taught himself to read .... (p. 62)

We may chuckle at Mr. Compson's dry wit - the concept of Sutpen's sense of "dramatic economy". But first impressions are often minor revelations, both of the perceiver and that which is perceived. So that while Mr. Compson reveals himself as an orator, the outline of Clytie as a prophetess of doom is taking shape. It is an outline reinforced by the shrilly poetic intonations of Miss Rosa Coldfield, when she asserts that Clytie is

> ... anything but inept: perverse inscrutable and paradox: free, yet incapable of freedom who never once called herself a slave, holding fidelity to none like the indolent and solitary wolf or bear (yes, wild: half untamed black, half Sutpen blood: and if 'untamed" be synonymous with 'wild', then 'Sutpen' is the silent unsleeping viciousness of the tamer's lash) whose false seeming holds it docile to fear's hand but which is not, which if this be fidelity, fidelity only to the prime fixed principle of its own savageness; - Clytie who in the very pigmentation of her flesh represented that debacle which had brought Judith and me to what we were and which had made her (Clytie) that which she declined to be just as she had declined to be that from which its purpose had been to emancipate her, as though presiding aloof upon the new, she deliberately remained to represent to us the threatful portent of the old. (p. 156)

While one tends to be weary of the voice of Miss Rosa, there is no escaping her. Listening to her the reader experiences a sensation very much like being seized by the scruff of the neck, or being detained by a woeful tale of an ancient mariner. Forced to listen, we find Clytie "the threatful portent of the old", and this obviously complements Mr. Compson's image of her as "presiding augur". Also, by listening to Miss Rosa, we glimpse the fundamental paradox inherent in Clytie's character, even while her symbolic feature is becoming fixed. We hear that Clytie is a free woman, yet she is incapable of freedom; that she is of two races and of neither; that she is placed somewhere beyond both black and white; that it is to this place - this station in life, to which she is faithful. If her pigmentation makes her "that which she declines to be," it also makes her "that from which its purpose had been to emancipate her." And indeed it seems that placed somewhere beyond the troubled reality of race relations, her raison d'etre is to preside over and to prophesy - simply by being - the tragic collapse of Sutpen's Hundred.

By giving their views of Clytie early in the novel, both Mr. Compson and Miss Coldfield pave the way for the speculative presentation of Quentin and Shreve. The full power of Clytie, in her role of "presiding augur", is not, cannot be felt until the closing episode. In the dramatic finish, the reader finds Clytie, after some fifty years of waiting, at last fulfilling her function: the complete and literal destruction of Sutpen's Hundred. It is a scene which deserves to be cited at length:

> He, Quentin, could see it, could see the deputy holding her [Miss Rosa] while the driver backed the ambulance to safety and returned, the three faces all a little wild now since they must have believed her - the three of them staring, glaring at the doomed house: and then for a moment maybe Clytie appeared in that window from which she must have been watching the gates constantly day and night

> for three months - that tragic gnome's face beneath the clean headrag, against a red background of fire, seen for a moment between two swirls of smoke, looking down at them, perhaps not even now with triumph and no more of despair than it had ever worn, possibly even serene above the melting clapboards before the smoke swirled across it again .... (p. 375)

One could hardly ask for a more vivid picture. And the image of Clytie more serene than triumphant or despairing, is acceptable. It is an image which we have been prepared for from the beginning - with the Compson-Coldfield depiction. After waiting a lifetime to bring down the house of Sutpen, one fancies that Clytie, given her peculiar character, would be serene, finally at peace or satisfied that she had done her bidding.

Yet, while Clytie's character is fixed, even as the narrators would all have us believe that she is, in the final analysis, the soothsayer in residence at Sutpen's Hundred, such a lofty stature does not negate the fact that she is a Sutpen, and as such, is a part of the drama, and very much a part of the quasi-epic romance that is Absalom,Absalom! Consider what happens to the picture when Quentin speculates about the twelve years after Judith's death, how Clytie must have

> ... raised the child which had been born in the old slave cabin [Bon's grandson] and scrimped and saved the money to finish paying out for the stone on which Judith had paid his grandfather the hundred dollars twenty-four years ago and who, when his grandfather tried to refuse it, she (Clytie) set the rusty can full of nickles and dimes and frayed paper money on the desk and walked out of the office without a word. (p. 210)

Here Clytie is not simply the black servant talking of family business, she is family: a Sutpen, a fact betrayed, in part, by the grim obstinancy that is the legacy of her sire. The reader need only recall Clytie helping Judith to make her wedding dress (p. 101), Clytie forbidding Wash Jones

entrance into the house (p. 183), or guarding Etienne, Bon's son, like a "Spanish duenna" (p. 199) - one need only consider these and other such instances to realize that Clytie is much more subjectively involved in the drama than the narrators seem to suggest. Yet we wonder, as in the case of Bon, what to make of her finally.

No answer is immediately forthcoming. However, it may help to clarify where this brother and sister stand in relationship to each other, by observing the difference between them. Bon, we know, is the legitimate son from Sutpen's first marriage; Clytie, on the other hand, is the illegitimate daughter from a relationship with one of his slave women. Bon vocalizes his anguish over Sutpen's refusal to acknowledge him as his son; Clytie remains mute, appears devoid of any such filial emotion.[12] It is perhaps due to this lack of feeling, more than any other factor, which causes Thadious Davis to write, in her essay "The Yoking of Abstract Contradictions", that Clytie's role "evokes serious questions about Faulkner's use of blacks as symbols rather than fully developed people."[13] If we assert that Bon and Clytie, like Etienne and Jim, are personifications of the miscegenation theme, it is safe to conclude that while they may not give us 'meaning' in any final sense, they do offer a bifurcated response to the issue: on the one hand, Bon is emblematic of the mulatto who verbalizes his need for parental recognition, or acceptance; while on the other hand, Clytie is symbolic of the mute mulatto, the one who is either unable, or unwilling, to confront the white progenitor with a verbal request for acknowledgement of parenthood. Apparently, it is a matter of sensitivity and the lack of it.

A final word before turning to Bon's son. It is rather odd that given the importance of Clytie in the narrative, and the fact that her brother Bon

received so much critical attention, that she should be virtually ignored by critics. This reader was surprised to find three references to Clytie after scanning some nine volumes on Faulkner. The first, by Cleanth Brooks, has already been mentioned in footnote twelve. The second is by Backman in his study Faulkner: The Major Years. Mentioning Clytie apropos to his discussion of Judith, he writes: "Her mulatto sister, Clytie, continued long beyond Judith's death as the guardian of her master's house. Clytie represents the Negro family servant so involved with her white folks that she could make no life of her own."[14] The third reference to Clytie appears in Kerr's William Faulkner's Gothic Domain: "Clytie", she observes, "the faithful servant in the Gothic cast of characters, is never used for comic relief. The half-sister of Judith and Henry, and acknowledged to be so, Clytie was driven by her protective loyalty to Henry to destroy him and herself when she burned the house rather than let Henry be arrested, she feared, for murder."[15] Both Backman's and Kerr's comments seem far from adequate: Backman's, because he fails to recognize that Clytie is not simply a stereotype of "the Negro family servant so involved with her white folks that she could make no life of her own." Such an observation may be applied to Dilsey but not to Clytie. For there is never a question of Clytie "making a life of her own." That is never an issue. Kerr, on the other hand, merely states the obvious in passing. Of course the reader knows that it appears to Quentin and Shreve, as they reconstruct what might have taken place on the fateful night when Sutpen's Hundred burns, that Clytie's actions are prompted by her desire to protect Henry. But Clytie's reasons are much more deep-rooted. And so the very least one can say here is that Clytie is truly paradoxical to the end - that the burning of Sutpen's Hundred has as much to do with her protection of

Henry as it has to do with some mysterious oracle of destruction.

Yet Clytie's destruction of Sutpen's Hundred, herself and Henry, no more destroys the Sutpen curse (for now we must conclude that we are dealing with a curse) than Henry's fratricide does. For Bon leaves behind him a son: Charles Etienne De Saint Velery Bon - the child by his octoroon mistress, previously described as part of his "fashionable equipment". Mr. Compson offers us two photographs of him: one as a quiet, lonely child, and the other as a violent adult. While Mr. Compson, and the townfolk he represents, tend to see Etienne as yet another inexplicable Sutpen, when we compare him to his father and Clytie, Etienne is singularly comprehensible. For instance: both Mr. Compson and the town - on which Etienne descends like a mad fury - seem to find it difficult to understand his motivation. The careful reader will. For Etienne, unlike Clytie or Bon - actually is one-dimensional.

As a child he is "the little boy whom Beardsley might not only have dressed but drawn - a thin delicate child with a smooth ivory sexless face" (p. 193), or he is the "little strange lonely boy ... with his four names and his sixteenth-part black blood and his expensive esoteric Fauntleroy clothing" (p. 194). He is the child that the Sutpen sisters - Judith and Clytie - watched; and waited for the day when he would be orphaned to fetch him to Sutpen's Hundred. But it is Clytie who goes to New Orleans to fetch him - Clytie who "had never been further from Sutpen's Hundred than Jefferson in her life" (p. 195). Just as it is Clytie who makes sure that the boy sleeps, not on a pallet like herself, but on a cot in the attic, while she stays in the hall below: "barring the foot of the attic stairs, guarding his escape or exit as inexorably as a Spanish duenna" (p. 199). It is also Clytie who teaches the young Etienne to chop wood and who, never letting him

out of her sight, stands over him "with that brooding fierce unflagging jealous care, hurrying out whenever anyone white or black stopped in the road as if to wait for the boy to complete the furrow and pause long enough to be spoken to, sending the boy on with a single quiet word or even gesture a hundred times more fierce than the level murmur of vituperation with which she drove the passerby on" (p. 199). It is evident that Clytie sees Bon's son, somewhat like herself, outside the community of black or white, a kind of untouchable. It is not, as Davis argues, to keep the boy "from the knowledge that barriers exist between races and that those barriers are socially real."[16] Rather it is exactly the opposite. And if the fact that Clytie sees to it that Etienne sleeps on a cot - not a bed like Judith or a pallet like herself - but a cot; if this is not enough in itself to provoke racial consciousness in the boy, then certainly her sharp termination of any hint or suggestion of social interaction between the boy and the community, is. From this photograph of the boy Etienne as pariah, we turn to Etienne, the violent man.

The reader will not need a course in child psychology to conclude that Etienne's violent outburst is partially related to his upbringing as an untouchable, no more than it is necessary to meet any other Yoknapatawpha family to know that his sixteenth-part black blood and the fact that he is 'escapably' Negro, will cause havoc among the townfolk who thought him white only to discover him black. General Compson made just this discovery, and his speechifying, which he so loved to do before a crowd, was abruptly checked, his voice having been "shocked into short circuit" (p. 203). Also, Mr. Compson draws our attention to the matter of pigmentation when he tells of Etienne's violent encounters:

> ... the negro stevefores and deckhands on steamboats or in city honky-tonks who thought he was a white man and believed it only the more strongly when he denied it; the white men who, when he said he was a negro, believed that he lied in order to save his skin, or worse: from sheer besotment of sexual perversion; in either case the result the same: the man with body and limbs almost as light and delicate as a girl's giving the first blow, usually unarmed and heedless of the numbers opposed to him, with that same fury and implacability and physical imperviousness to pain and punishment, neither cursing nor panting, but laughing. (p. 206)

And so the picture of Etienne grows increasingly sad. A character who never speaks but in the language of violence, he attacks seemingly innocent people repeatedly. His violent communication with his world is the result of having been raised an untouchable. But to what degree is anyone's guess. One thing is certain: his marriage to the "ape-like" black woman is a blatant, vengeful act, as much against himself as against his society, and the two Sutpen sisters who denied him the status of a white man and thwarted any communion with Negroes. Mr. Compson makes Etienne's desperation explicit, telling how he "appeared, with a coal black and ape-like woman and an authentic wedding license...and apparently flung the wedding license in Judith's face with something of that invincible despair with which he had attacked the negroes in the dice game" (p. 205). This movement towards self-immolation can be found in all the images of the adult Etienne. Returning to Sutpen's Hundred, after an absence during which his whereabouts are unknown, he repeatedly "[hunts] out situations in order to flaunt and fling the ape-like body of his charcoal companion in the faces of all and any who would retaliate" (p. 206). This is yet another expression of his "invincible despair"; a despair which, unlike his father's, is never romanticized or poeticized, but is realistically presented to the reader. His violence is directly

related to, is in equal proportion to, his unconquerable defeat. The cause, the root, is in Sutpen, his paternal denial of Bon, and in his turn, Bon's own denial of Etienne.[17] Moreover, if the reader listens long enough and hard enough, a dim echo of 'bad seed' resounds from the violent path of Joe Christmas.

But the reader need not go outside the context of Absalom,Absalom! Sutpen's corrupted innocence, his moral depravation, constitutes the bad seed from which his brood spring. Even as Henry's negative response to the Negro echoes and tragically dramatizes Sutpen's own response, so too Judith's disclosure to Etienne demonstrates that she is very much her father's daughter:

> I believed [she admits to Etienne] that there were things which still mattered just because they had mattered once. But I was wrong: Nothing matters but breath, breathing, to know and to be alive. And the child, the license, the paper. What about it? The paper is between you and one who is inescapably negro; it can be put aside, no one will anymore dare bring it up than any other prank of a young man in his wild youth. (p. 207)

Displaying that certain inability to acknowledge any transaction between black and white as morally binding, Judith proves inescapably Sutpen and white Southerner. Etienne's wife, the "ape-like negro", "the black gargoyle", can be dismissed, denied the dignity of human status because she is never perceived as human. In her we find a grotesque flowering of all the animal imagery associated with Negroes in Absalom,Absalom! From the Conradian "band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men," (p. 8) to the "huge bull of a nigger," (p. 225) to "the monkey nigger" (p. 232) - all these bestial images culminate in Etienne's "black gargoyle". Indignant black readers should beware; for they are called upon to carry out the difficult task of hurling a subtle and discriminating invective against the depiction of

the Negro as beast. Faulkner is, of course, nowhere in sight. And so to attempt to hurl verbal abuse at him is not only futile, it is stupid. One is dealing here with the racism of the Coldfields and the Compsons and the Sutpens. It is to Faulkner's credit that he sent these messengers with the story, that he had the courage to hold up his fellow Southerners to our ridicule. And so, while we may long to hear him speak up in his own voice, we should consider that it must have been no easy task for Faulkner, the moralist, to play the quiet puppeteer while such moral cripples as Judith Sutpen shamed the white South with their jaundiced eyes and deformed sensibilities.

To return to Etienne for one last brief observation. When we find him finally living "like a hermit in the cabin which he rebuilt [consorting] with neither white nor black", what we are witnessing is the acting out of an existence for which he was groomed as a boy. It is not surprising that living as he does, in a solipsistic world totally devoid of cultural affinities or filial attachments, he lacks any sense of being the son of Charles Bon, or of even caring. As Shreve informs us:

> ... if your father [Quentin's] had asked him if he was Charles Bon's son he not only would not have known either, he wouldn't have cared: and if you told him he was, it would have touched and then vanished from what you (not he) would have to call his mind long before it could have set up any reaction at all, either of pride or pleasure, anger or grief? (p. 215)

Such lack of sensitivity suggests that Etienne is half-way to idiocy. Yet idiocy, in the case of Jim Bond, does not negate emotional response. For the reader finds Jim, at the end of the novel, "howling with human reason" as Sutpen's Hundred burns (p. 376).

And so we come to the last photograph in the Sutpen family album. It is

of Jim Bond, the sole survivor of Sutpen's progeny. Of the four Negro offspring, he is the least known, the most shadowy. For there are no more than two or three references to him in the novel, references which only slightly enlarge upon the ostensible facts of the genealogy: He is the "son of Charles Etienne de Saint Velery Bon. Born, Sutpen's Hundred, 1882. Disappeared from Sutpen's Hundred, 1910. Whereabouts unknown."

We recall that he is the "it" Judith refers to when she encourages Etienne to escape to the North, where he could pass for white: "I will raise it," she says, "see that it ... It does not need to have any name; you will neither have to see it again or to worry" (p. 208). From this we move to a more palatable reference to Jim, which comes via Dilsey's delightfully comic Luster. He introduces Jim to Quentin and Mr. Compson as the "Bright-colored boy whut stay wid dat ole woman" [Clytie], and prompted to identify the bright-colored boy by name, Luster continues: "Dat's a lawyer word. Whut dey puts you under when de Law ketches you. ... and that was him [Shreve concludes to elucidate Luster] - the name was Bond now" (p. 215). All we know further of Jim Bond is that he howls "with human reason" as Sutpen's Hundred goes up in flames, and continues to pipe his anguish among the ruins:

> ... there was nothing left now. [Shreve tells us] nothing out there now but that idiot boy to lurk around those ashes and those four gutted chimneys and howl until someone came and drove him away. They couldn't catch him and nobody ever seemed to make him go very far away, he just stopped howling for a while. Then after awhile they would begin to hear him again. (p. 376)

Reading this one thinks of the climax of The Sound and the Fury, and of that other howling idiot, Benjy. That is all. But not quite: there is one more reference to Jim, one which seems to have befuddled many a critic. It comes at the end of the novel, on the last page, and as such, it is

difficult to overlook:

> I think [Shreve comments] that in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it won't quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they won't show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you [Quentin] will also have sprung from the loins of African kings. (p. 378)

Granted that Shreve has been the amused outsider throughout the novel, the only one who could see the ridiculous aspect of the Sutpen story, the one who saw Southern life as "better than Ben Hur". But the reader cannot simply ignore Shreve's tongue-in-cheek cuteness here, or shrug and mutter semantics. For one thing, this comment comes at the close of the novel, and for another, it reflects on the miscegenation theme. Yet the tone here seems too light, too amused to be applied to the serious issue at the core of the work. The question undoubtedly arises: why did Faulkner, after such a laborous enterprise, risk the belittlement of his theme by this eleventh hour jesting? One hears again the echo of critics like De Voto: "Mr. Faulkner does not know. ..." After all is said and done, could it really be as simple as that?

Black readers and all those not opposed to racial integration through black and white couplings, cannot easily forgo the jest. Let us examine the facts: Jim Bond is an idiot. Whether his condition is caused by genetic malfunction, or environmental abuse, or whether it is the result of some deterministic plot or fatalistic heritage, or whether it is a combination of all these, we do not know for sure. But we do know that the poor lad is, as Luster would say, a looney. Yet Shreve prophesies that "the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere"! Who wants a world governed by idiots, poor creatures capable of little more than "howling with human

reason" as they survey the charred ruins, the sole legacy of their forefathers? One would much prefer, of course, that the Lucas Beauchamps (minus that feverish lust for buried gold) inherited the west. For Lucas has at least three Faulknerian qualities which we all adore: pride, dignity and love. Moreover, there is nothing whatsoever the matter with his mind. (Yet we must remember that Lucas, like Jim, is the product of a miscegenic union and that Faulkner could have intended both characters to be viewed, on a symbolic level, as representative of the degeneration of society. Such an interpretation however is difficult to pursue. For the idea of miscegenation as emblematic of social disintegration is never clearly articulated in the novels, and so it seems futile to build an argument based on such a vague idea. Also, such an argument would undoubtedly prove the most serious indictment of Faulkner as a racist.) But on to the last disturbing point of Shreve's prophecy: "... in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of "African kings." African kings? How did we get from "monkey niggers" and "black gargoyles" to "African Kings"? The obvious answer is that Shreve is a non-Southerner, that he does not share the Southerner's warped perception of the Negro. Yet, to the sensitive reader, who has paid attention to the text, there is something slightly disturbing here, something a little forced or insincere about African kings, this abrupt and obvious elevation of the lowly Negro. But by far the most important and troublesome problem is that Shreve, intelligent as he is, fails to provide any workable idea towards the satisfactory resolution of the most important aspect of the novel - miscegenation. Perhaps, finding the denouement unsatisfactory himself, is what caused Faulkner to take up the miscegenation theme again in Go Down, Moses.

The McCaslin Family Album

In his biography of Faulkner, David Minter observes that "Go Down, Moses marked ... a crucial point in Faulkner's career, in part because it was followed by a silence that lasted nearly six years, and in part because it brought much work that had preceded it to a kind of culmination."[1] Absalom, Absalom! directly preceded Go Down, Moses, and there can be no doubt that the chief concerns of the former novel - miscegenation, incest, the relationship between the black and white Southerners - are also the chief concerns of the latter. From the first undercurrent felt in "Was", the story with which the book opens, miscegenation is securely yoked, not with the fear of incest now, but with actual incest. Together they are responsible for the McCaslin curse, which appears as inexorable as the Sutpen curse.

The fact that the events of "Was" take place in 1859, and the events of "Go Down, Moses" - the piece with which the book concludes - occur in 1941, and that they are set in motion by, or spring from, the wrong-doing of old Carothers McCaslin, clearly indicate that for Faulkner the past is not severed from the future. Therefore, time in itself cannot exorcise the curse. Time is a continuum. One thinks of the T.S. Eliot of Four Quartets: "Time present and time past/Are both perhaps present in time future./And time future contained in time past." The fluidity of time suggested by these lines from "Burnt Norton" is a concept which Faulkner shared. It is a concept which Cleanth Brooks believed orginated, for Faulkner, with Henri Bergson. This may well be the case. But what is important, however, is Faulkner's use of the concept, not only in Go Down, Moses, but as we have seen, in Absalom, Absalom!. Faulkner himself is on record as having said of the

characters who people his county:

> [the fact] that I have moved [them] around in time successfully ... proves to me my own theory that time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as was - only is.[2]

It is not surprising then that the story "Was" is, that the important disclosure of the mixed lineage of Tomey's Turl portends, what was for the South, the tragic perpetuity of mixed blood, running, it would seem, with liquid Time itself.

The reader of Go Down, Moses increasingly comes to view miscegenation in the South as tragic, or more correctly, to view miscegenation as a stock feature of the tragic legend which was forged out of the tragicomedy of Southern existence. But we must be careful not to separate miscegenation from incest in this particular instance, since the black line of the McCaslin family is rooted in incest. For old Carothers compounded his illicit affair with his Negro slave, Eunice, by committing incest with their daughter, Tomasina. This ill-fated union produced Tomey's Turl, and from here on the black line runs with an almost biblical prolificacy: Tomey's Turn begot Lucas, Jim and Fonsiba, Lucas begot Henry and Nat, Nat begot an unnamed child, while Henry begot Samuel (or was Samuel's progenitor Nat?) Jim, on the other hand, begot a child who begot the unnamed woman of "Delta Autumn", who, when she appears, is carrying a child fathered by Roth Edmunds, the great-great grandson of old Carothers McCaslin. And once again, it is the child of mixed lineage, the child of "Delta Autumn", who survives to carry on the line.

The reader can predict this outcome by looking at the McCaslin genealogy as it develops through the book. Richard Adams observes, quite correctly,

that of the three branches composing the family, it is the black branch which is the most prolific. The legitimate white sons of Carothers McCaslin, referred to throughout as Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy, only produced one offspring between them: Uncle Buck's son Isaac, who is "Uncle Ike to half a county and father to no one" (p. 3). Of the second branch, which stems from the marriage of old Carothers' daughter to a man named Edmonds, there is: Cass Edmonds, Zack Edmonds, and Roth Edmonds, Zack's son. Hence, both the ligitimate white male line, and the white female line, are amazingly short when compared to the black line. Forced to live under the alias of Beauchamp, the black McCaslins are, to borrow that favorite adjective of Faulkner's: endurable. Looking at them and their sire, the viewer finds it difficult not to think of Sutpen and his black progeny. But before turning the pages of the McCaslin album, a word about the camera lens employed.

The technique - though much simpler than Absalom,Absalom! - appears so fragmentary and limited that the reader must become actively involved. Depending on interest and intellectual prowess, one is likely to be engaged in endless speculation and conjecture.[3] Briefly stated, the technique is, for the most part, a limited third person. As Faulkner never takes full advantage of the artistic license granted the omniscient eye, some of the characters are impenetrable. For instance: Tennie's Jim and Fonsiba are vaguely shown, and the most comic and tragic character of the book, Tomey's Turl (even though we have a close-up shot of him), remains quite mute. We know nothing of his thoughts, nothing of what it means to him personally to be a half-white McCaslin. We see him only through the eyes of his master and half-brother, Uncle Buck, or his half-cousin, Cass McCaslin, or through the eyes of Mr. Hubert, the master of Tennie, his girl. It is not until "The

Bear", when Ike takes down the family ledger, turns its yellowing pages to journey back to the past, that we learn the facts surrounding Turl's birth. Like Jim and Fonsiba, his shadowy offspring, Tomey's Turl remains mute, his psychological reality lost to the viewer; for it can no more be detected from the face of his photograph than it can be detected from theirs. Yet, the picture of Lucas compensates for those of his kin. He is shown as the prototype of his mixed race, and in him we find all the light and shadow, all the depth and complexity we found previously in the picture of Charles Bon. Moreover, the way Lucas views his ancestor, old Carothers, is antipodal to the way Ike, his white cousin, views the old man. And so, by juxtaposing the views of Lucas and Ike, what we get is the rounded hindsight, and only the hindsight, view of old McCaslin. Finally, the camera eye which at first seems to wander about, shooting domestic scenes, hunts, and old Indians at random, causing the narrative to appear, not only fragmentary and limited, but at times downright chaotic - the eye of Go Down,Moses is really quite selective and precise. Material which initially appears extraneous later reveals itself to be quite organic. And so a few mute photographs, the barely discernible pictures of Jim and Fonsiba, trouble the viewer no more than the one or two shots lost in a good roll of film is likely to do.

What will cause some concern is the portrait of old Carothers. Long before we see him through the eyes of Ike, in the fourth section of "The Bear", as an "evil and unregenerated old man", we see him through the eyes of Lucas, Zack and Roth Edmonds, as the same kind of fine figure of a man that the poor white Wash Jones sees Sutpen to be, or the same kind of larger-than-life heroic figure that Mr. Compson sees Sutpen as. Old Carothers is a man to emulate, his devoted descendants would have us believe. Little wonder then

that critics, Myra Jehlen for example, focus on his virtues. "The best white man" [Jehlen says] is the founder of the book's microcosmic society, Carothers McCaslin, and the others range themselves on a scale descending from him."[4] Such an interpretation is both quite correct and quite erroneous. It is true that old Carothers is the founder of the McCaslin dynasty. His plantation is even larger than Sutpen's Hundred. Though we are not informed of the acreage in Go Down, Moses, at the beginning of Intruder in the Dust, we learn that it is a two-thousand-acre plantation. With that certain Southern respect for the planter, the man of property, it should come as no surprise whatsoever that old Carothers is elevated to a lofty position by the majority of his descendants, that they took pride in the McCaslin name and the McCaslin blood. And we will find much evidence of McCaslin pride when viewing Lucas. Yet, Ike all but topples the old man from his high pinnacle. His low, disgusted view of McCaslin causes him to repudiate his inheritance. Considering all the views, examining the total picture of the old man, it is impossible to call him "the best white man". He is very like Sutpen where it matters most: not only has he acquired land, niggers and a big house, he has mistreated and denied the Negro, and in a pathetic attempt to make amends, he reverts to the cash nexus: he leaves a thousand dollar legacy to his son Tomey's Turl, because, as Ike observes, it was "cheaper than saying My son to a nigger" (p. 269). As we recall, Sutpen too resorted to the cash nexus when he repudiates his first wife and Charles Bon.[5] This is not to say that there are no differences between these two men of property. There are. Old Carothers never appears a fanatic; he does not seem to have been driven by any "design", and even while his crime appears worse than Sutpen's - insofar as he commits incest

with his daughter - there is no sense that he was dogged by retribution as a result. Rather, in fine biblical fashion, his sins are visited upon the third and fourth generations. Also, as Minter observes: "Although old Carothers McCaslin is clearly more prolific than Thomas Sutpen, he appears less prodigious."[6] Yes, for want of a Miss Rosa to demonize him, or a Mr. Compson to heroize him, McCaslin does appear less prodigious than Sutpen. His portrait has that faded look of very old pictures. This is undoubtedly due to the long view we have of him, and then, only as an old man. For we never see him as a boy coming into Mississippi with his family, or leaving home to seek his fortune, or returning to erect his big house; we only see him old, established, through the eyes of his descendants Lucas, Zack, Roth, and Ike. But it is that strange, tragicomic shot of Tomey's Turl, as he runs his way through "Was", which cast the first shadow on the founder of the McCaslin clan.

At the beginning of "Was" we learn that Uncles Buck and Buddy and the young Cass, "knew exactly where Tomey's Turl had gone, he went there every time he could slip off, which was about twice a year. He was heading for Mr. Hubert Beauchamp's place ... to hang around Mr. Hubert's girl, Tennie, until somebody came and got him" (p. 5). From this information, only two things are immediately apparent: Tomey's Turl is male, and he is the property of the McCaslins. One does not know, at this point, if he is beast or man. Later, when we do know that he is human, he is nonetheless viewed in animal terms. Even prior to the disclosure of his "run", the animal metaphor employed throughout the man-hunt appears in the chase of the fox by the dogs. This incident - considered "a good race" by the nine-year-old

Cass - foreshadows the events to follow. Tha analogy between the fox and the slave could scarcely be more appropriate: both have broken out, both have momentarily disrupted the order of things, and both are creatures to be caught and controlled.

The animal or hunting metaphor cannot be missed. When Uncle Buck spots Turl for the first time, he plans how best he might "bay him", when he moves in too quickly Cass attributes this movement to Buck's desire not to miss seeing Tomey's Turl "treed" (p. 8). Yet the man-hunt is robbed of its horror by the vein of comedy infused into the narrative. And so even while the dehumanization of slavery is blatantly obvious, both the hunter and the game evoke laughter from the reader. Cass tells his cousin Ike of the sport:

> He had never seen old Jake go that fast, and nobody had ever known Tomey's Turl to go faster than his natural walk even riding a mule. Uncle Buck whooped once from the woods, running, on sight, then Black John came out of the trees, driving, soupled out flat and level as a hawk, with Uncle Buck right up behind his ears now and yelling so that they looked exactly like a big black hawk with a sparrow riding it ... (p. 8)

Then there is the incident of those ferocious hounds let loose on Turl:

> They just tongued once and when they came boiling up around Tomey's Turl it looked like they were trying to jump up and lick him in the face until even Tomey's Turl, slowed down and he and the dogs all went into the woods together, walking like they were going home from a rabbit hunt. (p. 14)

The comedy reaches its climax when Uncle Buck, believing he has at last treed Turl in Tennie's cabin, forgets what "even a little chile should have known: not ever to stand right in front of or right behind a nigger when you scare him...." Consequently, Uncle Buck

> ... never even saw the door open; the fyce just screamed once and ran between his legs and then Tomey's Turl ran right clean over him. He hever even bobbled; he knocked Uncle Buck down and then caught him before he fell without

> even stopping, snatched him up under one arm, still running, and carried him along for about ten feet, saying, "Look out of here, old Buck, Lood out of here, old Buck," before he threw him away and went on. (p. 19)

That Tomey's Turl, a slave, should casually refer to his master as old Buck, and just as casually throw him away, cannot fail to elicit laughter from the reader. All such images negate the horror of slavery, and together with the burlesque of courtly romance, acted out by the aging Miss Sophonsiba, as she tries to capture Uncle Buck, all contribute to the comic dimension of the story. And so it becomes increasingly difficult for the viewer to seriously consider the plight of Tomey's Turl.

The comic aspect of the narrative led critics to pay relatively little attention to "Was", or simply to question what kind of comedy Faulkner employs here: is it frontier humor, black comedy or slapstick? But to focus on the comedy of "Was" is not enough, nor is it sufficient to say, as one critic does, that it "is a warmly humorous introduction to some of the old McCaslins, white and black, before the Civil War."[7] For "Was" is more than a humorous introduction to the McCaslins. In Tomey's Turl we have the embodiment of the miscegenation-incest thematic concern. Furthermore, once again we find the Southerner's negative response to the mulatto.

The Southerner in question is Mr. Hubert. First, it should be noted that there is nothing to suggest that Mr. Hubert knows of the McCaslin incest; apparently, he is only aware of the miscegenation. Mr. Hubert is of the planter class, and his sister, Miss Sophonsiba, epitomizes the Southern myth-maker whose sandcastle Cash so effectively knocks over in The Mind of the South. The reader learns that she "was still trying to make people call [the plantation] Warwick after the place in England that she said Mr. Hubert was probably the true earl of only he never even had enough pride

... to take the trouble to establish his just rights" (p. 5). While Mr. Hubert may not have enough pride to establish his earldom, he most certainly does not lack the planter's pride or sense of supremacy over the Negro; and he undoubtedly shares in his community's horror over miscegenation. He is disgusted by the fact that Tomey's Turl is a "white half-McCaslin". Cass tells of his absolute refusal to buy Turl so that he could be with Tennie, because: "he wouldn't have that damn white half-McCaslin on his place even as a free gift, not even if Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy were to pay board and keep for him" (p. 6). When it is finally decided that the fate of Turl and Tennie, Uncle Buck and Miss Sophonsiba, be settled by a poker game, it should come as no surprise that, at the crucial moment, rather than run the risk of having the white half-McCaslin on his plantation, Mr. Hubert gives up Tennie to the McCaslins. His slow and deliberate study of Tomey's Turl, as he leaves his cards face down on the table before him, is one of the sobering moments of this story:

> He reached out and tilted the lamp-shade, the light moving up Tomey's Turl's arms that were supposed to be black but were not quite white, up his Sunday shirt that was supposed to be white but wasn't quite either ... and Mr. Hubert sat there, holding the lamp-shade and looking at Tomey's Turl. Then he tilted the shade back down and took up his cards and turned them face down and pushed them toward the middle of the table. "I pass, Amodeus," he said. (p. 29)

Mr. Hubert's thoughts are clear: he will have nothing to do with Tomey's Turl because of his mixed origins. He is representative of his class, of an almost Hitlerian obsession with racial purity. What Turl thinks we never know. So discovering the most comic and tragic picture in all of Go Down, Moses, also the most mute, the viewer turns to the large close-up of Lucas in "The Fire and the Hearth".

We find Lucas proud Negro, low nigger and "more than just a man". This naturally makes for contradictions, but by far the most serious arises from the flawed view of Lucas' response to his McCaslin blood, when we are told that

> ... it was not that Lucas made capital of his white or even his McCaslin blood, but the contrary. It was as if he were not only impervious to that blood, he was indifferent to it. He didn't even need to strive with it. He didn't even have to bother to defy it. He resisted it simply by being the composite of the two races which made him, simply by possessing it. Instead of being at once the battle-ground and victim of two strains, he was a vessle, durable, ancestryless, non-conductive, in which the toxin and its anti stalemated one another, seethless, unrumored in the outside air. (p. 104)

This is the perception of Roth Edmonds - a view which the reader must refute. For Lucas is shown to be anything but "impervious" or "indifferent" to his McCaslin blood. Reflecting how close he came to killing Zack Edmonds in the dispute over his wife Molly, Lucas concludes: "I reckon I ain't got old Carother's blood for nothing, after all" (p. 58). Nor is this an isolated reference to the blood of old Carothers. "The Fire and the Hearth" abounds with references to the ancestor, how much Lucas takes after him, and how, unlike the Edmonds, Lucas is a "man-made" rather than - believe it or not, a "woman-made" McCaslin: "Because you are a McCaslin too", Lucas says to Edmonds, by way of justification as to why he waited until daylight to confront him, "even if you was woman-made to it" (p. 52). Clearly, there is no sense of shame at the thought of having McCaslin blood, but rather a sense of pride.

And it is not only in his dealings with the Edmonds that Lucas is proud of his McCaslin blood, but when he considers his lineage as opposed to that of George Wilkins, his daughter's suitor. George, a young man Lucas thinks

of as little more than "a jumber-jawed clown", incurs his wrath and ridicule when he sets up a still on the Edmond's property, and so interferes with Lucas' own whiskey-making operation. As he does not want George for a son-in-law, Lucas sees this offense as affording him the opportunity to get rid of George: he will turn him in to Edmonds. But he reconsiders. He is digging for the money, allegedly buried by the McCaslin twins, and does not want sheriffs about looking for stills. Now he considers taking George into partnership with him - to do the actual digging. In an inner tirade, he thinks it over, thinks of his McCaslin blood - and incidentally, gives us his low view of Ike McCaslin - thinks of George's unknown origins, and proudly, if comically concludes: Never:

> He, Lucas Beauchamp, the oldest living McCaslin descendant still living on the hereditary land who actually remembered old Buck and Buddy in the living flesh, older than Zack Edmonds even if Zack were still alive, almost as old as old Isaac who in a sense, say what a man would, had turned apostate to his name and lineage by weakly relinquishing the land which was rightfully his to live in town on the charity of his great-nephew; he, to share one jot, one penny of the money which old Buck and Buddy had buried almost a hundred years ago, with an interloper without forebears and sprung from nowhere and whose very name was unknown in the country twenty-five years ago - a jumber-jawed clown who could not even learn how to make whiskey, who had not only attempted to interfere with and jeopardise his business and disrupt his family, but had given him a week of alternating raging anxiety and exasperated outrage culminating in tonight - or last night now - and not even finished yet, since he still had the worm and kettle to conceal. Never. (p. 40)

This long-winded sentence meanders through the labyrinth of Lucas' mind, showing the reader, as it winds its way, just how proud he is of his lineage. He is proud of being "the oldest McCaslin still living on the hereditary land", and critical of Ike whom he sees as having "turned apostate to his name and lineage" - an opinion the reader must consider

when viewing Ike's repudiation of his heritage. More to the point however, is the view of George. It is he, not Lucas, who is the "ancestryless" one, having "sprung from nowhere". The sense of pride found in this passage permeates "The Fire and the Hearth". It is his pride, coupled with his sense of honor, of living by a fixed code, that claim Lucas Beauchamp for a McCaslin. Myra Jehlen interprets Lucas' monologue, and Lucas himself, quite differently: "when we do enter Lucas' mind," she writes, "as in the first section of 'The Fire and the Hearth', we witness only the foolishness about the whiskey still or his silly dream of buried gold. And when Lucas speaks directly he sounds no different, only perhaps more impudent, than the stereotype of a very shrewd but ultimately child-like darky."[8] To say that in the passage cited above one finds "only the foolishness about the whiskey still", and that ultimately Lucas is simply a "child-like darky", is a gross misreading of the monologue and of Lucas. Throughout "The Fire and the Hearth", one finds Lucas by turns: proud, greedy, stubborn, cunning ... but never a fool.

The reader who considers Lucas' pride at being a McCaslin, is forced to ask how he can be described as being "impervious" or "indifferent" to that blood, as Roth would have us believe. Then there is that enigmatic and peculiar observation: "Instead of being at once the battle ground and victim of the two strains, he was a vessle,durable, ancestryless, non conductive, in which the toxin and its anti stalemated one another, seethless, unrumored in the outside air." Such an observation leads the reader to think of Lucas as sterile or barren as the direct result of the "stalemated" blood, the unmixable blood of black and white. (The concept that black blood and white blood do not mix, but remain somehow separate in the individual,

is also found in the characterization of Joe Christmas in Light in August, and so it appears that Roth's view is closer to his creator's than one might first imagine.[9]) But there is nothing in the text to suggest that Lucas is impotent or sterile. How then does this stalemate manifest itself? Lucas sires two children, Henry and Nat, he has farmed the land for forty-five years when the story opens, and there is no mention of blight or any other disease in his crop; he has operated his business - be it farming or whiskey-making, successfully, he has full command of all his faculties, he is strong - can go for days without sleep, as we see him do while he feverishly digs for the buried money. In short, there is absolutely nothing the matter with Lucas. Hence the stalemate remains incomprehensible to the reader.

If we skip from "The Fire and the Hearth", to the fourth section of "The Bear", we find a superb example of Lucas as proud Negro. At the age of twenty-one, Lucas goes to Ike for the money left Tomey's Turl by old McCaslin, but which Tomey's Turl never claimed, and which is to be passed on to his descendants. Here we learn that the incident "not only took its place in the Edmonds family annals, but in the minor annals of the town too: - how the white and negro cousins went side by side to the bank that morning and Lucas said, "Wait. It's a heap of money." "It's too much," Ike replied, "too much to keep hidden under a break in a hearth. Let me keep it for you." But Lucas inquires if the bank will keep the money for a black man, and when he discovers that the bank will now do business with Negroes, he decides to take control of the funds. We witness how the two cousins

> ... stood side by side at the window while the white man had the account transferred and the new pass-book filled out; again Lucas said. "Wait" and then they stood side by side at the ink-splashed wooden shelf while Lucas wrote out the check, writing it steadily under the white man's direction in the cramped though quite legible hand

> which the white man's mother had taught him .... Then they stood again at the grille while the teller cashed the check and Lucas, still blocking the single window, counted the money tediously and deliberately through twice and pushed it back to the teller beyond the grille. "Now you can put it back," he said. And gimme my paper." (p. 109)

The image of the white and black cousins standing side by side at the bank window suggests the movement toward social equality. It is a movement made possible by the collapse of the old order with the Civil War. But war and reconstruction can only be credited with the social movement here; it is Lucas himself who is responsible for the psychological impetus, Lucas the proud young Negro asserting his civil rights. Critics often interpret Lucas within the framework provided by the Adamic myth. And while it may be, as one critic states, that Lucas, "accepted the curse of Adam by staying on the plantation when he could have left it at the age of twenty-one", we can add that while Lucas physically stays on the plantation, he has, nonetheless, travelled a great psychological distance towards a dignity often taken for granted.[10]

To return to "The Fire and the Hearth" and yet another view of Lucas. When he goes to Edmonds to inform him that George Wilkins is operating a still - he does go through with the plot after all - Lucas is low nigger:

> Without changing the inflection of his voice and apparently without effort or even design Lucas became not Negro but nigger, not secret so much as impenetrable, not servile and not effacing, but enveloping himself in an aura of timeless and stupid impassivity almost like a smell. (p. 59)

If the viewer did not find Lucas, less than a hundred pages later, as "more than just a man", this low nigger image could probably be dismissed as an image which complements low behavior. Yet, such an answer appears too simplistic when the picture of Lucas undergoes such a drastic transformation:

> He's more like old Carothers than the rest of us put together [Roth observes], including old Carothers. He is both heir and prototype simultaneous of all the geography and climate and biology which sired old Carothers and all the rest of us and our kind, myriad, countless, faceless, even nameless now except himself who fathered himself, intact and incomplete, contemptuous, as old Carothers must have been, of all blood black white yellow or red, including his own. (p. 118)

And so the image now takes on a romantic tint, one which helps to illuminate the statement Lucas makes during his confrontation with Zack Edmonds: "I'm more than just a man". No more than seven pages into the story at that point, the reader naturally stops to ponder such a claim. Now however, Lucas indeed appears more than a man. As his own progenitor, he soars above mortal limitations to become his own heir and the prototype of all natural phenomena particular to the South. This is of course to suggest that Lucas is representative of a Southern race of men whose very existence falsify - even makes ridiculous, the concepts implicit in segregation.[11] These then are the images we have of Lucas. And all those who saw the complexity of Charles Bon will continue on from "The Fire and the Hearth", not overly alarmed that its protagonist is depicted as Proud Negro, low nigger and more than a man.

The black McCaslins all but vanish after "The Fire and the Hearth". In the next story, "Pantaloon in Black", there is only a passing reference to Lucas. We learn that Rider, the hero, builds a fire on his hearth on his wedding night, just as "Uncle Lucas" had done on his. Yet, Rider's only connection to Lucas - or any of the McCaslins, is that he rents a cabin from Roth Edmonds. "Pantaloon in Black" is the sad love story of a grieving widower. It is unique insofar as it is material which not only appears extraneous on first viewing, but stubbornly remains outside the McCaslin saga

on later viewing. Indeed if we consider Go Down, Moses a family affair, Rider's story has no place in the work. Within the context of the McCaslin album, Rider proves, at best, an odd photograph of a grieving Negro, a man whose sorrow is misconstrued by the white community.[12] After "Pantaloon in Black" comes "The Old People", where there is a reference to Tennie's Jim - who goes hunting with the party headed by Sam Fathers. But the camera eye never settles on him. The focus is now on the young Ike and Sam Fathers. The focus stays with Ike and Sam Fathers throughout "The Old People" and into "The Bear". It is only in the fourth section of the latter story, that the miscegenation-incest theme is picked up again, and we are once again with old Carothers and his black progeny.

One would indeed be hard-pressed to find a reader - regardless of how cautious or astute - who did not, on first reading this book, find it fragmentary to the point where the narrative threads seemed hopelessly scattered and untieable. And should the unsuspecting reader happen to pick up Minter's biography, learn that, in December of 1941, when Faulkner mailed off the typescript of Go Down, Moses, knowing "that he had written another great work, he made his instructions plain: 'Set as written ... DO NOT CHANGE PUNCTUATION NOR CONSTRUCTION" - reading the book for the first time and hitting upon such a comment, the dazed, weary student is quite likely to conclude that both Faulkner and his biographer are quite mad. Yet, a second, a third reading, the hard victory of enlightenment achieved, the student, unmindful of past sentiments, may openly proclaim respect for the writer, or at the very least, pay the great fictionist a grudging compliment.

For Go Down, Moses does finally appear extraordinary. By focussing on the character of Ike McCaslin in "The Old People" and "The Bear", Faulkner

shows the reader just what it means to be a sensitive white McCaslin. One discovers that Ike is in direct contrast to Lucas - that they are in perfect counterpoint. While Lucas takes pride in the blood of old Carothers, Ike views his ancestor as a cankerous old man, one whose possessions and way of life are to be repudiated. This double perspective creates a tension within the narrative, and so, far from being untieable, the narrative threads are, for the most part, not only tied beneath the surface of the prose, they are quite taut. Even the picture of Sam Fathers fits in: Sam, who is not a McCaslin, and who evolves in "The Old People" and "The Bear" to such a prominent position that initially he seems to upstage all the members of this family. Yet, viewing Sam a second and a third time, one finds that, as Ike's surrogate father, he takes an appropriate place in the album. Perhaps Warren Beck best sums up the relationship between Ike and Sam when he writes: "what Sam Fathers stands for in Isaac's life story is a primary formative influence that is extrafamilial, extrasocietal and antedates by far all he knows or is to learn of his own heritage as a McCaslin."[13] This certainly seems to be the case: a superb hunter whose every move appears part of some panygyric to the wilderness, Sam is the ideal, the model for Ike. It is Sam Father's way of life, his respect for, and communion with, nature that influences the outlook of young Ike. It is precisely because of all that Sam Fathers has taught him, as he is growing up, that Isaac comes to view his ancestor as an evil old man. The almost mystical communion with the woods which we find in Sam, and which he teaches Ike, is a dimension absent from Lucas' life. And so the reader must review Lucas' views of Ike against the new evidence found in "The Old People" and "The Bear". Now we discover how difficult it is to see Ike as a weakling who "turned apostate to his

name and lineage" without good reason. And yet we cannot totally disregard the view either. Finally, it becomes impossible to side with either Lucas or Isaac. Each character has a good case against the other; both photographs look to the viewer equally fine and equally flawed: Lucas is a proud Negro who lives for honor and will not relinquish what he considers to be rightfully his - but his pride is rooted in a corrupt ancestor; Ike, on the other hand, feels not pride, but such guilt and shame that he repudiates his inheritance - only, he becomes a separatist, eking out a meager existence, a life impervious to nature's prolificacy and regeneration. Faulkner himself is reported to have said of Isaac: "... a man ought to do more than just repudiate."[14] And ultimately, all Ike does is repudiate. Even though he realizes that his repudiation does not free him of the curse, that even in running, he carries his heritage with him, he nevertheless seeks to expiate his ancestor's sins by doing just that: running.

There is a sense of pathos as the sixteen-year-old Ike of "The Bear" grows into the eighty-year-old Uncle Ike of "Delta Autumn". For time does not change his thinking or the circumstance of the McCaslins. As the black line again makes its presence felt, embodied in the person of Jim Beauchamp's grand-daughter and his great-grandson, we find the young Ike has seasoned into an old man with all his delusions and prejudices intact. Consider his advice to Jim's descendant:

> Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you - for a while yet, maybe a long while yet. We will have to wait. Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find a black man who would see in you what it was you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even still less than that, if it's revenge you want. Then you will forget all this, forget it ever happened, that he ever existed. (p. 363)

Ike has learnt little in his long life: he has not learnt that there is no escape from the McCaslin curse, that going back North, marrying a black man, is not going to change this woman's circumstances or that of her child; he has not learnt - though he should have from his own experience - that forgetfulness, like escape, is impossible for those of McCaslin blood. One thinks of the futile attempts made by this woman's grandfather and his sister to escape to the North:

> It was as though he [Tennie's Jim] had not only (as his sister was later to do) put running water between himself and the land of his father's nameless birth, but he had interposed latitude and geography too, shaking from his feet forever the very dust of the land where his white ancestor could acknowledge or repudiate him from one day to another, according to his whim, but where he dared not even repudiate the white ancestor save when it met the white man's humor of the moment. (p. 105)

Jim does not know that escape is impossible, that he and his white ancestor are forever yoked together by blood, and that verbal repudiation or geographic dislocation will not alter the fact. And so, in "Delta Autumn", as Ike's "gnarled, bloodless, bone-light bone-dry ... fingers touched for a second the smooth young flesh where the strong old blood ran after its long lost journey back to home" (p. 362), the circle is complete. The circle is. One must agree with Levins that with the appearance of Jim Beauchamp's granddaughter, carrying the child fathered by Roth Edmonds, "the old biblical notion of the sins of the father comes full circle."[15]

With "Delta Autumn" Faulkner makes his point: *miscegenation*, like Original Sin, continues. Escape from the ancestral curse is impossible as long as life is perpetuated. Since this is quite evident with this story, the reader wonders why the book does not end here, and may well view the title piece, "Go Down, Moses", as somewhat anticlimatic.

Critics have interpreted the last story as Faulkner's attempt to contrast the agrarian lifestyle of the South to the money-oriented lifestyle of the North. Some go as far as to state that Samuel Beauchamp, Lucas' grandson and the antihero of the story, comes to his tragic end because he has been "'getting rich too fast'; he has moved too quickly from the agrarian life of the plantation to the money-oriented life of the Chicago underworld."[16] Or yet again that: "it is the North and the modern world breaking down the old structures that [is] responsible for his fall."[17] All such criticism fails to recognize the larger view. Faulkner does more than juxtapose the polarized lifestyles of North and South; he hammers home his central theme: the McCaslin curse runs from generation to generation, is visited upon all the offspring; escaping to the North, trying to shed one's identity - as the opening description of Samuel so vividly illustrates - will not save one. Indeed, for Jim and Samuel both, running to the North to escape the McCaslin curse is somewhat like Oedipus fleeing to Thebes.

Looking at the tragic picture of Samuel, the viewer may experience the sense of having travelled a long way from what Walter Taylor calls the "hard laughing" of "Was", in the year 1859, to the hard crying of Molly in 1941.[18] Yet, we end exactly where we began, in the physical and the ungeographic South from which its inhabitants cannot escape. In Samuel, as in Etienne and Joe, we have another instance of the "bad seed" coming to a bad end: like his predecessors, Samuel is prone to violence. At nineteen he quit the country for the town, where he "spent a year in and out of jail for gambling and fighting, to come at last under the serious indictment for breaking and entering a store" (p. 372). The indictment is serious because he strikes down an officer when caught red-handed. When he breaks out of

jail, the narrator gives his own verdict: "... a youth not yet twenty-one, with something in him from the father who begot and deserted him and who was now in the State Penitentiary for manslaughter - some seed not only violent but dangerous and bad" (p. 372). Clearly, Samuel is the victim of his heritage, of his genes. Yet, focusing on Molly's plaintive chant over her grandson's body, Jehlen cites and interprets the above mentioned passage as follows:

> Samuel's ideas are bad because he is bad and he is bad because he was born so, with "something in him from the father who begot and deserted him and who was now in the State Penitentiary for manslaughter - some seed not only violent but dangerous and bad." Nothing there to reflect on anyone. The matter should be settled, but Molly's accusation of the white South is so powerful (so telling?) that it frightens even unflappable Gavin.[19]

It is true that Molly's accusation is powerful, as she repeats over and over again: "Roth Edmonds sold my Benjamin. Sold him to Pharoah. Sold him to Pharoah and now he dead" (p. 380). But it is beyond the comprehension of this reader how anyone could conclude, after reading Samuel's story, and the book as a whole, that there is "nothing there to reflect on anyone." Jehlen obviously loses sight of the nature of the McCaslin curse. The father who begot and deserted Samuel was himself first begotten and abandoned when Carothers McCaslin summons his own daughter, Tomasina, to his house and got "a child on her and then dismissed her because she was of an inferior race" (p. 294). And as with Original Sin, all who come in the wake of this old man are guilty simply by being, all are equally damned.

Conclusion

Let us juxtapose the final photographs from these albums, the family portraits, as it were. First, we have Thomas Sutpen and his progeny. In the foreground is Sutpen himself: large, so large that some would say heroic. In his expressionless composure, there is power - so much power that "anyone could look at him and say, Given the occasion and the need, this man can and will do anything." For he is like the experienced explorer, the one who endured the "normal hardship of the pursuit" as well as "the added and unforeseen handicap of the fever", to emerge alone, solitary, determined "to gain and keep to enjoy it the material prize for which he accepted the original gambit." Yes, that is what we see most in his face: determination. His eyes are so fixed on his dream that he can see none of the faces of the children he sired, the children now surrounding him. But perhaps it is just as well. For if Sutpen did avert his eyes momentarily, did look with parental affection at his 'acceptable' offspring: Judith and Henry, he would find them mere "illusions", replicas, cold, expressionless, "marblelike". And should he break free of the racist taboo long enough to look across to his black offspring, he would find only Charles Bon looking back at him with anguish and yearning on his face. The others, Clytie, Etienne and Jim, seem totally indifferent: Clytie, wearing servant dress, wearing too that "marblelike" expression, Clytie watchful yet serene - her charge, Etienne, poised in an attitude of violent attack; and Jim, oblivious to all, yet with his mouth open in a howl. Looking over to the McCaslin portrait, we find similarities: In the foreground, towering above them all, is the haughty founding father, old Carothers McCaslin. Stretching from either side of him is his accursed brood. On one side we find his twin sons Buck and Buddy, his grandson Ike,

his daughter's son Cass, along with Zack and Roth Edmonds; on the other side we discover the Negroes, led by Tomey's Turl and stretching way into the shadows of the photograph. Unlike Sutpen's progeny, some of McCaslin's descendants cast flattering glances on him, and Lucas, bearing a striking resemblance to the old man, regards him with pride. But from the other side Ike looks at old Carothers with open scorn and disgust on his face.

On studying these family portraits, the viewer comes to three conclusions: one, a divided house cannot stand; two, there is at once so real and so spurious a division here that it appears ridiculously absurd; three, miscegenation is a sin.

The first conclusion we draw seems an obvious cliche. Yet, the loud dissonance that reaches its climax in the howling of Jim Bond, or the wailing of Molly Beauchamp; the charred ruins of Sutpen's Hundred or the cursed big house of the McCaslins - all bear witness to the destructiveness - the inevitable collapse of divided households.

We find the dichotomy paradoxical. Clytie, for instance, is so much a part of the Sutpen household that it is quite inconceivable to think of her outside that setting. Yet we are called upon to see her above or beyond the Sutpens, presiding over the fate of her father-master. Molly Beauchamp, while not of McCaslin blood, is married to Carothers McCaslin's Negro grandson, and serves as the surrogate wife and mother to Zack and Roth Edmonds. But Molly's relationship to the Edmonds does not offer the best example of the close cohabitation of black and white, the organic relationship Cash speaks of in _The Mind of the South_. The relationships of Lucas and Zack, Henry and Roth prove excellent examples. The curse, we are told repeatedly, is responsible for the division, for the tragedy.

The curse, the sin, is miscegenation. It eats away at the foundation of these dynasties, it is what causes fathers to deny children, and the existence of a bond so strong that only death will sever it. We come to accept miscegenation as resulting in a curse. It is difficult not to, when it seems synonymous with a wild, disgusting lust, and is yoked to greed and incest. So inextricably tied is miscegenation to ownership of the land and incest, that it becomes almost impossible to discuss it in isolation.[1]

Thinking of the curse of the Sutpens and the McCaslins, one thinks of all three offences, and this often leads to thoughts of the guilt of the founding fathers. Malcolm Cowley writes of the planters: "They had the virtue of living single-mindedly by a fixed code; but there was also an inherent guilt in their "design", their way of life, that put a curse on the land and brought about the Civil War."[2] In the case of Sutpen and McCaslin this "inherent guilt" is questionable.[3] What is important here, however, is the yoking of miscegenation to undeniable wrong-doing and labelling it a sin. For if Faulkner reaches any culminating point with Go Down, Moses, it is to announce that miscegenation is a sin - one which, together with ownership of land and people, brought about the McCaslin curse. And insofar as the McCaslin saga is a "chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South", the centrality of miscegenation to the Southern problem is immediately obvious.

But why exactly is miscegenation a sin? To the best of my knowledge, no one has asked the question outright. Rather, critics are almost beside themselves with curiosity as to what miscegenation means, or to know what goes on in the white Southerner's mind to evoke such a negative response to the Negro. There is a fine distinction to be made between miscegenation as

sin because the offspring of miscegenetic couplings are denied full parental and social acceptance, and so fathering such children is a sin, and miscegenation as sin simply because white consorts with Negro. Where exactly does Faulkner stand in relationship to this distinction? We do not know. For his voice cannot be heard above the voices of his personas, and it has already been stated that it would be folly to equate him with any one of his narrators - regardless of how sympathetic they may be, or how much they focus on the wrong-doing of the white man.

But regardless of what his thoughts were on the subject, we do know that Faulkner was preoccupied with miscegenation. Over and over he returned to the theme, and so, apart from the two novels discussed here, there are characters of mixed blood scattered throughout the Yoknapatawpha saga - the most famous being Joe Christmas of Light in August. Audrey Vinson, in her essay "Miscegenation and Its Meaning in Go Down, Moses," concludes with what seems an interesting observation:

> Miscegenation for Faulkner was apparently too volatile, too close to ultimate truth about humanity to approach directly. He defined it in many extensions of its usual meaning with deliberate semantic intention. Through irony and other linguistic devices, he arrives at complex meanings which are illuminating.[4]

The only problem here is that the illumination Vinson speaks of (she focuses the bulk of her discussion on ritualistic participation as an extension of miscegenation), only shows that Faulkner repeatedly avoided making any direct or conclusive statement on the issue. Hence, for all the flow of rhetoric we remain forever afloat on the surface, lacking the necessary diving gear to take us down to Faulkner's subterraneous habitat.

Outside the novels, we occasionally hear him speak of the Negro. The most notable occasion being the Nobel Prize address: "... the will of man

to prevail will even take the nether channel of the black man, black race, before it will relinquish, succumb, be defeated." One cannot help but wish the writer had phrased that differently, for as it stands, it does seem to suggest that the black man, black race, is being held in reserve, somewhat like an army regiment which will only be called out as a last resort. But that Faulkner should unhesitantly embrace the Negro without ambivalence, would, of course, be the most miraculous, un-Southern feat imaginable. Everything in the society which nurtured him said the Negro was inherently inferior to the white man. Faulkner's grandfather owned slaves and fought in the Civil War, something which he never hesitated to mention in his public addresses on the Southern way of life. His advice to Negroes actively seeking civil rights in the postbellum South shows just how aware Faulkner was of the white Southerner's deep-rooted belief in the inferiority of the Negro. He advised Civil rights leaders to "Go slow".

> Go slow now. Stop now for a time, a moment. You have the power now; you can afford to withhold for a moment the use of it as a force. You have done a good job, you have jolted your opponent off-balance and he is now vulnerable. But stop there for a moment; dont give him the advantage of a chance to cloud the issue by that purely automatic sympathy for the underdog simply he is under ... You have shown the Southerner what you can do and what you will do if necessary; give him a space in which to get his breath and assimilate that knowledge; to look about and see that (1) Nobody is going to force integration on him from the outside; (2) That he himself faces an obsolescence in his own land which only he can cure; a moral condition which not only must be cured but a physical condition which has got to be cured if he, the white Southerner, is to have any peace, is not to be faced with another legal process or maneuver every year, year after year, for the rest of his life.[5]

Faulkner constantly advocated time and persistence - what he called "a course of inflexible and unviolent flexibility". This, he said, speaking as a Negro

> ... is the course I would advise the leaders of my race to follow: to send every day to the white school to which he was entitled by his ability and capacity to go, a student of my race, fresh and cleanly dressed, courteous, without threat or violence, to seek admission; when he was refused I would forget about him as an individual, but tomorrow I would send another one, still fresh and clean and courteous, to be refused in his turn, until at last the white man himself must recognize that there will be no peace for him until he himself has solved the dilemma.[6]

In his essay "Faulkner and Desegregation", James Baldwin concludes: "The time Faulkner asks for does not exist ... There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation. The challenge is in the moment, the time is always now."[7] One can also add that Faulkner asks too much of both the black and white Southerner with his advice to "Go slow": of the black man he asks that he continue to tolerate social inequality for an indefinite period in order to give the white man time to adjust to the idea that he is entitled to civil rights; of the white he asks that he realize that "nobody is going to force integration on him from the outside ... that he faces the knowledge "that he himself faces an obsolescence in his own land". But the white Southerner, insofar as he is also an American, has always faced an obsolescence in his own land, the knowledge of which he has managed to live with quite complacently. Without being forced to change, there is nothing in the Southerner's make-up that would propel him to change of his own accord. Did Faulkner forget, for a moment, the tenacity of the Southerner's psyche? "The seething and anonymous miasmal mass which in all the years of time has taught itself no boon of death"? One cannot help but give a hearing to James Baldwin when he argues against Faulkner's 'middle of the road':

> ... it is easy enough to state flatly that Faulkner's middle of the road does not - cannot - exist and that he is guilty of great emotional and intellectual dishonesty

> in pretending that it does. I think this is why he clings to his fantasy. It is easy enough to accuse him of hypocrisy when he speaks of man being "indestructible because of his simple will to freedom." But he is not being hypocritical; he means it. It is only that Man is one thing - a rather unlucky abstraction in this case - and the Negroes he has always known, so fatally tied up in his mind with his grandfather's slaves, are quite another....[8]

Yes, there is nothing in the novels to suggest otherwise. For Faulkner, the Negro came, not of African kings, but of African slaves. That was his social reality. When we agree with Genovese that one race cannot enslave another without feeling superior, we are also saying that any member of the slaveholding class, regardless of how sympathetic he is to the Negro's plight, or how disgusted he is by his grandfather's way of life, we are saying that any such individual, suckled by the South, in love with the South, must, on some level, however deep or however unconscious, share that sense of white supremacy.

Understandably: Faulkner being a Southerner, a moralist, a man of remarkable sensibility, must have experienced some of the keen anguish which he so brilliantly captures in his most tormented characters. And even as those characters evoke our sympathy, if not our complete understanding, so too should the man behind the characters. Ultimately, black readers among his audience should be grateful to him for his art, for the moral richness of a Dilsey, or the dignity of a Lucas, the comic 'devilment' of a Luster. ... Grateful too that he showed, perhaps despite himself and his society, the absurdity as well as the tragedy of a Southern racial fastidiousness. And if the complete meaning of miscegenation forever escapes us, we do know this much: miscegenation in Yoknapatawpha best encapsulates the white Southerner's denial of the Negro, his inability to embrace the black man as, first and foremost, a man, a fellow human being with which to share

both the famine and the harvest of nature, the battles and the victories, the fellowship of humanity because Negro, like Caucasian, is man.

Notes

Introduction

[1] W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1954), p. 94.

[2] Cash, p. 62.

[3] Cash, p. 62.

[4] William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (New York: Vintage Books, 1934), p. 86.

[5] William Faulkner, "The Nobel Prize Address", printed in Willian Faulkner: Essays, Speeches & Public Letters (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 56.

[6] Cash, p. 42.

[7] Cash, p. 62. Also, the sketch of the poor white, in the person of Thomas Sutpen's father in Absalom, Absalom!, offers an example of this kind of behaviour. For he seems to exist in a "fog of alcohol and nigger-beating and scheming to avoid work." p. 241.

[8] Cash, p. 51.

[9] Cash, p. 54.

[10] See Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Vintage Books, 1936), p. 232 - the sketch of "the monkey nigger" at the Tidewater mansion who turns the young Thomas Sutpen away from the front door.

[11] Eugene D. Genovese, The World the Slaveholders Made (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 105.

[12] Genovese, p. 109.

[13] Cash, p. 45

Notes

Introduction

[14]Genovese, p. 160. Genovese argues, on page 128, that George Fitzhugh was "not a typical figure [that] his argument, considered as a theoretical system, did not sweep the South." Yet he acknowledges that De Row observed that Fitzhugh was, in 1857, the South's "only active working advocate" - one whose doctrine of slavery was "adopted by many." And since Genovese himself acknowledges that Fitzhugh's "thought held a central place in the development of the ideology of the master class", it would be more accurate, and less contradictory, to say that Fitzhugh was a leader, a spokesman for his class.

[15]In his prologue to The American Adam, R.W.B. Lewis writes:

> "The new habits to be engendered on the new American scene were suggested by the image of a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race .... The world and history lay all before him. And he was the type of creator, the poet par excellence, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him. All this and more were contained in the image of the American as Adam."

Just how un-American the Southerner appeared is readily apparent.

[16]Genovese, p. 161.

[17]Cash, p. 94.

[18]Cash, p. 2.

[19]Absalom, Absalom!, p. 139.

[20]See Absalom, Absalom!, p. 230 - the confrontation between the Sutpens and the Negroes.

[21]Bernard De Voto, "Witchcraft in Mississippi" in William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 201.

[22]De Voto, p. 202.

Notes

The Sutpen Family Album

[1]Melvin Seiden, "Faulkner's Ambiguous Negro," The Massachusetts Review, 1963, 4:675-690.

[2]De Voto, "Witchcraft in Mississippi," p. 203.

[3]The varying points of views in no way undermine the concept of a Southern sensibility argued in the introduction. For even though Miss Rosa is the vehement racist here, we must remember that the Compsons are of the slaveholding class, and 'nigger' is as much a part of their perception and vocabulary as it is of Miss Rosa's.

[4]Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 290. Brooks questions whether Sutpen is representative of the Southern planter: "Are his values and attitudes toward life consonant with those of the Compsons and the McCaslins, the De Spains and the other planter families, or are they different? The novel makes plain that Sutpen's plantation neighbors sense that he is a different sort of person from themselves." The main tenet of Professor Brooks' argument appears to be that Sutpen is too abstract to be considered a typical Southerner - too preoccupied with his design. He writes that: "Though Thomas Sutpen is fixated on the details of Southern planter society, a doctrinaire fixation of this sort has a very wide general reference. In fact, it is a characteristically "American" aberration." (p. 299). The point is this: though the Sutpen story may be read as emblematic of American innocence, Thomas Sutpen is, first and foremost, representative of the Southern backcountryman grown prosperous. His fixation with his design in no way negates this fact.

[5]Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 427.

[6]That Sutpen should entertain "scum and riffraff" as well as "gentlefolks" does not in itself prove that he was a different sort of planter. Showing how fluid the social boundaries were at the time, Cash informs us: "Fully three-quarters of the planters were accustomed to having their farmer neighbors and cousins at their boards now and then; nor was it any rare thing for a great man with political ambitions to seize on a dozen crackers at a camp-meeting or a party rally and bear them off to his home to sleep on his best beds and make merry with his best liquor ...." (p. 53)

Notes

The Sutpen Family Album

[7]Brooks, Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond, p. 290.

[8]Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 105.

[9]Lynn Gartrell Levins, Faulkner's Heroic Design (Athens: The University of Georgia, 1976), p. 25.

[10]De Voto, "Witchcraft in Mississippi," p. 200. De Voto applies the conflict the reader finds in the portrait of Charles Bon to the overall theme of the novel: "That theme is hardly reducible to words, and certainly has not been reduced to words by Mr. Faulkner. It is beyond the boundary of explanation: some undimensional identity of fear and lust in which a man is both black and white, yet neither, loathing both, rushing to embrace both with some super-Tolstoian ecstasy of abasement, fulfillment, and expiation."

[11]Levins, p. 30.

[12]In his essay "History and the Sense of the Tragic: Absalom, Absalom!", Cleanth Brooks argues that Clytie is accepted, by Sutpen, as his daughter: "After Sutpen has returned from the war, Clytie sits in the same room with Judith and Rosa and Sutpen and listens each evening to the sound of Sutpen's voice. When Sutpen proposes to Rosa, he begins, "'Judith, you and Clytie — ' and ceased, still entering, then said, 'No, never mind. Rosa will not mind if you both hear it too, since we are short for time.'" Clytie is accepted naturally as part of the "we." She can be so accepted because acceptance on this level does not imperil Sutpen's "design." The last sentence here seems to contradict Brooks' argument - that Clytie is accepted as Sutpen's daughter without any regard to color. If this was indeed the case, one would not have to speak in terms of 'levels' of acceptance.

[13]Thadious M. Davis, "The Yoking of "Abstract Contradictions": Clytie's meaning in Absalom, Absalom!", Studies in American Fiction, p. 218.

[14]Backman, p. 109.

Notes

The Sutpen Family Album

[15] Elizabeth M. Kerr, William Faulkner's Gothic Domain (London: National University, 1979), p. 35.

[16] Davis, p. 212.

[17] While the perpetuation of emotional child abuse is most evident in the repudiation of Negro progeny by the white sire, the father-son estrangement, there is also the suggestion that mothers, as well as fathers, are guilty of emotional child abuse, and that it is perpetuated from one generation to the next. In the generous flow of Faulknerianism below, notice how the mother-son relationship between Bon and his mother is made representative of all mother-child relationships:

> "... he took it for granted that all kids didn't have fathers too and that getting snatched every day or so from whatever harmless pursuit in which you were not bothering anybody or even thinking about them, by someone because that someone was bigger than you, stronger than you, and being held for a minute or five minutes under a kind of busted water pipe of incomprehensible fury and fierce yearning and vindictiveness and jealous rage was part of childhood which all mother of children had received in turn from their mothers and from their mothers in turn from that Porto Rico (sic) or Haiti or wherever it was we all came from but none of us ever lived in." (p. 298)

Notes

The McCaslin Family Album

[1]David Minter, William Faulkner his life and Work (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 186.

[2]Cleanth Brooks, Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond, p. 252.

[3]Comparing the narrative form of Absalom, Absalom! and Go Down, Moses, David Minter states: "If Absalom, Absalom! may be said to be Faulkner's paradigm of a teller's relations to his tale, Go Down, Moses may be said to be his paradigm of a reader's relations to his text." (p. 188)

[4]Myra Jehlen, Class and Character in Faulkner's South (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 122.

[5]Contrary to Genovese's analysis that Southern planters found it difficult to "accept the idea that the cash nexus offered a permissible basis for human relations," in Faulkner's work, the reader finds a pattern of cash settlements being made on the emotional and moral debts of white Southerners to Negroes. For example, Roth Edmonds, like his great-great-grandfather, settles his account with his child's mother with money. Moreover, he does not do so himself, but has Isaac make the delivery. But the woman, Jim Beauchamp's granddaughter, says it all when she glances indifferently at the banknotes and declares: "That's just money." (p. 358). Also see the first chapter of Intruder in the Dust.

[6]Minter, p. 188.

[7]Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years, p. 161.

[8]Jehlen, p. 122.

[9]William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 424.

[10]Richard Adams, Faulkner: Myth and Motion (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 145.

[11]Something should be said about racial segregation as it appears in Go Down, Moses. In this context, segretation has nothing to do with external laws imposed on the characters, but rather, it comes from within

Notes

The McCaslin Family Album

the characters themselves. We have already observed that plantation life, ironically enough, favored desegregation. Malcolm Cowley, when he focuses on the relationship between black and white in the South, cites Frederic Law Olmsted as an example of the surprised Northerner who did not understand - to employ Olmsted's own words: "the close cohabitation and association of black and white [where] Negro women are carrying black and white babies together in their arms; black and white children are playing together ... black and white faces are constantly thrust together out of the doors, to see the train go by." The young Lucas and Zack, offer an example of this close cohabitation. And it is not until maturity, not until 'the curse' of the ancestor descends, that a break in the relationship is experienced. A pattern of innocent, happy youth versus experienced, tormented adulthood, takes shape when the relationship of Henry and Roth, the sons of Lucas and Zack respectively, emulate the relationship of their fathers. They ride horses and mules, hunt and fish, peacefully coexist until the curse of old Carothers is visited upon Roth. We learn that:

> ... one day the old curse of his fathers, the old haughty ancestral pride based not on any value but on an accident of geography, stemmed not from courage and honor but from wrong and shame, descended to him. He did not recognize it then. He and his foster-brother, Henry, were seven years old. They had finished supper at Henry's house and Molly was just sending them to bed in the room across the hall where they slept when there, when suddenly he said, "I'm going home." (p. 111)

Roth does not understand his behaviour as he leaves the Beauchamp household and makes his way back to his own house with Henry, equally unaware of what has descended upon his foster-brother, innocently tripping after him. Nor do they understand as they enter the Edmonds house and go up to the bedroom where they slept together on the pallet when spending the night there, no more than they understand when Roth refuses to sleep with Henry on the pallet, but sleeps alone in the bed. But after this incident:

> They never slept in the same room again and never again ate at the same table because [Roth] admitted to himself it was shame now and he did not go to Henry's house and for a month he only saw Hnery at a distance, with Lucas in the field ... Then one day he knew it was grief and was ready to admit it was shame also, wanted to admit it only it was too late then, forever and forever too late. (p. 112)

Notes

The McCaslin Family Album

As in the case of Lucas and Zack, the break in the friendship of Henry and Roth is shown as the direct result of the curse brought about by the sin of the ancestor. Old Carothers' wrong-doing is now elevated to the level of Original Sin, of which all are guilty. Shame, grief, a poignant anguish, are like ugly birth marks scarring the McCaslin off-spring, causing a deformity of spirit, one which results in isolation. Racial segregation now becomes little more than an expression of this isolation.

[12] In the first part of "Pantaloon in Black" the narrative eye is fixed on Rider. (Mourning his wife's death), we find the Negro isolated with his grief, desperately seeking relief in work and whiskey without success. As thoughts of his beloved Mannie cut into his psyche, and the temporary balm of alcohol numbs his senses, Rider makes his way to a dice game. Banging on the door for admittance, he eerily announces to the players: "Open hit. Hit's me. Ah'm snakebit and bound to die." Rider is indeed suffering from a wound as pernicious as a snakebite; moreover, when he enters the room and we immediately learn that, among the gamblers is the white night-watchman "with the heavy pistol in his hip pocket," we sense trouble quivering in the air and almost glimpse pale phantom Death waiting in the wing. Sure enough, one page later, the white man reaches for the pistol as Rider aggressively tries to get into the game. And Death, no longer pale or hovering, descends with the dexterity of succinct violence.

The reader, long moved to sympathy for this snakebitten widower, by the poignancy of his grief, is suddenly faced with the ignorance of the sheriff's deputy:

> "Them damn niggers," [the deputy reflects on Rider's behaviour] "I swear to godfrey, it's a wonder we have as little trouble with them as we do. Because why? Because they aint human. They look like a man and they walk on their hind legs like a man, and they can talk and you can understand them and you think they are understanding you, at least now and then. But when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might just as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes" (p. 154).

The deputy goes on to elucidate the Negro's lack of "normal human feelings and sentiments" by relating Rider's behaviour at Mannie's funeral, and directly afterwards, to his wife. But in the process of his narration he reveals nothing so much as his own lack of perception and sensitivity to Rider's obvious, if unique, expressions of grief:

Notes

The McCaslin Family Album

> "His wife dies on him. All right. But does he grieve? He's the biggest and busiest man at the funeral. Grabs a shovel before they even got the box into the grave they tell me, and starts throwing dirt onto her faster than a slip scraper could maybe have done it. But that's all right ... maybe that's how he felt about her. ... But here the next day he's the first man back at work except the fireman, getting back to the mill before the fireman had his fire going, let alone steam up. ... So he comes to work, the first man on the job, when McAndrews and everybody else expected him to take the day off since even a nigger couldn't want no better excuse for a holiday than he had just buried his wife, when a white man would have took the day off out of pure respect no matter how he felt about his wife. ... But not him" (p. 156).

To the end Rider is isolated with his grief and his actions misconstrued by the white community. In jail for the murder of the watchman, Rider tries to break out - not because he wants to escape the consequences of the crime, but because his anguish over Mannie seems to be less poignant in the open air. Ripping off the cell door, "bricks hinges and all", Rider "walks out of the cell toting the door over his head like it was a gauze window-screen, hollering, "It's awright. It's awright. Ah aint trying to git away." As he is seized, he continues to insist: "Ah aint trying to git out. Ah aint tryin to git out." His cries, his anguish, fall not on deaf, but on befuddled ears.

[13] Warren Beck, Faulkner (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), p. 377.

[14] Minter, p. 189.

[15] Levins, Faulkner's Heroic Design, p. 85.

[16] Adams, p. 154.

[17] Jehlen, p. 118.

[18] Walter Taylor, "The Double Perspective of Faulkner's 'Was'", Southern Humanities Review, 1970, 3:11-14.

[19] Jehlen, p. 63.

Notes

Conclusion

[1] There is only an allusion to the lust of old McCaslin, and nothing about lust is mentioned in the instance of Sutpen and his slave. The sexual passion which must have driven these men to consort with black women is totally absent from Faulkner's work. Yet we can assume that such a passion was a reality - a hard reality - one which the white man, imbued with racism, could not face. In Mind of the South Cash makes an interesting observation about the Negress and miscegenation:

> Torn from her tribal restraints and taught an easy complaisance for commercial reasons, she was to be had for the taking. Boys on and about the plantation inevitably learned to use her, and having acquired the habit, often continued it into manhood and even after marriage. For she was natural, and could give herself up to passion in a way impossible to wives inhibited by Puritanical training. And efforts to build up a taboo against miscegenation made little real progress. (p. 95)

If the reader seriously considers Cash's commentary, and thinks of the Negro as emblematic of man's bond to the earth, then one must conclude that it is no simple matter of depraved lust that drives the white man to the Negress, but the involuntary haul of an elemental bond. This is a dimension that is absent from the treatment of miscegenation in both Absalom, Absalom! and Go Down, Moses.

[2] Malcolm Cowley, The Portable William Faulkner (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. xx.

[3] Genovese may well have had the Sutpens and McCaslins in mind when he accuses Cash of being largely responsible for "the spread of guiltomania" among historians studying Southern planters:

> If some historians choose to be impressed by the evidence that some planters, accepting the moral standards of bourgeois society, felt guilty about slavery, others may be permitted to be impressed by how many did not, for their failure to display a sense of guilt demonstrates just how far they had advanced toward alternative notions of morality and social order. Unmistakable evidence of guilt feelings exists, but it does get rarer as we approach 1861, for, as we might expect, the victory of the proslavery forces on the ideological plane had to manifest itself psychologically (p. 146).

Notes

Conclusion

[4]Audrey Vinson, "Miscegenation and Its Meaning in Go Down, Moses," CLA Journal (14:143-155, 1970), p. 155.

[5]William Faulkner, Essays & Public Letters, ed. James Meriwether (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 107.

[6]Faulkner, Essays & Public Letters, "A Letter to the Leaders in the Negro Race" was originally published as "If I Were a Negro," p. 110.

[7]James Baldwin, "Faulkner & Desegregation," Partisan Review (23:568-573, Fall, 1956), p. 573.

[8]James Baldwin, p. 570.

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