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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by James Hayes Clemmer, Jr. entitled "William Faulkner and the Southern Gentleman." I recommend that it be accepted for nine quarter hours of credit in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Richard Beale Davis
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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WILLIAM FAULKNER AND THE SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
The University of Tennessee

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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by
James Hayes Clemmer, Jr.
June 1963

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PREFACE

In The Gentleman in America Edwin H. Cady suggests that "accurate criticism of certain interesting American authors depends upon a full reading of books which cannot be understood without a clear grasp of the Gentlemanly configuration."[1] William Faulkner is one of these authors. Faulkner uses the natural conflict between differing concepts of gentility, and especially Southern gentility, to dramatic advantage in creating his characters. The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of this conflict in three of Faulkner's major figures: Thomas Sutpen, Isaac McCaslin, and Gavin Stevens.

The concept of the "Gentleman" is extremely complex; Faulkner's novels are themselves extremely complex; and it would be absurd to hope that the mating of two complexities will result in a study that is simple. To achieve some measure of simplicity, however, I have ignored, where possible, the temptation to qualify my findings. Qualification, once begun, could easily balloon into ninety percent of the paper.

I would like to thank Professor Richard Beale Davis, who inspired and directed this project, and Professors Durant

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[1]Edwin H. Cady, The Gentleman in America (Syracuse, 1949), p. 1.

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da Ponte and Bain T. Stewart, who kindly served as my second and third readers.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Few Faulkner critics have failed to mention, in one way or another, the influence of the South and its peculiarities upon Faulkner's work. Their comments have varied from curt, one-sentence ejaculations such as Edith Hamilton's remark that Faulkner writes of "ugly people in an ugly land"[1] to fairly full and objective treatments, as exemplified by Allen Tate's conclusion that Faulkner is a "traditionalist"--a writer who "takes the South as he knows it today or can find out about it in the past, and who sees it as a region with some special characteristics but otherwise offering as an imaginative subject the plight of human beings as it has been and will doubtless continue to be, here and in other parts of the world."[2]

The early adamant hostility of some critics to Faulkner's subject matter is well illustrated by Louis Kronenberger's review of The Unvanquished, in which he states: "The twisted heritage which the Confederate South bestowed upon its descendants is something few of them have renounced.

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[1]Edith Hamilton, "Faulkner: Sorrower or Slave?" Saturday Review of Literature, XXXV (July 12, 1952), 8.

[2]Allen Tate, "The New Provincialism," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXI (1945), 262.

. . .it has got into their blood, and all that their weakened minds can do is to resort to a rather vague, rueful, and inadequate irony. . . ."[3] Among the more sympathetic critics of Faulkner's work and his fictional world has been Malcolm Cowley, who says, ". . .his work has become a myth or legend of the South. . . . I call it a legend because it is obviously no more intended as a historical account of the country south of the Ohio than The Scarlet Letter is intended as a history of Massachusetts or Paradise Lost as a factual description of the Fall."[4]

More typical than either clearly hostile or clearly sympathetic remarks, however, have been the many casual comments upon Faulkner's regional subject matter made by critics who touch upon it in passing to other areas of criticism. Irving Howe says that one need not "take at face value or even give substantial credence to the claims of the Southern myth. . .in order to acknowledge the powerful uses to which it can be put by a sympathetic imagination."[5]

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[3]Louis Kronenberger, Review of The Unvanquished, Nation, CXLVII (April 13, 1940), 481-82.

[4]Malcolm Cowley, "William Faulkner's Legend of the South," Sewanee Review, LIII (1945), 348.

[5]Irving Howe, "The Southern Myth and William Faulkner," American Quarterly, III (1951), 361.

Aside from their personal and differing biases, however, there is almost universal agreement among critics that there is at the heart of Faulkner's work a concern with the decline of the old Southern order, and that Faulkner has developed this partly mythological and partly historical order into a fictional systhesis which is wholly his own. Beginning with George M. O'Donnell's article entitled "Faulkner's Mythology," published in 1939,[6] various writers have taken some of the moral, religious, sociological, and historical elements of the Yoknapatawpha novels to task. But none, so far as this writer knows, has attempted to treat Faulkner's work from the standpoint of the historical concept of the Gentleman, and especially of the Southern Gentleman. Writing in 1945, John M. Maclachlan said: "It is and will. . .remain a mystery that so many critics could have written so many words about the Jefferson novels without commenting upon the emotional attitude towards the older gentry, amounting almost to reverence, that burns in them."[7]

The fact that criticism of Faulkner in terms of the concept of the Gentleman has been largely avoided is, however, understandable. Crossing as it does historical, sociological,

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[6]George M. O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," Kenyon Review, I (1939), 285-89.

[7]John M. Maclachlan, "William Faulkner and the Southern Folk," Southern Folklore Quarterly, IX (1945), 157.

and religious lines (and touching as it does psychological and philosophical concerns), the concept tends in the direction of intangibility and obscurity. The difficulties of working with the concept are amply attested to by the fact that there have been so few attempts to fathom it within the limits of scholarly writing, and that those attempts which have been made have proved to be, at best, only marginally definitive. This is particularly true with regard to the concept of the Southern Gentleman, which has not been exposed to anything approaching full treatment. For these reasons it has been necessary to include in the present paper a chapter dealing cursorily with some of the main themes which have been characteristic of the gentleman concept in general and the Southern concept in particular.

In subsequent chapters I apply these themes in evaluating three of Faulkner's more controversial characters. The resulting interpretations amount, in some cases, to new readings of the novels in which these characters appear. Generally, however, approaching Faulkner from the standpoint of the gentlemanly tradition should help to elucidate not only Faulkner's men, but the concept of the Southern Gentleman as well. Although Faulkner adapted his Southern environment and heritage to suit his own artistic needs, one cannot doubt that in addition to conveying universal truths his novels convey some truths about the South--and about

Southerners. The purpose of this study, accordingly, is to demonstrate that Faulkner's pre-Snopesian male characters, taken together, constitute a broad concept of the Southern Gentleman. This concept is centered in the gentlemanly criterion of excellence.

It is hard to deal with two variables without the steadying support of a constant factor, but at the risk of attaining merely a weak relativism in this study I have tried to deal both with the concept of the Southern Gentleman and with Faulkner's characters as variables. Not enough time has passed since the Civil War for the idea of the Southern Gentleman to reach the state of crystallization which now belongs, say, to the Renaissance Gentleman or the Gentleman of the Enlightenment; and, as for Faulkner's characters, they are being reinterpreted every day. This project has consequently entailed much "give and take," and I must invite the reader to approach this paper with the same spirit of involvement.

Certain basic propositions have, however, been reached during the course of this study, and it is upon the assumed validity of these propositions that the validity of the entire paper must rest. The argument presented in the following chapters involves, in brief, the following assumptions: (1) that the concept of the Southern Gentleman is a lineal descendant of previous concepts of the Gentleman found in the history of Western Civilization, (2) that the concept of the

Southern Gentleman differs from these prior concepts in that the autonomous Southern culture from which it sprang never arrived at the state of fruition which more stable and longer-lived historical cultures achieved; thus it is more legendary in character than many of these earlier concepts, (3) that, therefore, the concept of the Southern Gentleman must be compared with these prior concepts in terms of the lowest common denominator of the historical traditions of gentility, namely, the ideal of excellence in men, (4) that there are two kinds of excellence in men: external excellence and internal excellence, and (5) that William Faulkner, by depicting in his novels Southern men who are exceptional (i. e., excellent) in external ways and men who are exceptional in internal ways, has made implicit in his work a concept of the Southern Gentleman.

CHAPTER II

THE SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN

In a book entitled Social Relations in Our Southern States, published in 1860, D. R. Hundley devotes a chapter to "The Southern Gentleman" in which he tries to draw the line very carefully between the distinctly Southern Gentleman and the "conventional" Gentleman:

> In our description of the Southern Gentleman . . . we wish the reader to understand from the beginning, that we intend to confine ourself to such a gentleman as is peculiarly the outgrowth of the institutions of the South. Of course there is at the South a conventional gentleman, as there is at the North, or in England, or on the continent of Europe: but he is [not] the Southern Gentleman [Hundley's italics] . . . . Although born in the Southern States, and never having been any where else, may be, he is yet simply a gentleman--the universally accredited gentleman of the civilized world.[1]

But the Gentleman which Hundley goes on to describe as "peculiarly Southern" resembles, in general and in detail, the Gentleman he calls "conventional"--he comes from good stock, he is usually possessed of a faultless physical development, he lives in the country, and he loves to hunt wild game. His major occupations are farming and politicking.

Although Hundley tried, as have other writers since his time, to dissociate the Southern Gentleman from the Gentleman of earlier times, it is significant that he felt

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[1] D. R. Hundley, Social Relations in Our Southern States (New York, 1860), p. 21.

compelled to relate his idea of the Southern Gentleman to it, even if in a negative way. One must have a general idea of what a "Gentleman" is before he can have any valid ideas of what a "Southern" Gentleman is, or was.

For purposes of brevity and clarity, it is convenient to discuss the historical or "conventional" concept of the Gentleman in terms of two basic aspects: the idea of the external gentleman, and the idea of the internal gentleman. The external gentleman is the behavioral gentleman, the man who is set apart from the general public by the excellence of his heritage, actions, wealth, and/or other visible characteristics. The interior gentleman, on the other hand, is the inner, invisible gentleman, the man whose private life and character raise him above the general level of the people. These two sides of the gentleman's nature are to be found side by side in almost all treatments of the gentleman concept since Castiglione's The Courtier, written in the middle of the Italian Renaissance. In this particular work the exterior and the interior gentleman are depicted as existing in a one-to-one relationship within the same ideally-drawn Aristotelian person. In Elizabethan England the ideal gentleman was compounded of equally important internal virtue and external decorum, as Spenser's Faery Queene illustrates, but during the Renaissance the emphasis gradually shifted from a concentration on decorum and courtly manner to an insistence

upon noble inner qualities of mind and character.[2] Then, in the Cavalier, we find a brief return to the ideal of Italian courtiership--the mating of unimpeachable virtue with visible valor, honor, and decorum.[3]

In the Enlightened Gentleman of the eighteenth century there was a further emphasis upon internal qualities, and the idea of the "natural" gentleman--the gentleman of merit, rather than birth, became popular. The equalitarian philosophy of Hobbes, the popular essays of Addison and Steele, and the writings of Fielding and Chesterfield all contributed to this relaxing of the external criterion of noble birth.[4] In the romanticism of nineteenth-century England there occurred a further compounding of gentlemanly ideals, which resulted in a new and broader emphasis on the internal gentleman.

The development and evolution of European and Continental concepts of the gentleman's nature provided, of course, the basis for an American concept of the Gentleman. From the Italian courtesy books came fundamentals of manner and

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[2]Ruth Kelso, The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century (University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. XIV. Urbana, 1929), p. 12.

[3]Esme Wingfield-Stratford, The Making of a Gentleman (London, 1938), p. 193.

[4]Cady, p. 9.

decorum; from the Renaissance came the diversity and variety of professionalism and mercantilism; from the Cavalier came the defiant spirit of rebellion and adventure which lent color especially to the idea of the Southern Gentleman; and from the eighteenth century came the rationalistic spirit which emerged in the gentlemen-founders of the American political system.

These various influences were mixed and mingled in America. In The Gentleman in America Cady discusses the general pattern of their effect on the American concept, and he breaks his findings down into six main ideas which he believes have formed the basis for the American Gentleman. Three of these ideas have to do with the exterior gentleman: the factors of birth, wealth, and role in society. Three others have more to do with the interior gentleman: character, courtesy, and cultivation. In separate chapters Cady discusses: the theocratic New England gentleman, as exemplified by John Winthrop, John Cotton, and Cotton Mather; the "fine" Chesterfieldian gentleman as opposed to the Richardsonian gentleman; the Natural gentleman as opposed to the Hereditary gentleman, with the contrary ideas of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as focal points; the Agrarian concept of the gentleman; the Holmesian emphasis upon urbanity and culture as opposed to the Emersonian-transcendentalist insistence upon democracy; and the gentleman as socialist.

A persistent theme running through all of these types is, again, the disjuncture between the external gentleman and the internal gentleman. In the New England theocracy strict religious standards led to an emphasis on the internal gentleman. Even though John Winthrop was most obviously a practical-minded businessman and a natural leader of his flock, even the most casual reading of the parts of his Journal which he wrote during the tempestuous passage to the New World on the Arabella reveals an inner spiritual concern which dominated his thought and action. The idea of the "fine" Chesterfieldian gentleman, as embodied in Chesterfield's Letters, was certainly concerned almost wholly with the external gentleman. Public image and social respectability were the important things to Chesterfield. In contrast, the sentimentally moralistic novels of Richardson encouraged adherence to a rigid set of values, which were to furnish an internal guide for an individual's behavior. These two aspects of the gentleman's make-up are readily apparent in the conflict between the natural gentleman and the hereditary gentleman. The hereditary gentleman gains distinction through the external factors of birth and wealth, while the natural gentleman gains and retains his status through a moral and internal distinction and excellence which allows him to assume a natural role of leadership, in some form or another. Again, all these types can be factored by

the quality of "excellence."

The concept of the Southern Gentleman does not, however, lend itself to the kind of compartmentilization Cady applies to the American Gentleman in general. Perhaps this is why Cady himself essentially ignores the Southern Gentleman. The concept of this Gentleman is not couched in terms of types of men. It is concerned, rather, with a symbol of a peculiar, meteor-like culture that was born, lived, and was destroyed all within a period of about fifty years--from the invention of the cotton gin until Appomattox. It was during this period that the remnants of the Old-World coastal aristocracy and the new planter aristocracy, along with yeoman farmers, poor white, and Negroes, came to feel themselves an autonomous cultural unit set apart from Yankeeland; and it was this awareness of the South as an entity that made possible the projection of A Southern Gentleman: a man who was the complete embodiment of the Old South. This Gentleman resembled the old Virginia Gentleman.

The idea of the South's autonomy was, however, illusory. The elements within it were too diverse, and the pressure brought to bear by the North was too great, and it fell before it had a chance to evolve into a true, seasoned culture. And when it fell it left in its wake, not a history of a Nation and a People, but a myth of a Nation and a People. It also left the myth of the Southern Gentleman, and because this

idea of the Gentleman was mythical, it moved into the twentieth century as a legendary stereotype. This stereotype of the old Virginia gentleman persisted and still persists in the popular imagination of Southerners and Northerners alike. There has been a movement on the part of some writers, however, toward what some critics call the "testing of the myth," particularly with regard to the concept of the Southern Gentleman. This "testing" has taken the form of gradual introspection, probing the makeup of the ante-bellum Southern culture and the ante-bellum man of excellence, or gentleman. There has been a new emphasis on the radically heterogeneous composition of the Old South, and on the correspondingly heterogeneous makeup of the South's best men.

For this reason the distinction between the internal and the external gentleman is readily applicable to the Southern Gentleman. One can see in Thomas Jefferson's thought a perpetual effort to link the natural, or self-made gentleman with the historical concept of the aristocratic gentleman, the man of hereditary distinction. The concept of the "Natural Aristoi" came to be his solution to the problem. In the many post-Civil War conjectures made about the Southern Gentleman's nature, there is a distinct dichotomy between those ideas which turn about external and those which turn about internal concerns. Up until 1941, when W. J. Cash published his monumental <u>The Mind of the South</u>, most comments made about the

Southern Gentleman were about the external gentleman, as he existed in history and legend. D. R. Hundley listed external criteria which the Southern Gentleman always met. These included the factors of birth, physical appearance, his "family and friends--his negroes, horses, dogs, and estates--his manners, speech, opinions, excellencies, and faults. . . ."[5] Susan Dabney Smedes, describing the life of her father in A Southern Planter, compiled a biography in which the most incidental anecdotes concerning this man's everyday life were included; but other than trying to leave with her readers the vague notion that Mr. Dabney had been, indeed, a very fine gentleman, there was no mention of deeper motives for his actions than those of mere practicality.[6]

Even the Vanderbilt Agrarians of the 1920's, who prided themselves on representing the typical "unreconstructed Southerner, who persists in his regard for a certain terrain, a certain history, and a certain inherited way of living" were reluctant to take to task the individual Southerner's internal structure--his motives and morals.[7] In "Reconstructed

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[5]Hundley, p. 21.

[6]Susan Dabney Smedes, Memorials of a Southern Planter (Baltimore, 1887).

[7]John Crowe Ransom, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," I'll Take My Stand (New York, 1962), p. 1.

but Unregenerate" (in I'll Take My Stand) John Crowe Ransom claims that the backward-looking Southerner's "fierce devotion is to a lost cause," but he, like the other Agrarians, does not try to analyze the lost cause to see what its internal and moral ramifications were: he laments the losing of the cause.[8] In "The Irrepressible Conflict" Frank Lawrence Owsley touches upon the problem when he says,

> After the South had been conquered by war and humiliated and impoverished by peace, there appeared still to remain something which made the South different--something intangible, incomprehensible, in the realm of the spirit.[9]

But Owsley, too, fails to suggest that this indefinable "something" could be looked up in the individual Southern man of excellence. Owsley talks in general terms of the virtues of the old Southern social order, and upon these generalities he bases his plea for a return to agrarianism.

To dismiss the Agrarians rather hastily: although their primary concern was not with the Southern Gentleman as such, many of the points at issue in their work--the Southern and agrarian outlook upon educational, religious, aesthetic, economic, and other concerns--involve ideas which are fundamental to the gentlemanly tradition. And direct reference to this tradition could have helped them elucidate some of these.

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[8] Ibid., p. 2.

[9] Frank Lawrence Owsley, "The Irrepressible Conflict," I'll Take My Stand p. 63.

A further explanation of just what is meant by the "internal" and "external" aspects of the gentleman concept might prove useful at this point, for these aspects are quite evident in Faulkner's work. Historically, a gentleman is a man who embodies his society's loftiest ideals of human excellence. In Castiglione's Rome, in Sydney's England, and in Winthrop's Massachusetts there were fairly clear-cut notions of what the ideal gentleman was, and each of these men, in his own peculiar way, fitted that ideal (or described it). Other societies, however, have been incapable of recognizing and respecting those persons who reflect their highest aspirations. Still others have rejected their best citizens because of some flaw in their makeups. Although few of history's gentlemen have been perfect men, some have fared better than others in the eyes of public opinion.

Public opinion is the barometer by which the external gentleman is measured, but it has little to do with the internal gentleman. The external gentleman is characterized by a broad and general popular reputation, while the internal gentleman's virtues are usually only recognized by his family and close friends (numerous examples of this phenomenon can be found in literature and history). Only in the form of legendary heroes of the public imagination--Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Robert E. Lee--can we find a one-to-one relationship between internal virtue and external accomplish-

ment; elsewhere they are distinct and separate qualities. Printed accounts of the exterior aspects of gentlemanliness are to be found everywhere--in newspaper reports and magazine articles on famous people, tales of war heroes--but only the magic perception of a Boswell or a Sandburg or the creative genius of a Faulkner can illuminate the interior gentlemanliness of a man's life. In brief, then, the external gentleman is the man who presents a favorable and exemplary public image, whereas the internal gentleman is distinguished by his private character and is usually recognized only by those whose relationships with him are intimate.

With the publication of The Mind of the South a new understanding of the internal structure of the Southern Gentleman became possible. In a "Preview to Understanding" Cash summarizes the popular (and, to a large extent only) "legend of the Old South," a legend which includes all the exterior trappings of the Virginia-gentleman concept--and he then dismisses it summarily. The passage is fairly lengthy, but it is worth quoting in its entirety:

> What the Old South of the legend in its classical form was like is more or less familiar to everyone. It was a sort of stage piece out of the eighteenth century, wherein gesturing gentlemen moved soft-spokenly against a background of rose gardens and dueling grounds, through always gallant deeds, and lovely ladies, in 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 mansions, preferably white and with columns and Grecian entablature. Their estates were feudal baronies, their slaves quite too numerous ever to be counted, and their social life a thing of Old World splendor and delicacy. What had really happened here, indeed, was that the gentlemanly idea, driven from England by Cromwell, had taken refuge in the South and fashioned for itself a world to its heart's desire: a world singularly polished and mellow and poised, wholly dominated by ideals of honor and chivalry and noblesse--all those sentiments and values and habits of action which used to be, especially in Walter Scott, invariably assigned to the gentleman born and the Cavalier.[10]

Cash negates this image with a cryptic period: "There was an Old South, to be sure, but it was another thing than this." In the pages which follow this introduction Cash tries to formulate an accurate and objective description of the people of the South, past and present. As the above passage indicates, he steers clear of stereotypes. He acknowledges the fact that there was actually a genuine, if small, aristocracy in the coastal areas of the South, but the roll of frontier upon frontier and the passing of time succeeded to a large extent in replacing the aristocrat with the pioneer, or converting him into one. The tradition of aristocracy, brought to the South by a few genteel families and adopted

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[10] W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South (Vintage edition; New York, 1961), p. ix.

by the new planter aristocracy, "met and married with the tradition of the backwoods," and the result was a gentleman-pioneer who contained "at once the iron man of the frontier, the wild boisterousness of the backlandsman at play, and something . . . of such sweepingly splendid fellows as Mr. Richard Steele . . . and Mr. Charles James Fox--contained them so integrally and inseparably that it is impossible to say where one ends and the other begins."[11]

Cash discusses at length the composite and heterogeneous makeup of the Southern Mind, including those elements which originated in the old aristocracy, the new planter aristocracy, the pioneer, the yeoman farmer, the poor white, the Indian, and the Negro. His aim is not to paint a picture of an "ideal" or absolutely typical Southern individual but rather to explore the inner workings of the collective Southern Mind, in order to discover traits of that mind which were present to some degree in all Southerners regardless of what class they happened to belong to. In order to achieve this end, Cash discusses a number of "romantic fictions" which evolved in the Southern culture as it tried to justify itself to itself and to the world. And the chiefest of these fictions, as has already been indicated, involved "precisely the assumption that every planter was in

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[11] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

the most rigid sense of the word a gentleman." Most of the planters were lacking in the very essentials of gentility:

> The ideas of rigid personal integrity in one's dealings with one's fellows and of noblesse oblige and chivalry in the widest sense--of the obligation to be not only just but more than just, of the obligation, above all, to the most tender concern for the welfare and happiness of the weak and powerless--these ideas, representing the highest product of aristocracy, and constituting perhaps its only real justification in the modern world, are only imperfectly adumbrated or are missing altogether.[12]

In the absence of these aristocratic virtues, Cash finds in the Southern Mind a "horse-trading instinct," a will-to-power, ruthlessness, and individualism which leaves no room for the niceties of civilized and gentlemanly life. And yet Cash sees an order and pattern in the Southern culture. He lists a group of virtues and vices he considers to be most evident in the Southern Mind, past and present:

> Proud, brave, honorable by its lights, courteous, personally generous, loyal swift to act, often too swift, but signally effective, sometimes terrible, in its action--such was the South at its best. And such at its best it remains today, despite the great falling away in some of its virtues. Violence, intolerance, aversion and suspicion toward new ideas, an incapacity for analysis, an inclination to act from feeling rather than from thought, an exaggerated individualism and a too narrow concept of social responsibility, attachments to fictions and false values, above all too great attachment to racial values and a tendency to justify cruelty and injustice in the name of those values, sentimentality and a lack of realism--these have been its characteristic vices in the past. And, despite changes for the better, they remain its characteristic vices today.[13]

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[12] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[13] Ibid., pp. 439-40.

Although Cash implies that there have been no true gentlemen in the South since the days of the old coastal aristocracy, these terms he lists as virtues and vices of the Southern Mind represent positive and negative qualities which have recurred time and again in the gentlemanly concepts of the Western World. Men of excellence have always exhibited these extreme and powerful traits. One can conclude from this that Cash's conception of the gentlemanly tradition is fairly narrow, and that it is limited in the main to the external side of that tradition. He claims that the absence of "chivalry in the widest sense" precludes the possibility of Southern gentility, but he does not suggest that pride, bravery, honor, courtesy, generosity, and loyalty have at times been accepted as the mark of a gentleman. This exaggerated refutation of Southern gentility was certainly motivated, however, by Cash's desire to destroy the popular legend of the genteel South, and it can thus be understood. Cash's book has, in fact, by bringing the internal structure of the Southern Mind to light made possible a fully rounded concept of the Southern Gentleman, a concept which includes not only the external gentleman but the internal gentleman also.

On a more popular though less systematic level, other Southern writers during the Southern Renascence also contributed to the same end. In the introduction to a chapter

entitled "The Modern Renaissance" in The Literature of the South (an anthology first published in 1952) one of the editors says:

> It is an obsession with reality which has preoccupied many Southern authors. "Isn't this the way it is, or the way it was?" they seem to ask themselves. "And if this is so, must we not try to give it--insofar as words can render anything--an honest representation in language?" Here, in a broad sense, is the theme of recent literature.[14]

This "obsession with reality" has helped to broaden the popular image of the South, partly through a gradual removal from the old Southern stereotypes.

Southern fiction during the Renascence ran the full gamut from an unqualified reiteration of the old Southern legend in its most romanticized and abominable form to an extreme naturalism that is even more unrealistic than the legend. James Branch Cabell and Ellen Glascow treated the gesturing Virginia gentlemen in a more-or-less conventional way, though with a pessimistic sophistication that took full cognisance of the partly mythological basis of their subject. Erskine Caldwell, Katherine Anne Porter, and Eudora Welty, writing a bit later, essentially discarded the myth itself but left in their writing the haunting awareness of defeat and degeneracy which has since been carried to its extreme

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[14] Introduction to "The Modern Renaissance," The Literature of the South, Richmond C. Beatty et. al., eds. (New York, 1952), p. 611.

conclusion by such chroniclers of perversity as Tennessee Williams. Thomas Wolfe, Robert Penn Warren, and, latterly, James Agee trod a middle ground, using, in the cases of Wolfe and Agee, Southern locale as a vehicle for the expression of their more subjective artistic interests.

One can see in these writers a general trend away from a concentration on the Southern myth per se and an increasing interest in the aftermath of the South's destruction. The legend is implicit in their work, but it is with the chaotic turmoil left in the wake of the South's defeat that they are most concerned. And they have generally come to varying degrees of pessimism in trying to deal with this turmoil. So has William Faulkner. But he, unlike these other writers (for the most part) has essentially stuck with the myth itself--not with the surface of the myth, the external legend, but with the internal heart of the myth. He has tried to fathom it, to plumb the internal workings of the men and women who brought about, and were victims of, the myth. He alone has seemed to try to redefine and clarify the "story of the Old South." And he has re-created, according to his own interpretation of the Southern legend, examples of the most extreme kinds of gentlemen he envisions as having lived in the Old South. The subject of his novels is often degeneracy, true. But it is degeneracy from a state of excellence that he imputes, by implication, to the Southern

order at its highest peak. And this excellence is visible in a striking variety of ways in his male figures.

Only since 1939 have Faulkner's novels received serious critical consideration. And only since the 1946 publication of Malcolm Cowley's Portable Faulkner have they achieved anything approaching popular acclaim. There seem to be two main reasons why acceptance of his work was delayed so long. One reason has to do with Faulkner's style, which had to win aesthetic acceptance from both the critics and the public. The other reason is to be found in Faulkner's refusal--and his inability--to write about the South in terms of the Southern stereotypes. Now, as then, a writer who wants to be immediately popular must capitalize upon the notions which are already in the minds of his audience, and this Faulkner did not do.

The picture Faulkner gives us of the South, unlike the ideal portrait painted by the Agrarians, shows us little we would want to return to: we would many times rather forget it; and, as for the "gesturing gentlemen moving softspokenly against a background of rose gardens and dueling grounds, through always gallant deeds and lovely ladies"--they are simply not there. There is a genteel tradition evident in Faulkner's works, and it encompasses both external and internal aspects of gentility; but readers of the 1930's were not prepared for the kinds of ladies and gentlemen

Faulkner gave them. The general public and the critics as well had to undergo a fundamental change in their concepts of the South, and particularly of the Old South, before they could read Faulkner with understanding and appreciation. They had to leave behind the well-worn "romantic fictions" about the South and concentrate instead on the internal workings of the Southern Mind, whose virtues and vices are hidden beneath the surface of the Southern culture and the Southern man of excellence.

In accordance with this emphasis, most of the criticism which has been done on Faulkner's subject matter within the past twenty years has turned about moral and internal considerations; many of these studies have centered around Faulkner's chief male characters. These figures are drawn with such boldness and depth that some of them assume the noble proportions which have always been characteristic of the gentlemanly configuration, and they embody those virtues which Cash sees in the Southern Mind.

Any attempt to place Faulkner's men in rigid gentlemanly categories would only result in unnecessary abstraction and artificiality. The fairly flexible and arbitrary distinction between "internal" and "external" gentleman can, however, be applied to some of these characters without strain, and without implying that Faulkner was trying systematically to create classical "types" of gentlemen. One of

the strong points of his work is, indeed, the individuality and uniqueness of his best characters. But kinds of men do emerge from his novels. Three of these kinds, three extreme and basic kinds, are best exemplified by Thomas Sutpen, Isaac McCaslin, and Gavin Stevens. Each of these figures is archetypal; each represents the symbolic manifestation of his species. Thomas Sutpen is the embodiment of the Southern pioneer tradition, characterized by strength of will, perseverance, and blindly puritanical force of character. Sutpen represents ambition and aspiration, two qualities prized highly in the frontier South, and he achieves visible and concrete status as a citizen of the South. For this reason he must be considered some kind of a gentleman. But he also lacks certain genteel qualities. He lacks, chiefly, moral fibre; and for this reason he must be called a purely external gentleman. Isaac McCaslin, on the other hand, has that which Sutpen lacks, and lacks that which Sutpen has. He represents the very antithesis of the pioneering spirit, being totally void of aggressiveness and drive. But he possesses a moral vision of extreme proportions, and this elevates him into the ranks of gentility. Gavin Stevens represents a synthesis of Sutpen and Isaac. In him are combined a thorough appreciation for the Southern tradition, including the puritanical pioneering spirit, and a higher moral sense which gives him a troubling insight into that

tradition. Again, he is the epitome of his kind. He seems to represent the most exemplary man of his type that Faulkner could conceive; thus he must be called a gentleman. Taking these three figures together, the broad outlines of Faulkner's concept of the Southern Gentleman become visible.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS SUTPEN

> "A fine proud man. If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like." --Wash (Absalom, Absalom!)

Cleanth Brooks calls Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner's best, and least understood, novel.[1] There is general agreement among critics that this work is among Faulkner's most structurally perfect, and that it fulfills a significant function in the Yoknapatawpha cycle, but there has been little consistency of opinion about Thomas Sutpen, the central figure in the novel. Although most critics agree that Sutpen is in essence a tragic and Gothic figure, their interpretations of this tragedy and Gothicism vary widely, and this variance becomes most striking when they attempt to relate Sutpen to the South. Irving Howe says, for instance, that Absalom, Absalom! is "a retelling of the Southern myth in terms of its negation, with Sutpen as the opposite of Sartoris,"[2] while Harvey Breit says just the opposite: "Absalom, Absalom! seems to be more than a tale

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[1]Cleanth Brooks, "Absalom, Absalom!: The Definition of Innocence," Sewanee Review, LIX (1952), 543.

[2]Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (second edition; New York, 1962), p. 74.

of the tragic relations between a father and his sons, to possess deeper significance, as though for Faulkner it were the objective correlative of a vision of the South. You will find in it, Faulkner seems to be saying, a fundamental summing up."[3]

The questions at issue in these differing interpretations seem to be: are we to understand Sutpen as being a positive, or a negative, figure? and does he represent the good side of the South, the bad side of the South, simply the South--or the South at all? Howe goes on to say, "Faulkner is probing the undertissues of the past, fearful that he will locate some secret evil. . . ."[4] Cleanth Brooks finds, on the other hand, in Sutpen's "innocence" a partial justification for those elements in his make-up which seem, at first glance, evil.[5]

The chief problem involved here is, again, the problem of stereotypes. The majority of Faulkner's characters defy simple "good guy-bad guy" classification, and Thomas Sutpen is even more paradoxical than most. Joseph Warren Beach says of this novel, "What is most fascinating is the way the

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[3]Harvey Breit, Introduction to Absalom, Absalom! (New York, 1951), p. x. (Absalom, Absalom! was first published in 1936.)

[4]Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, p. 74.

[5]Brooks, p. 344.

characters go through a continuous process of interpretation, like ancestral portraits several times retouched. Thomas Sutpen starts . . . as a sort of incomprehensible demon of malignancy and perverseness. Later . . . we begin to have an awed respect for him as a man of unusual vision and force of character. We come to pity him . . . and our pity is reinforced by admiration. . . ."[6] We find a new picture of Sutpen on almost every page, and the resulting ambiguity of our image of him precludes the possibility of stereotyping him. This ambiguity also gives him the mystical force of character which pervades the novel.

By the same token that it is impossible to classify Sutpen as a "good guy" or a "bad guy," it is impossible to call him a "gentleman" or a "knave." But it is highly significant that Faulkner tells the story of Sutpen--who could himself lay little claim to gentility--as it is seen through the eyes of other characters, the Compsons and Miss Rosa, who have some idea of what a gentleman is, and what a gentleman is not. One of the major themes in the novel comes to be the juxtaposition of the values of civilization with the values of barbarism, as embodied to some extent in Sutpen. The aristocratic notions of heredity, propriety, and decorum,

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[6]Joseph W. Beach, American Fiction, 1920-1940 (New York), p. 166.

come into conflict with Sutpen's animalistic and ruthless desires for power, influence, and wealth, and the resulting tension provides a crux around which the novel turns.

We first see Sutpen through the eyes of Miss Rosa:

> "He wasn't a gentleman. He wasn't even a gentleman. He came here with a horse and two pistols and a name which nobody ever heard before, knew for certain was his own any more than the horse was his own or even the pistols, seeking some place to hide himself, and Yoknapatawpha County supplied him with it. He sought the guarantee of reputable men to barricade him from the other and later strangers who might come seeking him in turn, and Jefferson gave him that. Then he needed respectability, the shield of a virtuous woman, to make his position impregnable . . . and it was mine and Ellen's father who have him that.
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> . . . . . .
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> "No: not even a gentleman. Marrying Ellen or marrying ten thousand Ellens could not have made him one. Not that he wanted to be one, or even be taken for one. No. That was not necessary. . . ."[7]

Miss Rosa here reveals herself as a staunch defender of an aristocratic Faith, and her condemnation of Sutpen is based upon his total non-adherence to it. He does not belong to the class of "gentlefolks, our own kind." Miss Rosa comes to identify Sutpen with the "curse upon the South." She is mortified at his having met her sister Ellen Coldfield, who becomes his wife, in church:

> "In church, mind you, as though there were a fatality and curse on our family and God Himself were seeing to it that it was performed and discharged to the last drop

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[7] Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! pp. 14-16

> and drag. Yes, fatality and curse on the South and on our family as though because some ancestor of ours had elected to establish his descent in a land primed for fatality. . . ."[8]

Jefferson as a whole reacts to Sutpen with the same indignation and reproach Miss Rosa exhibits. The business places and homes of the town echo in steady strophe and antistrophe: "Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen. Sutpen." He looks like a man who has been sick,

> ". . .like a man who has been through some solitary furnace experience which was more than just fever, like an explorer say, who not only had to face the normal hardship of the pursuit which he chose but was overtaken by the added and unforeseen handicap of the fever also and fought through it at enormous cost not so much physical as mental. . . ."[9]

And his actions were furtive, executed with a "cold and ruthless deliberation" which frightened and puzzled the town. Sutpen was quite obviously a different sort of man, an anti-social, private sort of man. And he was certainly in no traditional sense of the word a gentleman. He lacked the gentleman's gregariousness, his social ease, and his above-board manner. He was not born well, and he was neither wealthy nor friendly.

There was one man in Jefferson, however, who made friends with Sutpen. This was General Compson, the grandfather of Quenton Compson (who narrates the novel). General

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[8] Ibid., p. 21.

[9] Ibid., p. 32.

Compson, who had more claim to gentility than most of the other townspeople, seemed to see something in Sutpen that no one else saw. He believed that there was deep in Sutpen's mind a basic "respectability" which, more superficial considerations aside, compensated for Sutpen's ruthlessness and hurry. He thought that there was something in Sutpen's driving force which deserved toleration and sympathy. Sutpen possessed an artistry and a patience which he admired. He said, at one time, that anyone could look at Sutpen and say, "Given the occasion and the need, this man can and will do anything." [Faulkner's italics]

The predominating irony in Sutpen is the fact that in the face of his apparent lack of concern with gentlemanly notions, he wanted desperately to be a gentleman; and he directed all his labors toward that end. But it was the visible characteristics of the Southern gentleman-planter that he desired. "To combat them you got to have land and niggers and a fine house," he said, and these were the things he wanted. He exhibited none of the characteristics generally associated with gentlemanly ideals, and he made no efforts to gain these characteristics, but he did succeed in gaining a gentleman's external accoutrements. Arriving in town with only a horse and two pistols, he managed to win a wife whose father's credit he could use in establishing a foothold. He bartered one hundred acres of land from Chief

Ikkemotube, and with seed given him by General Compson and twenty Negroes brought from Haiti he launched a series of financial successes which won him the grudging acceptance of the townspeople. He built a fine home, "Sutpen's Hundred," for his wife and himself, and here they raised two children, Judith and Henry.

In this first part of the novel we see a demonstration of the meteoric rise to power and wealth which was characteristic of the more ambitious and capable sort of Southern planter. This same phenomenon is related in historical accounts of this period in the South, and Sutpen's ascendancy, as described by Faulkner, is typical. But this in itself did not make him a gentleman in the complete sense of the word. While General Compson saw in him something to be admired, the judgment of Miss Rosa and of the townspeople (who were never fully won over to him) remains in essence the final judgment. Sutpen was noted more for his supposed cruelty to his family (a rumor, with some basis, propagated by Miss Rosa) and for his unusual and perverse relationships with his Haitian Negroes than for his adherence to Jefferson's idea of what a gentleman should be.

But Sutpen at the height of his career could well have passed as a Southern Gentleman of the peculiar and external sort described in popular fiction (and popular history) between the Civil War and 1920. The casual visitor

to Sutpen's Hundred could have found there the imposing manor house, the slaves "too numerous ever to be counted," and the barns filled with cotton and grain. And, if he happened not to meet the impersonal and distant Sutpen himself, he would have been likely to assume that the baron and owner of this magnificent estate were a gregarious and benign gentleman of the first order. But in the minds of those who knew him, Miss Rosa and General Compson--those who were aware of the internal workings of Sutpen's mind and character, he was a puzzling person, and his life defied casual understanding.

Sutpen's ascendancy continued at a fairly steady rate until the War. The War, in this novel, serves the same dramatic purpose that it does in most of Faulkner's novels. Sutpen joins the Confederate army and adds many cubits to his popular stature through valorous conduct as an officer, but the War un-does what it has taken him thirty years to accomplish. His plantation is brought to ruin, but more than that the War serves as a precipitating factor in bringing to the surface Sutpen's internal flaws. The War allows the "seeds of defeat" which were present in his inner mind and past life to grow and flourish. Just before the War, as an omen of impending doom, Sutpen's first son, by a former marriage to a Haitian mulatto, comes to plague and torment him. This younger man's name is Charles Bon--

Charles "Good," and he is the antithesis and shadow of Sutpen. He is handsome and educated, and he exhibits many of the subtler traits of a gentleman. But he comes to get retribution for the injustice done his mother and himself when Sutpen fled her Negro blood.

As a Gentleman, Bon comes directly from the boudoir of Balzac's France. He is an effeminate and worldly-wise Vautrin who frequents the brothels and cosmopolitan haunts of New Orleans. Being part Negro himself, as well as a citizen of the world and a mixture of the sexes, his understanding of people crosses racial, regional, and sexual boundaries, and it is this understanding which he uses to challenge Sutpen. He succeeds in seducing not only Sutpen's daughter Judith, but his son Henry as well. Judith and Henry, not knowing who Bon actually is and totally unaccustomed to men of this particular kind, react to him with wholehearted naivete and acceptance. Sutpen realizes that Bon is his son, but his only reaction is one of thunderstruck silence. Although he has been a strong-willed and powerful man, his will and power have been of a curiously limited kind, and when confronted by Bon with the fact of civilized and sophisticated retribution, he has no basis upon which to understand or fight it. His son Henry, upon learning that this seducer of his sister and of himself is in reality their half brother, responds with an action that

is the equivalent of the blow laid on Claggart's face by the innocent, wronged, and deeply hurt Billy Budd. Like Sutpen, and like Billy Budd, Henry is "innocent." He does not understand Bon, and he is incapable of responding rationally to the unfamiliarly human and evil challenge which Bon presents to his emotions. He reacts to Bon by killing him.

The conflict between Bon and Sutpen, in addition to being a family and racial conflict, is based in their respectively different orientations to civilization and gentility. Sutpen is basically a rustic and stubborn pioneer. Although he has made himself something of a gentleman in an external sense, he has remained untutored and narrow. Bon, on the other hand, has become acquainted with the finer points of civilization, and his thoughts and emotions are couched in terms of sophisticated and traditional, though perverse, gentlemanliness. He goes about his business

> . . .with an air of sardonic and indolent detachment like that of a youthful Roman consul making the Grand Tour of his day among the barbarian hordes which his grandfather conquered, benighted in a brawling and childish and quite deadly mud-castle household in a miasmic and spirit-ridden forest.[10]

He is enshrouded by an aura of mystery and obscurity. He is capable of meeting any situation, and he is not bothered by

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[10] Ibid., p. 93.

the obstacles which trouble his less-wise father and brother. He is forever "waiting to take what he can from what he sees," and he maintains

> . . .a certain reserved and inflexible pessimism stripped long generations ago of all the rubbish and claptrap of people (yes, Sutpen and Henry and the Coldfields too) who have not quite yet emerged from barbarism, who two thousand years hence will still be throwing triumphantly off the yoke of Latin culture and intelligence of which they were never in any great permanent danger to begin with.[11]

Bon's attack upon Sutpen and Henry takes an interesting turn when he tries to teach Henry the ways of the world by taking him to New Orleans and introducing him to the brothel. Henry objects to the brothel with a stubborn resistance that Bon attributes to his "puritan character." The brothel is to Henry

> . . .a place which to his puritan's provincial mind all of morality was upside down and all honor perished--a place created for and by voluptuousness, the abashless and unabashed senses, and the country boy with his simple and erstwhile untroubled code in which females were ladies or whores or slaves looked at the apotheosis of two doomed races presided over by its own victim--a woman with a face like a tragic magnolia, the eternal female, the eternal Who-suffers:[12]

To Bon Henry was steeped in a "granite heritage," a tradition whose menfolk were strong but narrow-minded and whose womenfolk were goddesses raised upon pedestals.

In Bon's psychological attack upon Henry we find the

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[11] Ibid., p. 94.

[12] Ibid., p. 114.

first mention in the novel of anything approaching a Sutpen heritage. And it is ironic that this heritage is referred to as being "granite," for we learn later that Sutpen comes from a poor family in the Virginia hills, and that there is nothing more illustrious in his background than a hint of the Old Baily and the mountains of Scotland. He had run away from his home at the age of fourteen, after being intimidated into launching his design of conquest by a Negro servant who had refused to let him in the front door of a Virginia planter's home. He had first gone to a sugar plantation on a Caribbean island, where he had met and married Eulalia Bon; then, after finding that she was part Negro, he had come to Mississippi.

The only possible explanation for Bon's detecting a kind of heritage in Henry is that he saw in him a form and kind of culture which had its genesis in something other than a long family tradition. Specifically, there must have been some universal and solid factor locked up in the character of Sutpen himself--some factor that represented not merely his own idiosyncratic nature, but a general cultural movement as well. Quentin Compson, re-creating Henry's reaction to Bon, says:

> I can imagine him, with his puritan heritage--that heritage peculiarly Anglo-Saxon--of fierce proud mysticism and that ability to be ashamed of ignorance and inexperience, in that city foreign and paradoxical. . . . Yes, I can imagine how Bon led up to it, to the shock:

> the skill, the calculation, preparing Henry's puritan mind as he would have prepared a cramped and rocky field and planted it and raised the crop which he wanted.[13]

Here, then, we find in the absence of that personal family heritage and name which is vital to the traditional concept of the gentleman a depersonalised cultural factor, puritanism, into which Henry and Sutpen have been assimilated rather than born. Sutpen adheres to a fairly rigid puritanical code. In spite of his sometimes unscrupulous behaviour, his private thoughts are generally dominated by the spirit of asceticism, strong-mindedness, and innocent rigidity which is characteristic of the puritan mind. His leaving Eulalia Bon, for instance, is not prompted by an evil desire to hurt her, but, rather, by an innate fear of the implications of miscegenation. And his refusal to recognise Bon as his son is motivated not by a desire to cover up his guilt, but by a simple inability to cope with the fact that he has been guilty of miscegenation.

His puritanism is also revealed in other ways. Upon Sutpen's first coming to Jefferson, the townspeople are struck not only by his unusual appearance and single-minded behavior, but by his refusal to drink and his total, if cold courtesy towards them. When the Jefferson vigilance committee's curiosity about his slaves and steamboat-loads of

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[13] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

goods has finally overwhelmed them, they ride to Sutpen's Hundred to question him. He meets the committee with a firm and imperturbed greeting: "Good morning, Gentlemen. Were you looking for me?" The committee follows him and watches helplessly as he strides into Mr. Coldfield's gate and gets himself engaged to Ellen. They arrest him as he emerges from the house; but with "that quality still swaggering but without braggadocio or belligerence" he submits to them so quietly that the arrest which had been meant to defeat him turns instead into a solemn victory for Sutpen.

In Sutpen's puritanism we find, perhaps, a clue to General Compson's appreciation of him. Both Sutpen and Compson seem to sense a kinship between them, a common bond of puritan direction and strength which the frontier has instilled in them. This has led to a close friendship within which Sutpen feels free to confide his deeper thoughts. As a result, some of the most significant insights we gain into Sutpen's character come from General Compson. We learn, for instance, of Sutpen's "design," his plan for success. Relating Sutpen's story in the way his grandfather says he told it, Quentin says:

> "You see, I had a design in mind. . . . To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family--incidentally of course, a wife. I set out to acquire these, asking no favor of any man."[14]

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[14] Ibid., p. 263.

And he goes on to reveal his attitudes towards the Jefferson gentlefolk and the injustice he feels he has suffered at their hands:

> "I did not even demand [respect], mind, as one of my obscure origin might have been expected to (or at least be condoned in the doing) out of ignorance of gentility in dealing with gentleborn people. I did not demand; I accepted them at their own valuation while insisting on my own part upon explaining fully about myself and my progenitors. . . ."[15]

Through Compson we learn that Sutpen thought courage and shrewdness were the only things necessary for success, and that, given these two requisites, a man could do anything. He could assume control over himself and those around him and allow the fates to propel him to success. Compson says, "he thought there was something about a man's destiny (or about the man) that caused the destiny to shape itself to him like his clothes did. . . .destiny had fitted itself to him, to his innocence, his pristine aptitude for platform drama and childlike heroic simplicity. . . ."[16]

The War, and Bon, only bring about the tragic demise which was inherent in Sutpen's design from the beginning. Physically and mentally he is reduced to a shell of his former self. But the same irrational impulse which moved him to challenge the plantation world will not die. He returns from the War determined to rebuild his plantation

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[15] Ibid., p. 264.

[16] Ibid., p. 246.

and to replace Henry, who has disappeared without a trace, with another male heir. But the friction between his determination to achieve these goals and the impossibility of his doing so reduces him to a babbling idiot in the eyes of public opinion, Jeffersonian opinion. The design which came very close to working before the War cannot work now, and this is a fact he simply cannot accept.

Miss Rosa gives a highly significant account of Sutpen during his post-war madness. It was Miss Rosa, it will be remembered, who had at the outset rejected Sutpen because he was not a gentleman. Now, however, Miss Rosa becomes his apologist:

> "Yes, mad, yet not so mad. . . . If he was mad, it was only his compelling dream which was insane and not his methods. --not madman, no: since surely there is something in madness, even the demoniac, which Satan flees, aghast at his own handiwork, and which God looks on in pity--some spark, some crumb to leaven and redeem that articulated flesh, that speech sight hearing taste and being which we call human man."[17]

Miss Rosa sees in Sutpen the same redeeming factor which Faulkner elsewhere calls endurance, and it is compounded with divinity.

Sutpen's defeat, then, grows out of his "compelling dreams," his "design." It grows out of his desire to become a gentleman in spite of the tragic internal flaws which limit his moral development to a hedonistic barbarism.

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[17] Ibid., p. 166.

This is best illustrated near the end of the novel when Wash, the devoted Negro who compares Sutpen to God, is forced to kill him. In his last frantic desire for a male heir, Sutpen seduces Wash's daughter, Milly; and when the child turns out to be a girl, he insults Milly by comparing her with a horse. Wash turns upon Sutpen and kills him with a hoe. scythe?

But Sutpen does become a kind of gentleman. He gains the external accoutrements of a Southern Gentleman--house, slaves, family, and a distinguished war record. More importantly, he is driven by the blind inner necessity which characterized the puritanical Southern frontier. Even though his character is fraught with ambiguities that effectually remove him from the pigeon-hole classifications of traditional types of gentlemen, he is drawn so boldly and with so little reservation that he emerges from his individualism and becomes a pattern or archetype of one kind of excellence in the Southern complexion--the puritan gentleman, hard-driving, ascetic, narrow-minded, blind to his faults, unrealistic, but child-like--innocent by virtue of his blindness, ambitious to achieve impossible goals. These are among the characteristics W. J. Cash sees in the Southern Mind.

CHAPTER IV

ISAAC McCASLIN

From Thomas Sutpen, who is a wholly external gentleman lacking in the internal moral fibre which traditionally characterizes a gentleman, we move to Isaac McCaslin, who is the extreme opposite of Sutpen. Isaac, or "Ike," is a supremely moral man who cares nothing at all for the externals of life--especially for the things that are all-important to pioneers such as his grand-parent, Carothers McCaslin, and Thomas Sutpen. Ike's interests are wholly internal. He is motivated by his feelings, his thoughts, and his deep sense of human values, rather than by the acquisitive, aggressive, and materialistic drives of the pioneers. Acting from his moral vision of the South's corrupt and "cursed" nature, he repudiates entirely his tradition and heritage. He refuses to accept the legacy of land and money left him by Carothers; and he becomes a carpenter in a Christ-like gesture of renunciation and passivity.

Ike is developed most fully in the longest of the Go Down, Moses stories, The Bear, which spans the crucial years of his transition from boyhood to manhood.[1] In The

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[1]William Faulkner, The Bear in Portable Faulkner, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York, 1946), pp. 227-363.

Bear we see Ike progress from a boyhood infatuation with the Wilderness and a ritualistic yearly hunt for a very special bear, Old Ben, who resides in (and is symbolic of) the Wilderness, to a mature affirmation of that which the Wilderness represents and a complete repudiation of that which the act of the hunt symbolizes. Ike evolves from a Sutpen-like boy, ambitious for conquest and destruction, to an ascetic negation of all that civilization represents. Irving Howe says, "The whole development of Isaac McCaslin consists in his effort to reconcile wilderness and society."[2] This conflict is carried through the five parts of the story, coming to one climax with the killing of the bear and another with the unfolding of Ike's act of renunciation.

An understanding of the various steps leading up to Ike's repudiation of his heritage is necessary if we are to fully understand the meaning of that act. The action of the first three parts of the story can be viewed in essentially two ways: as a simple narrative, and as a more complex symbolic narrative. But taken together with parts Four and Five, wherein the events of the hunt are seen to have a special significance to Ike, the reader is forced to interpret them symbolically. The bear, Sam Fathers, the other hunters, the dog Lion, and the Wilderness itself come to represent larger entities, complex elements in Faulkner's

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[2]Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, p. 92.

creation of Ike.

The Wilderness is the basic symbol in the story. Old Ben and Sam Fathers seem to be subordinate symbols of the Wilderness, but the Wilderness itself remains a symbol in the Jungian sense: its meaning is embodied within itself and there is no higher visible reality to which it points. R. W. B. Lewis calls Faulkner's Wilderness "a compelling image . . . of the ethically undefined."[3] Although the Wilderness seems to represent primal innocence and freedom, Faulkner never defines it in moral terms. It remains ambiguous and mystifying--particularly to Ike, whose actions, "although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehensible to him."

The Wilderness remains, then, an ethical abstraction to Ike, and to Faulkner. Although some parts of the story have Christian overtones, Faulkner does not try to interpret the Wilderness in metaphysical or religious terms. Rather, he leads the symbol through two levels of concretization in Old Ben and Sam Fathers. The hunters' desire to conquer Old Ben develops in the course of the story into Man's desire to conquer and push back the Wilderness, and Sam Fathers becomes the personification of the Wilderness, the high priest of the ritual of the hunt and the arbiter between Man

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[3] R. W. B. Lewis, "The Hero in the New World: William Faulkner's The Bear," Kenyon Review, XIII (1951), 650.

and Nature.

It is on the level of the Wilderness as embodied in Old Ben and Sam Fathers that Ike first becomes aware of the spiritual and moral antagonism between Man and Nature, between the hunters and the Wilderness. And he comes to feel within himself a conflict, a tug-of-war, between these opposed forces. On the one hand he is drawn to the freedom and concord of the Wilderness, which he sees in Sam Fathers and Old Ben. But on the other hand he is also infected with the acquisitive spirit of conquest which belonged to his pioneer fathers. He is first attracted to the pioneer tradition. He wants to prove himself a man in the eyes of his elders, and he shoulders a gun and marches into the woods with the firm intention of downing Old Ben on first sight. Old Ben, however, sees him first--having come all the way to the camp to see what new blood was going to be tracking him that season. Like Sam Fathers before him, Ike is amazed at the old bear's affrontery, and he finds it impossible to fire his gun. This first paradoxical encounter with Ben provides Ike with the first glimmer of the revelation that is to come with the death of the bear.

It is highly significant that Faulkner bases this conflict within Ike upon an ambivalent heritage. This is evident, first, in Ike's name--Isaac. The Biblical Isaac was the son of Abraham, who in turn was a son of God. Faulk-

ner's Isaac, however, has two fathers, a physical father and a spiritual father who are diametrically opposed to one another. Carothers McCaslin is his physical parent (grand parent), and Sam Fathers is his spiritual father. The matter of heritage, which has always been at the heart of ideas of gentility, thus comes to play a vital role in this story. Ike feels himself to be a product of two traditions, a spiritual tradition and a physical tradition, and he is torn between the two. As a boy he is acutely aware of his elders--Major de Spain, General Compson, his Cousin McCaslin Edmonds--and he tries to prove himself worthy of them. He later describes himself during these early days of the hunt as being

> ". . . a boy who wished to learn humility and pride in order to become skillful and worthy in the woods but but found himself becoming so skillful so fast that he feared he would never become worthy. . . ."[4]

He comes to realize that Sam Fathers, Old Ben, and the Wilderness--not his blood ancestors--taught him everything he knew about "worth."

> If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater.[5]

It is upon Ike's realization of his ambivalent heritage that the development of the story depends. This problem comes to assume an "either-or" character in Ike; he must

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[4]Faulkner, The Bear, p. 328. [5]Ibid., pp. 245-46.

choose one and reject the other, for they are totally incompatible. In terms of the historical concept of the Gentleman, one can interpret Ike's dilemma as being a matter of his choosing between a form of external gentility and a form of internal gentility. He can choose to accept the ritual of the hunt (itself a traditional gentlemanly activity symbolic of man's conquest of the Land) and his inheritance from Carothers, and he could thus become an ante-bellum country squire. This would win him the ready acceptance of his townspeople and a quiet, gentlemanly life. Or he can renounce all of this, repudiate his heritage, and become a social outcast. He chooses the latter course of action and thus gives up all claims to exterior gentlemanliness in the South; but he places himself into the category of the Christian gentleman--the man of private moral stature.

In relation to the concept of the peculiarly Southern gentleman, Ike's renunciation takes him far away indeed from the popular image--the image that Thomas Sutpen in part fulfills. In living the private life of a carpenter he is not surrounded with the white columns and mint juleps of a Kentucky Colonel, nor will he be a bold, adventuresome Jeb Stuart. He will not submit gracefully to defeat like a Robert E. Lee, nor will he cling defiantly to illusions of grandeur like a Jefferson Davis. He will be a merely anonymous carpenter, but an internal gentleman by virtue of his

moral vision and his fidelity to it.

The exact nature, presumably, of Ike's moral vision is locked up in the meaning of the Wilderness symbol, and we can get no farther than this symbol in trying to glean a metaphysical interpretation of Ike's action from it. On another level, however, we do come to understand Ike's repudiation: we do not learn the precise moral basis for it, but we learn some of the specific causes of it. It is useful here to divide the psychological action of the story into two parts. Up until the slaying of Old Ben at the end of Part Three the action is essentially static. The hunters' play of wits with Old Ben depicts, more or less, a status quo, with neither the hunters nor Old Ben upsetting the balance. Ike apparently has no quarrel with this situation. He takes part in it to the fullest, enjoying the hunt and accepting the tension between two unmoving entities. The dog Lion, however, upsets this balance. The assault upon Old Ben ceases to be playful when the great grey dog with yellow eyes and "a cold and grim indomitable determination" is tamed and trained to destroy him.

Lion becomes, then, a symbol for any unbalancing factor. Lion could represent, to Faulkner and to Ike, the War, the coming of Progress to the South, or some internal Southern malignancy. At any rate, Lion is a disruptive fac-

tor; things change; the Wilderness is overpowered. It is this change, whatever it is, symbolized by the death by violence of Old Ben and Sam Fathers, that puts into motion Ike's repudiation. It seems that only with the death of the Wilderness does Ike perceive its full value. It is only after the sawmills have followed Ben's death that Ike realizes that the Wilderness stood for some basic human value which he must try to preserve. It is at this point, when he returns to the ravaged Wilderness two years after his first hunt, that his repudiation begins; and it is made retroactive to include everything that has happened in Mississippi since Ikkemotube first assumed that the land was his to sell. In Part Four Ike exhumes the McCaslin family records from a dusty shelf and, in dialogue with his cousin McCaslin Edmonds, he explicates in detail the Southern curse, as found in these records. The mood of Part Four is one of categorical condemnation. Everything is bad; nothing is good. Everything from Ikkemotube down to and through himself has been evil. The notion that men could even own the Land was absurd; the Land, instead, owns the men who live on it. Slavery was bad, and true love between the black and the white is too horrible for words. As if to emphasize Ike's passionate renunciation, Faulkner's syntax breaks into pieces.

The categorical and unqualified nature of Ike's repudiation is of special interest to this study, for it illustrates

the fact that Ike is an archetypal internal gentleman: he is not merely a Christian gentleman, one who acts from a rational belief in a traditional dogma; he is a mystic of the first order, and his mysticism dates from the experience of Old Ben's death, which assumes the proportions of a dramatic religious conversion. The axis of his life is tilted in the complete kind of change William James calls a primary religious experience. The idea of the inherent gentlemanly quality of the mystic is quite evident in history. From Christ himself, whom Esmé Wingfield-Stratford (in The Making of a Gentleman) calls "as complete a gentleman . . . as it is possible to imagine,"[6] through the early Saints of the Church, and down to the poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the seer has been respected for his divine insight into the secret order of man and the universe, and no less respect does Faulkner give Ike. There is nothing derogatory in his treatment of Isaac. There are no rumors of past sins, no blots whatsoever on his character. He is the divine man in active revulsion against evil--evil as he finds it in the South. Yet he is a Southerner, and he remains so.

McCaslin Edmonds assumes the function of moderator in Part Four. He tries to temper and illuminate Ike's spiritual passion by throwing realistic questions into his idealism as stumbling-blocks. When Ike is talking of the Creator's

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[6]Esmé Wingfield-Stratford, p. 120.

motives for creating Mississippi, for instance, Edmonds reminds him that his grandfather was also a "creator"--that he had created not only a plantation but also a number of offspring, both black and white, and that he had tried to provide for their future welfare by bequeathing his land and money to them. Edmonds here tries to impress upon Ike the fact that he has an earthly and immediate responsibility to discharge, no matter what responsibility his moral vision may dictate. Edmonds' realism is to no avail, however, for Isaac has already acted upon his mystical moral vision and given up his rightful inheritance to become a carpenter,

> ". . . not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene . . . but . . . because if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends He had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin. . . ."[7]

As R. W. B. Lewis has rightly said, we discover in Ike "an archetypal or ideal human personality."[8] Faulkner's loftiest moral and religious concepts seem to be embodied in Isaac. Having demonstrated how entirely different Isaac, the internal gentleman, is from Sutpen, the external gentleman, it now becomes necessary to illustrate the points they have in common and to show that they constitute two sides of one picture of the Southern Gentleman, rather than two separate pictures. In spite of the fact that Sutpen and Ike are radically different in their motives and aims, their <u>modus</u>

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[7]Faulkner, <u>The Bear</u>, p. 342. [8]Lewis, p. 643.

operandi are surprisingly similar, and they conform to many elements of Cash's description of the Southern Mind. Both Sutpen and Isaac are unrealistic. Sutpen's goal, to become a gentleman, is no more idealistic than is Ike's effort at total renunciation of his heritage. By the same token that Sutpen is never able to escape his past life and undo his "mistakes," Ike is never able to forget that the same blood runs in him that ran in Carothers McCaslin--and in his black cousin, Lucas Beauchamp. Both seek, in short, to escape the inescapable.

Both Sutpen and Isaac are afflicted with what Cash calls "an incapacity for analysis." Sutpen cannot understand his own actions; he can see himself only in terms of success and failure. He has no concept of evil, and "good" is just as far removed. Ike, on the other hand, is an expert at making moral judgments: everything is bad, little is good; but he cannot analyze anything other than ethical problems. The practical concerns of pioneer life, the necessary cutting of trees, and the subsequently necessary symbolic killing of old bears overwhelm him emotionally. He cannot cope with an inheritance he feels to be evil; and he repudiates it in its entirety, acting not on a basis of rational analysis but on an intuitive and emotional impulse.

The one characteristic of the Southern Mind which Sutpen and Ike display most forcefully is what Cash calls

"swiftness to act." Sutpen's ascendancy and Ike's repudiation are carried out with great expedition and a driving energy. Both arrive at "designs" which are decisive and ambitious, and both strive blindly to achieve their differing goals.

Taken together, Sutpen and Ike represent the extreme polarity of Faulkner's concept of the Southern Gentleman, with some of Cash's characteristics of the Southern Mind as constant factors binding them together into a broad unit. Many of Faulkner's other pre-Snopesian male characters can be fitted into the continuum thus created. In the following chapter a character who combines Ike and Sutpen in a unique way will be discussed.

CHAPTER V

GAVIN STEVENS

In Hegelian terms one might say that Thomas Sutpen represents the "thesis," or one side of Faulkner's Southern Gentleman--the puritan, blind yet innocent, that Isaac McCaslin represents the "antithesis," or the other side of this Gentleman--the moralist with an extreme religious sensibility, and that Gavin Stevens represents a "synthesis" or combination of these different types. In Intruder in the Dust Stevens is revealed as being a man steeped too deeply in the Southern pioneering tradition to negate it, yet enlightened by a moral vision that causes him to question the ethics of the past and present South. He is a staunch and philosophical defender of the Southern tradition, yet he is aware of the fact that some elements of that tradition are at odds with classical standards of justice and equality.

As a result of this ambivalence, Stevens is one of Faulkner's most enigmatic characters. Lacking both Sutpen's energetic, narrow forcefulness and Isaac's passionate moral zeal, Stevens is a relatively static figure characterized by inactivity and philosophical reflection. Like Isaac, there are two sides to his heritage: the legacy left him by his Southern forebears, and a sense of justice partly gained during the course of his studies in law at Harvard. He recog-

nizes certain values in the South and other values in universal moral standards. The South and the Southern tradition seem to him to stand for integrity, personal strength of character, and independence, even though his ideas of justice and equality dictate a higher concern for problems involving Man's humanity to Man than he finds to be typical of the South.

The difference between the internal and the external sides of Faulkner's Southern Gentleman is made vivid and detailed in Stevens. Placed side by side in one ideally-drawn character, they come into a direct conflict which reveals the dynamic and turbulent nature of Faulkner's concept. Intruder in the Dust, in which Stevens is a central figure, has been recognized as a pivotal work in the Yoknapatawpha cycle. Irving Howe has said, "In no other book does Faulkner so delicately communicate the agonizing uncertainties and dimming glories to be found in the 'old frail pages' of family records."[1] The chief character in this work is Lucas Beauchamp, and it is through Stevens' reactions to Lucas that we come to understand the unique combination of external and internal gentlemanly qualities that he represents.

Intruder in the Dust is mid-way in the Yoknapatawpha time-sequence. The Sartoris, Compson, and McCaslin clans are almost extinct, and Lucas is the sole preserver of the tradition of the past. He is the grandson of Carothers

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[1]Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study, pp. 90-91.

Gavin Stevens is confronted. In the first few pages of the novel it is made clear that Lucas has an infamous reputation among the Jeffersonians. Being the grandson of Carothers, he refuses to "act like a nigger," and the townsfolk refuse to allow him to act like a white man. He is the product of a dual heritage, and he claims the prerogative of McCaslin pride while they are determined to bring him to his knees as a Negro. This tension between Lucas and the people is brought to a head when Lucas is accused of killing a white man, Vincent Gowrie of Beat Four. He is brought to the jail, and an expectant crowd begins to gather. It becomes a mob, with "faces myriad yet curiously identical in their lack of individual identity, their complete relinquishment of individual identity into one We not even impatient, not even hurryable, almost gala in its complete obliviousness of its own menace. . . ."[2] This mob reacts to Lucas with blind hatred, and it is eager to help Beat Four lynch him.

Gavin Stevens, too, shares in the general disapproval of Lucas. Lucas has overstepped the South's racial boundary lines in rejecting the White Man's superiority, and Stevens feels that he is only getting what he has been asking for. In this attitude Stevens reveals the external and peculiarly Southern side of his nature. The color of Lucas' skin,

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[2]William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (Signet edition; New York, 1948), p. 90.

regardless of the McCaslin blood flowing inside him, is highly important to Stevens, and he insists that Lucas must stay in his own place. He raises his defense of this part of the Southern culture [illegible] in later sections of the novel. He talks, for example, about the "homogeneity" of the South, and of the two distinct races in the South: "We alone in the United States are a homogeneous people. . . . And, as for Lucas Beauchamp, he's a homogeneous man too."[3] This homogeneity implies more to Stevens than a merely innocuous, side by side yet separate existence for the two races. At the time he speaks, some fifty years after the Civil War, he still defends a fundamental inequality of the races as being an irrefutable corollary of racial homogeneity. And this basic difference between the blacks and the whites is operative at the deepest of all moral levels: the level of justice. He says,

> "Someday Lucas Beauchamp can shoot a white man in the back with the same impunity to lynch-rope or gasoline as a white man; in time he will vote anywhen and anywhere a white man can and send his children to the same school anywhere the white man's children go and travel anywhere the white man travels as the white man does it. But it wont be next Tuesday."[4]

He foresees the impending destruction of the South's homogeneity--and of the inequality of the races--but he will have no hand in it. He says, "Of course we will continue to defend it," for

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[3] Ibid., p. 101.

[4] Ibid., p. 101.

> ". . . only from homogeneity comes anything of a people or for people of durable and lasting value--the literature, the art, the science, that minimum of government and police which is the meaning of freedom and liberty, and perhaps most valuable of all a national character worth anything in a crisis. . . ."[5]

The homogeneity of the two distinct races is just as vital, to Stevens, as the overall homogeneity of the South; and he understands only too well Beat Four's readiness to burn Lucas, for Lucas is not a homogeneous but a heterogeneous creature. Lucas has assumed all the prerogatives of the White Man including, they think, the right to take the administration of retribution into his own hands, and this cannot be tolerated. Neither can Stevens tolerate it, for he--like Beat Four, and like Faulkner--defines the virtues of the Negro race as "the capacity to wait and endure and survive," and although Lucas has maintained this capacity, he has used it to intimidate and challenge the White Man.

The internal structure of Stevens' character is brought to the fore in his coming to Lucas' defense. Chick Mallison, Stevens' nephew, and an old lady named Miss Rosa Habersham prove that Lucas did not kill Gowrie, and Stevens is subsequently revealed as a man of conscience who is obliged to accept and defend innocence even when he finds it personally distasteful. He has an appreciation for truth and justice that over-rides his Southern prejudice against insolent and

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[5] Ibid., p. 100.

proud Negroes, and despite his dislike for Lucas and what Lucas represents, he is forced to come to his rescue. He agrees to take Lucas' case even though Lucas is determined to establish an equality between them by paying him for his services.

Stevens' long rhetorical speeches in defense of the Southern tradition are accordingly balanced out with many lengthy commentaries couched in terms of a universal moral concept. In an excerpt from one of the most interesting of these latter, Stevens is explaining to Chick the sudden change from hatred to feelings of guilt which came over the mob when it realized that Lucas was innocent of the murder:

> ". . . maybe it's because man having passed into mob passes then into mass which abolishes mob by absorption, metabolism, then having got too large even for mass becomes man again conceptible of pity and justice and conscience even if only in the recollection of his long painful aspiration toward them, toward that something anyway of one serene universal light."[6]

This "universal light" which Stevens talks of might be roughly comparable to the mystical vision of Isaac McCaslin, although in Stevens it does not result in the abject renunciation and mystical idealism which Isaac exhibits. It remains, rather, a fairly dispassionate and rational ethic which Stevens deals with in philosophical terms.

This combination of the external Southern Gentleman--the respected lawyer-citizen who ardently defends the South--

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[6] Ibid., p. 130.

and the internal Southern Gentleman of moral vision and insight results, as would be expected, in a character who is not quite so clear-cut and vivid as a Thomas Sutpen or an Isaac McCaslin. Stevens is problematical in this novel, and even more troublesome when he reappears in the Snopes trilogy. He is, however, one of Faulkner's most significant characters, for he represents the perfect "norm," or the focal point of Faulkner's concept of the Southern Gentleman. Stevens embodies both (1) a great respect for the Southern tradition, built upon the foundations laid by ambitious people like Sutpen, McCaslin, and Compson, and (2) a great appreciation for universal moral ideals. And it is upon these two dissimilar factors, in conflict and dialogue with each other, that Faulkner bases his concept of the Southern Gentleman. In Stevens we find "the human heart in conflict with itself," and this, to Faulkner, is the most excellent state of Man. And certainly men found in this condition are in some sense gentlemen.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to demonstrate that a broad concept of the Southern Gentleman is implicit in Faulkner's pre-Snopesian male characters. The fundamental assumption carried through the study has been that the only common denominator which can successfully be used to relate the highly legendary and relatively intangible concept of the Southern Gentleman to the historical tradition of gentility is the idea of excellence. The superior men of the short-lived Old South were the gentlemen of the Old South, regardless of whether their superiority lay in an embodiment of the puritanical and pioneer values the South appreciated or in the more universal moral values which have evolved in Western civilization. Three of William Faulkner's male characters have been considered Southern gentlemen on this general basis of "excellence," which bears a strong resemblance to the Renaissance idea of virtus.

Thomas Sutpen has been taken to be illustrative of the external gentleman, one whose puritanical and pioneer motivations manifested themselves in the attaining of material goods and a correspondingly striking public image. Isaac McCaslin has been studied as an internal gentleman, one whose exceptional moral vision raises him to a level of

excellence. Gavin Stevens has been taken to be a combination of these two kinds of gentlemen; he is the archetype of the "typical" Southern gentleman, one in whom is combined the virtues of genuine love for the Southern tradition and a native sense of decency which at times causes him to question that tradition.

It has been further demonstrated that Faulkner's concept of the Southern Gentleman, as outlined herein, is circumscribed by those characteristics which W. J. Cash lists as being and having been characteristic of the Southern Mind in general. Thomas Sutpen, Isaac McCaslin, and Gavin Stevens are all characterized by pride, idealism, unreality, swiftness to act (or, in the case of Stevens, to think); and all three are, in a sense, tragic figures drawn in heroic proportions.

In relation to previous criticisms of Faulkner's work, the special significance of this study is that it attempts to draw together under one abstract concept three of Faulkner's divergent characters. Most prior studies have been concerned with these figures individually or not at all; and, indeed, that is the only <u>safe</u> way to handle the many-faceted fruit of Faulkner's genius. One would hope, however, that the conclusions arrived at herein will prove, if not entirely convincing, at least interesting. It must be said, here, that the fact that conclusions of some kind <u>have</u> been reached at all imbues

this study with some form of distinction, for much of the Faulkner criticism which has been done to date has been a combination of plot synopsis and unsubstantiated conjecture.

The findings of this study indicate that there is much room for further inquiry along the same lines. Studies could be undertaken concerning (1) the chronological development of Faulkner's concept of the Southern Gentleman, (2) the old gentry as compared with the Snopses, (3) the poor white families as compared with the exceptional and genteel families, (4) degeneration in the genteel families as related to Faulkner's concept of gentility, and (5) comparisons of Faulkner's characters with the gentlemen of the historical South. The subject is an interesting one, and it must be discussed if we are fully to understand Faulkner's work.

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