

THE USE OF "DREAM" IN FAULKNER'S

THE UNVANQUISHED

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## PREFACE

William Faulkner's chronicle of Yoknapatawpha county has gained a considerable prominence in the literary world. Based on the history of Mississippi, this chronicle presents a grand pageant of numerous distinct characters in their personal conflicts and social affairs. The romantic people of Faulkner's South generally indulged in a self-destroying dream of heroic courage, reckless gallantry, and glorious obstinacy even at times when their social and moral obligations ought to have been changed in keeping with the rapid growth of the age of machines. This dream was largely influenced by a legendary aristocratic heritage. The Unvanquished is one of many novels and stories which portray this idea very distinctly.

The Unvanquished also displays Faulkner's own apprehension and criticism about the Southerner's inclination to distort the past and create a myth not based in fact. This study focuses on the apparent insistence of Faulkner in The Unvanquished that the dream based on the distorted myth is so deep in the minds of a representative Southern aristocratic family that no isolated efforts or attempts of any conscientious individual can alter their beliefs and behaviors. The analysis of the various dreams and their dreamers in The Unvanquished also focuses on the reasons for such

dreams and their consequences on the different characters.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The main thrust of American novels has been to portray an individual struggling either with himself or with society so as to proclaim personal integrity. In this new and "promised land," the American, a new man, tried forever to repudiate all external restraints of society and set out to seek the Dream which lay ahead in an unknown territory. To do so, he even had to alienate himself from his people and plunge forward to pursue his personal happiness, the alluding Dream which was always difficult to attain due to social obstructions. As Walter Allen states, "the lure of the Dream and the feeling that it has been destroyed have been central to much American fiction since the earliest days."<sup>1</sup> Personal happiness, on the other hand, is always subjective, and so, the Dream "which is still one of the most potent myths in the American mind, is impossible of realization . . . [or of] accurate definition: its only blue-print is each man's private dream" (Walter Allen, p. xviii). Consequently, this vague concept has been interpreted and analyzed in various manners and meanings through the centuries as classic American writers have dealt with conflicts of numerous types in their writing.

William Faulkner defined a man's privacy as his Dream: He called it the American Dream to seek "a sanctuary on the earth for individual man":

a condition in which he could be free not only of the old established closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power which had oppressed him as a mass, but free of that mass into which the hierarchies of church and state had compressed and held him individually thrallled and individually impotent.<sup>2</sup>

It is against this impotency that Faulkner's heroes fight. In The Unvanquished, as in many of his other novels, the central subject matter is "the confrontation of a young male with a troubling and powerful father figure, a topic that both plagued and inspired Faulkner as he attempted repeatedly to come to terms with his recent and distant family past."<sup>3</sup> The father figure normally represents all that glorious past, the traditional moral codes, and the societal expectations. The burden to compete and be an equal with this ancestral image becomes so heavy on the shoulders of a Faulknerian young man that he is led to self-destruction if he fails to meet the expectations conferred on him. It is against this same image of a father figure that Bayard Sartoris, the sensitive protagonist of The Unvanquished, revolts, and as a result the novel appears to end with a positive note when he rejects romanticism, tradition, and



violence to free himself of a confining heritage. He appears to have attained his own concept of the American Dream: freedom to do what he wants and believes. Yet we see the same Bayard in his old age, in Sartoris, basking in the memories of his ancestors, although mildly criticising the Sartoris code, and meeting his pseudo-courageous suicidal death. Thus, the title The Unvanquished, meant possibly to acclaim Bayard's victory over all those means to make him impotent, seems to be somewhat ambiguous.

The ambiguity may be directly related to the various kinds of dreams which the characters in the novel exhibit. The dreamers, their dreams, and dream-states at different levels produce a kind of ambivalence as each individual dreams in his or her own way to fulfill distinct motivations. Some of these dreams seem to be beneficial, some destructive for the individuals themselves and for the society. Whatever the consequence, the dreamers cannot escape these dreams which have been created upon age-old myths and legends of their heritage. In the build-up of the character of the individuals, however, both myths and dreams appear to be quite essential, so that they can, when possible, make their own decision about the path they would like to choose in real life. Growing up within an environment of chivalric and romantic antebellum, Civil War, and post Civil War South, Bayard Sartoris II goes through experiences of such dreams, some based on romance, some on power and violence, as he and his family struggle for survival and as reality gradually

penetrates his consciousness. His family myths help him to recognize and to evaluate the effects and the ambivalence of the dreams of his grandmother, father, and step-mother as he prepares himself for his future. I intend to explicate these dreams and their effects on Bayard's consciousness; also, I hope to focus on the ambiguity of the title by analyzing certain narrative revelations which show that Bayard may abhor but cannot deny the destructive dreams. For the clarification of the latter point, the possible intentions of Faulkner in writing this novel need to be explored first so that the peculiarity and the uniqueness of the Southern people may become intelligible.

The story of The Unvanquished apparently mirrors Faulkner's own desire to repudiate similar father figures in his family. When Faulkner was a young boy, his days were filled with the legends of the Civil War and the Old South related to him by the family members, especially "the maiden spinster aunts which had never surrendered,"<sup>4</sup> even after the devastating defeat of the Southerners by the demonic Northerners. These aunts get a significant place in almost all of Faulkner's novels. Evidently however, the figure which was most prominent and central to the reminiscences of this heroic past was that of his great grandfather, Colonel William C. Falkner, "a man of fiery and imperious character"<sup>5</sup> who is well represented by Colonel John Sartoris in The Unvanquished. Colonel Falkner became well-known for several heroic actions during the Civil War, and he was particularly

known for being involved in gun-fights caused by his masculine arrogance, forceful authority, and dangerous chivalry. It is no wonder that Faulkner the writer, born in 1897, would hear an endless number of stories about this legendary ancestor, and other such heroes, and the stories became more and more colorful as the past became more and more distant. Unfortunately, such legendary stories often became the foundation on which the future generation of the Southern people based their own idealism, sometimes insensibly. As Olga W. Vickery states, "there is always the danger . . . [when] history is transformed into legend and [an individual finds] himself mistaking the legend for history," the legend being the experiential fact which commands action.<sup>6</sup> Since legendary myths often distort realities, Faulkner sensed the dangerous myth-making quality of his people to be one of the reasons for the downfall of the Old South and its morals. So he directed his criticism toward the Reconstruction days when this was a daily practice. Several scholars confirm that although The Unvanquished is a simple and romantic projection of the Civil War and its effects on the Southern people, it is still a direct reconstruction of Faulkner's own family history, and in it, revision is the central theme. Faulkner did not have to do any research work for its story; rather, he completely depended upon the three-fold fund he spoke of: experience, observation, and imagination (Gwynn and Blotner, p. 251) because his own family history abounded in the same desperate qualities and often

false virtues which the South as a whole took pride in.

Writing during a period between the two World Wars, Faulkner was greatly disturbed by the decadence of the basic human values as depression set in, the issue of civil rights drew immediate attention, racial violence and industrial strife exploded, socialist movements gained prominence, and widespread bankruptcy, unemployment, and poverty took hold. Trying to evade, unsuccessfully sometimes, the despair of the modern industrial age, Faulkner turned to the Southern past, "which may or may not have been more virtuous but certainly seemed more spacious and vigorous than the present" (Howe, p. 13). George Marion O'Donnell calls him a "traditional man in a modern South" because when "all around him the anti-traditional forces are at work . . . his novels are, primarily, a series of related myths . . . built around the conflict between traditionalism and the anti-traditional modern world in which it is immersed."<sup>7</sup> Modern men, for him, are symbolized by the Snopeses who gradually and stealthily took to themselves the regions and the values of the Old South replacing them with materialistic selfish gains. The introduction of Ab Snopes in the life of the Sartoris people signifies the same degeneration. In the Snopes, who conquered the modern South, Faulkner saw a loss of the Cavalier spirit of his ancestors, the loss of honor. What Faulkner longed for in his venture into the past was the early Cavalier virtues of the people who believed in "simple honor for the sake of honor and honesty for the sake

of honesty" (Gwynn and Blotner, p. 80).

This concept of pure honesty guided the best part of Southern society before the Civil War, before there were any adverse effects due to the war. By the time the four years of fighting and defeat were over, the South had lost not only a major portion of its life of brilliant plantation luxuries and patriarchy, but also a great deal of courage, patriotism, clannishness, and honesty of the antebellum South. As Faulkner indicates, the Civil War was inevitable since the greatest cause of it was the sin of slavery along with various other economic and social flaws; however, he believed that it was a "'fever' sent by God to purge the South of this 'disease,'"<sup>8</sup> the practice of human slavery. Although relationship between the blacks and the whites is dominant in the plot of The Unvanquished, Faulkner is more concerned here with the initiation and the growth of an individual among various diversities of life.

Also, part of his indictment is against the concept of the war, any war, because it could not purge his South of its basic flaws even after its defeat. Rather, the same chivalric code valued largely before the war, remained "no longer a vital moral force since it [lacked] the social sanction of the whole community" (Miller, p. 204). After its defeat in the war, the South held desperately to its own antebellum past to glorify and retain not so much the positive but the negative features of the old code. Instead of being ashamed of the cause of the war, the Southern people

converted the whole process of their struggle and defeat into another myth of the lost cause; thus the regional memories remained intact as the plantation class began reconstructing the burnt-down feudal system.

For Faulkner, being as sensitive as he was, the shortcomings of the Reconstruction years did not pass unnoticed. He turned a critical eye on the post-war South as it resembled many of the defects of his own time. So, in his work we see "that past to be, though heroic in some aspects, sordid and destructive in others and hence undeserving of a romanticized response in its twentieth-century inheritors" (Wittenberg, p. 158). Even Faulkner's preference for the past is, thus, ambivalent. As Robert Penn Warren observes, "if Faulkner feels the past as the repository of great images of human effort and integrity, he also sees it as the source of a dynamic evil."<sup>9</sup> This contradiction about the past causes Faulkner to be paradoxical:

he writes in opposition to this myth as well as in acceptance of it. . . . As he moves from book to book, turning a more critical and mature eye upon his material, [he stresses] the rejection of an inherited tradition . . . and the direction of the drift is certainly away from romanticizing and toward realism. (Howe, p. 26)

What he may have considered a source of interesting and familiar subject matter shifted his point of view as he

became more and more disturbed by what he perceived.

Faulkner's own mythology is actually an image of the general human experience, and he dramatizes this image by the way it is conditioned, affected, and influenced by romanticized past myths. Although many of his incidents have a valid historical base, what he really emphasizes is not historical facts but the problems of human evolution: the deepest and the most basic feelings and experiences of an individual as he struggles to keep his personality intact. That is why slavery is not his main concern in The Unvanquished; instead, maintaining a romantic view of the Civil War and its consequences, he reveals, actually, the inner conflicts of Bayard, a basically romantic child, "whose changes may be emblematic of those Faulkner himself underwent" (Wittenberg, p. 159). Some critics find fault with Faulkner's romanticism in dealing with the otherwise violent Civil War. Melvin Backman, for instance, thinks that "the Faulkner of The Unvanquished idealizes and over-simplifies the Southern past . . . [and] the stereotypes to which the author clings suggests some fundamental unwillingness to confront reality."<sup>10</sup> But, truly enough, the Civil War is again not his subject in this novel. Faulkner uses history as much as it is needed here to particularize a time, a place, and a society in which he places his protagonist and then relates the whole conflict of this protagonist with a total universal experience. To do so, he needs, more than history and facts, the power of imagination, a sense of

romanticism, and the ability to exercise and exploit myths to examine and evaluate the present in comparison with the past. The Civil War in The Unvanquished is then "only a background against which Sartoris moral vitality is exercised."<sup>11</sup> For the Sartoris family, before and after the war, bravery is often foolhardy, and the concept of honor is often too narrow and selfish. They are representative of any Southern aristocratic plantation family who "obey a self-created world where honor and morality are rigidly defined, [who] blind themselves to reality and drive without hesitation to violent and meaningless deaths" (Swiggart, p. 37).

Nevertheless, myths and dreams are very much a part of the Southern life. Both romantic myths, distorted or not, and dreams born from these myths perform identical functions: "that of providing, through their symbolism, the much needed expression of the various crises of inner growth and maturation."<sup>12</sup> Past myths help an individual to define his existence in society and dreams help him to isolate himself in a world of his own; this private world may either reunite him with or alienate him from society. But, when myths begin to get distorted, they produce more negative than positive effects. Thus, in The Unvanquished as Bayard matures, he struggles between dreams and reality, either consciously or unconsciously, as he relates the present with all he has known and learned from the past myths. Simultaneously, the dreams of the other people he associates with also reflect, confuse, or clarify his inner conflicts as he remains one of



the most sensitive and sorrowful of Faulkner's witnesses who, according to Jean Jacques Mayoux, desperately try "to understand and to make sense of the situation [they] observe."<sup>13</sup>

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> Walter Allen, Tradition and Dream: The English and American Novel from the Twenties to Our Time (London: Phoenix House, 1964), p. xviii. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> William Faulkner, "On Privacy. The American Dream: What Happened to It," Harper's Magazine, July 1955, pp. 61-72. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Judith Bryant Wittenberg, "Repudiation and Catharsis: The Unvanquished," Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography (Lincoln, Neb.: The University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 157-166. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner, eds. Faulkner in the University (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 249. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>5</sup> Irving Howe, William Faulkner: A Critical Study (New York: Vintage Books, 1952), p. 10. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>6</sup> Olga W. Vickery, "The Grand Pattern: Truth, Legend, and Fact," The Novels of William Faulkner (Louisiana State

University Press, 1959), pp. 211-225. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>7</sup> George Marion O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, eds., Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (Michigan State University Press, 1960), pp. 82-93.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas T. Miller, "Faulkner and the Civil War: Myth and Reality," American Quarterly, 15 (Summer 1963), pp. 200-209. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Penn Warren, "Faulkner: The South, the Negro, the Time," Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 269.

<sup>10</sup> Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 119. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Swiggart, "The Use of Social Myth," The Art of Faulkner's Novels (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 1962), pp. 27-40.

<sup>12</sup> William Trowbridge, "Myth and Dream in the Novels of William Faulkner," Diss. Nashville, Tennessee, August 1975, p. 17. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Jacques Mayoux, "The Creation of the Real in

William Faulkner," William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, eds., Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (Michigan State University Press, 1960), pp. 156-173. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

## CHAPTER II

### DREAMS OF OTHER CHARACTERS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON BAYARD

In the Southern cultural heritage, where the family is regarded as a very important institution, stories about adventurous historical ancestors are very common. During the pioneer days, as the frontier men settled down in the unknown country, they dreamed of success and wealth through a plantation. This dream made them plan big and work hard; it also brought them land speculation accompanied by aggression and frequent violence. The families of those men who did finally succeed built up legendary tales about these "brave" fore-fathers so as to pass on similar traits of challenge, courage, and faith to the future generations. Stories based initially on facts went through gradual transformation, becoming more and more ornamented by romantic imagination, as they were orally transmitted to one generation after another. For young people growing up in this family-oriented society, such tales of the mythic and legendary past became "symbols of the human capacity for love, honor, pride and courage . . . a fundamental and important aspect of man's heritage and experience" (Vickery, p. 223). Simultaneously, such glorious events of the plantation days also become misty, out of

human scale and larger than life. The descendants of these past leaders clung desperately to the aristocracies and traditional mores of the past, dreaming of similar experiences; unfortunately, however, the failure to attain such a dream often led these individuals to destruction of self and society.

In The Unvanquished, there is an emergence of such destructive dreams as the inadequacies of the Civil War and the Reconstruction days are related to the tragic defeat. Not only is Bayard, the innocent protagonist, a romantic dreamer, but his dreams are also guided, bred, and encouraged by the dreams of those with whom he closely associates in his childhood and youth: his grandmother, father, cousin-step-mother, black companion, and several other characters. Most of these characters appear to start with high ambitions and virtues, as required by the Southern code; unfortunately, however, they cannot pattern their lives by the old traditional values because ultimately they do not maintain these values properly. In no time, their aspirations, their dreams, become so obsessive that they become self-conscious and adamant, a state which leads to dangerous consequences. As a result, these consequences have a negative effect on Bayard's young mind.

The Civil War is the pivot around which the characters turn, and it also becomes responsible for the transformations of their personalities; but the direction is not always pleasant. Douglas T. Miller summarizes these

transformations:

Granny Millard with her courage, sense of duty and personal integrity personifies its [the War's] best features as a functioning entity. . . . However the code gradually becomes corrupt in her. . . . Drusilla Hawk . . . [becomes] a caricature of the code at its extreme. . . . For the Colonel [John Sartoris] this code [becomes] largely an excuse for blistering gallantry and violence. (Miller, p. 207)

The three exhibit another one of Faulkner's central themes: the corruption of innocence. Their initial intentions and aspirations are directed toward the welfare of their society, but this philanthropic dream soon changes to single-mindedness on their own self-aggrandisement. At the end of the novel, Bayard, having recognized this moral degeneration of his loved ones, transcends their value system while still following the basic Southern code.

Rosa Millard, Granny, a Southern "Lady" in every sense, figures prominently in Bayard's childhood, taking the place of his dead mother. She prepares Bayard in every way to be the next Sartoris. She builds up the basic foundation of his religious and ethical training, teaching him to be faithful, honest, respectful, and clean-spoken. With rigorous disciplinarian attitudes, she teaches him not to lie or to be abusive; she also teaches him to love every living thing,

to be patriotic, and, most important, "to assume responsibility for the less fortunate."<sup>1</sup> However, despite all her strictness with his manners, she still displays a tremendous amount of love, which the older Bayard recollects most affectionately. He also comments on her strength of character. Her rigid adherence to her principles, her own morality, and her courageous confrontation of the bad times, the war days, make her one of those women who were "the indomitable, the undefeated, who never surrendered"<sup>2</sup> to the Yankees. Her only defect, which young Bayard comes to realize very late, is that she is blind to the changing times, and this same blindness, along with her mad pursuit of her dream to secure capital so that John Sartoris can rebuild his plantation, leads her to her brutal death.

The Civil War to Rosa Millard "is the usual folly of man raised to its highest power."<sup>3</sup> An image of a Southern mater, she willingly accepts the charge of her grandson and the slaves of her Confederate son-in-law. Ignoring the actual cause of the war, she behaves and deals with the slaves as she has always done, in a masterly but patronizing manner. She is apprehensive about only one slave, and that is the young hot-blooded Loosh, who finally betrays his masters as he leads the Yankees to the hidden family silver. Even then, she can only reprove him for doing so; she is more concerned about his immediate misery and starvation. This same concern for the poor refugees of the war, and especially for her grandson, forces her to make the difficult



and dangerous trip to Memphis and to Hawkhurst later to retrieve her private property consisting of a chest of silver, two slaves, and two mules, after the Yankees raid the mansion. She is determined to get her possessions back, so as to build up that shade under which the homeless can get shelter.

Her well-intentioned efforts soon take the shape of exploitation as the war affects her adversely. She wages her own personal war against her enemies, the Yankees, and she begins it with a lie; with the help of Ringo and Ab Snopes, the agent of her corruption, she starts getting consignment after consignment of mules with forged letters. Her only dream then is to surprise John Sartoris:

soon [he] would return home to his ruined plantation and most of his slaves vanished; and how it would be if, when he came home and looked about at his desolate future, she could take fifteen hundred dollars in cash out of her pocket and say "Here. Start over with this."<sup>4</sup>

So intent is she in her aim, that instead of repenting, she starts rationalizing her sin, which is similar to the sin of slavery since it constitutes the same exploitation of human beings. She is conscious but blind to her sin because she thinks that she is doing the right thing; feeding people is more important to her even if it means violating her morality. Ironically enough, she even asks God to approve her

deceit:

"I did not sin for gain or greed . . . I did not sin for revenge . . . I sinned for justice. And after the first time I sinned for the sake of food and clothes for your own creatures who could not help themselves--for children who had given their fathers, for wives who had given their husbands, for old people who had given their children to the holy cause . . . a lost cause." (p. 167)

Even in her moral decline, Rosa Millard still believes that goodness, which even God will justify, lies in her attempt to nurture and aid the helpless children of God, at the same time maintaining the social order, decent behavior, and rightful property. As Lyall H. Powers comments, "Granny's reasons, alas, were not finally 'the best,' for even in her new habit of dishonest mule trading and even in her intention to provide for the needy, it was the old habit--keeping things as they were, maintaining as far as possible the status-quo--that persisted" (Powers, p. 129).

Although Bayard accompanies his grandmother in all her escapades, he is never allowed to take part in any of those deceptive transactions; his soul should remain pure. But his soul does not remain peaceful because as he watches, the same Granny, who whipped him if he told a lie or washed his mouth if he cursed, violate all her principles day after day by lying, deceiving, conspiring, stealing, blinded by her

dream for more money. Later, Bayard remembered that "She didn't look any thinner or any older. She didn't look sick either. She just looked like somebody that has quit sleeping at night" (p. 138). Through her, the meaning of war is introduced to young Bayard. That the Old South has gone through a tremendous change becomes apparent as Granny, in spite of her whole-hearted trust in Southern men who would never harm a woman, is brutally murdered by Grumby, a new social evil, a man who claims to have been a Confederate soldier. As John Pilkington states,

her death at the hand of Grumby . . . probably should be interpreted as the consequence of the shift in her motive from the community's welfare to personal gain, in other words, her vulnerability to the temptations posed by Ab Snopes.<sup>5</sup>

However, despite all her moral decline, Bayard learns something valuable from her: strength of character, personal integrity, and indomitability.

The "heroic" qualities of the Confederate Colonel John Sartoris seen from the point-of-view of young Bayard earlier in the novel shift for us later to show another facet of his nature. In the Reconstruction days, although he still possesses virtues like nobility, leadership, and intelligence, his dream is centered upon power, which again is always corrupting. He wants to rebuild a better mansion than the one that has been destroyed; he organizes night-riders to

preserve his vigilance over his domain; he proceeds to rebuild and repair the railroad track. According to Drusilla, his wife, "he is thinking of this whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps" (p. 256). But, he does not allow voting rights to the blacks, mainly because they do not have a heritage and they are not educated or experienced enough for this important duty. The feudal qualities of the Old South become prominent in him, as the true Cavalier spirit degenerates into pride and arrogance, and in the name of honor, knighthood, and nobility, he kills by shooting the two carpet-baggers who insist on the passing of the voting rights for blacks. Again, a Faulknerian evil is committed as he violates the rights of other human beings.

Gradually, the mighty John Sartoris, the romantic warrior, becomes a victim of evil as his "military courage degenerates into needless capricious antagonism and finally to the cruel callousness of murder" (Powers, p. 134). His corruption is symbolized by capitalism and industrialism, as he plunges head-long into the reconstruction of the railway track, which signifies his "involvement with the machine, the agent of dehumanization."<sup>6</sup> He quarrels with Redmond, his partner in this business, and his end is tragic again because, as fate would have it, he is killed by Redmond at a time when he has just realized that he himself would not kill any more people. His sin does not remain unpunished.

Throughout his father's reconstruction career, Bayard, now in his youth, watches him slowly degenerating into the

corruption of power. He tries to stop his father, but his father seems to be either too ignorant or too indifferent about the possible outcome of his mad quest for power.

Bayard sadly notices that during the last two years his father's eyes "had acquired that transparent film which the eyes of carnivorous animals have and from behind which they look at a world which no ruminant ever sees" (p. 266).

Bayard has seen this kind of a look in "the eyes of men who have killed too much" (p. 266). He talks to Drusilla about the dangerous nature of his father's dream, but he discovers that she enjoys helping his father sustain his way of life; she believes that it may be dangerous but worth-while since it is, unlike Thomas Sutpen's dream, selfless.

"A dream is not a very safe thing to be near, Bayard. I know; I had one once. It's like a loaded pistol with a hair trigger: if it stays alive long enough, somebody is going to be hurt. But if it's a good dream, it's worth it. There are not many dreams in the world, but there are a lot of human lives. And one human life or two dozen--"

"Are not worth anything?"

"No. Not anything." (p. 257)

Bayard, however, cannot agree with Drusilla's argument; no dream is worth any human life. He, by this time, knows that it is the destructive dreams of his father which would lead

him to a tragic end; he becomes fearful of such dreams of the Sartoris way of life. Later, after his father's death, when Bayard looks at his corpse, he feels illimitable grief and regret because he sees in it the intolerance, the arrogance, and the needless stain of blood in his now empty hands: "the hands now appearing clumsy to have performed the fatal actions which forever afterward he must have waked and slept with and maybe was glad to lay down at last" (p. 272).

Another character corrupted by the effects of the War is Drusilla Hawk whose "problem is not in blindness of the complete upheaval of the traditional society but in the over-reaction to this upheaval" (O'Brien, p. 60). With her fiance's death in the war, she becomes, at a very young age, the bride-widow of a lost cause. Not bemoaning her fate, but with a completely nihilistic attitude, the Confederate Joan of Arc--full of courage and dignity--joins Colonel Sartoris' troop to fight against her enemy, the Yankees. Her only dream is revenge. Hardened by her experience, and bitter about the life of a piteous Southern belle, she repudiates her sex, chastity, virginity, as, with single-minded raptness, she helps John kill their enemies, and later rescue the ballot box, and pursue his dream of power. She marries John not out of love, but because he "commands" her to do so due to unavoidable circumstances; and like a good soldier she does as the commander wishes, in their battle together against their enemies. She has complete faith in

the Jeffersonian dream that "independence . . . self-respect and dignity . . . can outlast the worst of tragedies . . . [and] independence and dignity are often to be secured only with blood."<sup>7</sup> As she matures, she grows to relish the concept of revenge; she becomes the priestess of the cult by which her husband progresses in life--violence. The verbena she uses to adorn herself has a special primitive role. As Melvin Backman remarks, verbena was the sacred herb which was worn by the priests who served as guardians of the public in ancient Rome (Backman, p. 120). Drusilla plays the role of the priestess of the Reconstruction South as she embodies and serves the "succinct and formal violence" (p. 252) in the name of power and revenge. Her very appearance, the "boy hard body, the close implacable head with its savagely cropped hair" (p. 257) and "the eyes staring . . . with that fierce exaltation" (p. 270) invests her with a savage dedication: "still men must kill one another, still we must pay Cain's price in his own coin" (p. 246). The verbena, which Drusilla always wears above her ears, because its smell can be sensed above the odor of dust, horses, and courage, becomes symbolic in Bayard's growth. The odor of verbera, invariably associated with Drusilla, becomes a part of Bayard's life.

Bayard's education, however, is not complete until his last confrontation with a seductive request of revenge by Drusilla. When John Sartoris is killed by Redmond, she naturally cannot expect any other action from Bayard except to

kill the murderer. As a formal priestess of violence, she prepares to observe the ritualistic ceremonial rites to the fullest extent. Under the brilliant light of the chandeliers, she stands in her yellow ball gown waiting to offer the two duelling pistols to Bayard, as distinct symbols of potent manhood:

"Take them Bayard . . . take them. I have kept them for you. . . . You will remember me who put into your hands what they say is an attribute only to God's, who took what belongs to heaven and gave it to you. Do you feel them? The long true barrels true as justice . . . the two of them slender and invincible and fatal as the physical shape of love?" (p. 273)

Her ritualistic ceremony is so intense that she becomes terrible and hysterical when Bayard, by now having decided his course of action, refuses to accept the pistols. Since her cry for blood is ignored, she becomes "an image of disgust: the hysterical laughter bursts out of her 'like vomit' . . . all over her face like sweat does and with a dreadful and painful convulsion."<sup>8</sup> At the end, although she does acknowledge Bayard's courageous confrontation with Redmond, she still does not accept his insistence that revenge is a futile and immature gesture of her own social code.

The blacks in the novel also play a significant role in displaying various kinds of dreams which Bayard collects in



his experiences. He is shaken into realization about the defeat of his heroes by Loosh, his father's slave, as he breaks into the two boys' game-world with the news that Cornith and Vicksburg have fallen. With a distant look of triumph in his gaze, Loosh dreams of the oncoming freedom which is not far away, and also "far don't matter. Case hits' on the way" (p. 6). Cleanth Brooks confirms that there is a

troubling effect on the boy to whom Loosh is an adult, even though a slave, and whose slumbering revolt is felt rather than understood, and whose triumph, which he would have to conceal from a white adult, he can intimate to the boy.<sup>9</sup>

Loosh is only one of those thousands of slaves whose sole desire after the Civil War is to leave their white masters' homes in quest of their own identity, their rights of equality. Loosh voices the general dream of his people: "I going. I done been freed; God's own angel proclaimed me free and gonter general me to Jordan. I don't belong to John Sartoris now; I belongs to me and God" (p. 85). There is, incidentally, a link here between the private dreams and the mythic Biblical parallels as the slaves walk, hurrying, panting, murmuring, and chanting, blindly toward the North to "cross the River Jordan" on their pilgrimage to "the promised land." They move on and on, looking straight ahead. The mass of blacks in motion leaves a deep imprint on Bayard's mind; the dust raised by their feet confuses Bayard

as he loses track of an innocent childhood and is forced to cross the threshold to maturity. However, although too young to comprehend, Bayard knows even then that their quest for identity is senseless because the exodus is based on disillusionment. The basic needs of these homeless shelterless people could not be provided by their "deliverers" the Yankees, in the midst of the war days. As Bayard contemplates later, Ringo's eagerness to see the railroad symbolizes this senseless and blind motion of his race:

the motion, the impulse to move which had already seethed to a head among his [Ringo's] people . . . reasonless, following and seeking a delusion, a dream, a bright shape which they could not know since there was nothing in their heritage, nothing in the memory even of the old men to tell others "This is what we will find." . . . [It was] one of those impulses inexplicable yet invincible which appear among races of people at intervals and drive them to . . . leave all security and familiarity of earth and home and start out, they don't know where, empty handed, blind to everything but a hope and a doom. (p. 92)

The river which the blacks call Jordan becomes a symbol of Bayard's "becoming [a person] and being free to confront freedom--whether it can be endured or not"<sup>10</sup> as he is swept away by the tide along with other men, animals, objects in

the rosy twilight of the sunset. Moreover, the river also symbolizes birth, and Bayard emerges from it with a new, transformed, consciousness.

Thus, there are several forces working simultaneously on the young boy. On one side lies all his moral education achieved through his grandmother's rigid rules, strict at first and flexible later. On the other side lie all his sense impressions achieved through first-hand experiences of racial pride, over-confidence, and destructive dreams involved with the desire for money, power, and revenge. Bayard has learned to respect his land and his obligations to protect it. He has also sensed the basic flaws of his society: racial and social discrimination. But until his last action, we do not get an inclination of how much he has really learned and accepted to build up his individuality, or whether his childhood romanticism has been swept off by his maturity. He did kill Grumby to avenge his grandmother's death and that, we know, is an immature gesture on his part, born out of impulse and obligation. His final action, the confrontation with Redmond, relieves us to some extent because his courage is based not on destruction or foolhardy display of violence. His education, thus, appears to be complete.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> Lyall H. Powers, Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha Comedy (Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1980), p. 126. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew C. O'Brien, "A Note on Faulkner's Civil War Women," Notes of Mississippi Writers, 1 (Fall 1968), 56-63. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew Lytle, "The Son of Man: He Will Prevail," Seawnee Review, 63 (1955), 114-137.

<sup>4</sup> William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1965), p. 172. All successive references and quotations will be made from this edition, and the page numbers only will be indicated by parenthetical citation within the text.

<sup>5</sup> John Pilkington, The Heart of Yoknapatawpha (Jackson, Miss.: University Press of Mississippi, 1981), p. 205.

<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Longley, Jr., "Colonel John Sartoris: The Classic Tragic Hero," The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 177-191.

<sup>7</sup> Melvin E. Bradford, "Faulkner and the Jefferson Dream," Mississippi Quarterly, 18 (Spring 1965), 94-100.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Millgate, The Achievement of William Faulkner (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1968), p. 169.

<sup>9</sup> Cleanth Brooks, "The Old Order," William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha County (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 75-99. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Charles E. Nilon, "Blacks in Motion," A Cosmos of My Own: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1980, eds., Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (Jackson, Miss.: The University of Mississippi, 1981), pp. 227-251.

### CHAPTER III

#### BAYARD'S ROMANTIC DREAMS TRANSCENDED

#### BUT NOT IGNORED

One of Faulkner's central themes is Individualism--the right of a man to live as he chooses. In most of his novels, his heroes are often victims of society and of self-criticism; their individualism is often threatened by traditional moral codes, expected behaviors, and rigid structures; they are often emotionally bound by a legendary past, racial discrimination, religious background, and psychological conditioning. The young heroes are constantly struggling against all such social and emotional incrustations. Bayard Satoris, the protagonist of The Unvanquished, also proves to be such a character; growing up in an imprisoning social atmosphere, he is transformed from "a wide eyes romantic child to a realistic adult critic of the tradition."<sup>1</sup> As he matures, Bayard's romantic childhood dreams based on his legendary heritage are replaced by the sleeplessness of confused reality based on the flaws of the same heritage, and he ultimately succeeds in modifying at least some of the defects of his society. Most scholars analyze and discuss this inherent theme which unites the seven stories of the novel. Warren Akin calls it a novel of initiation built

around "a sympathetic protagonist, an initially incomplete understanding by him of his environment or himself, and events that cause significant ethical or perceptual change."<sup>2</sup> Myra Jehlen thinks that the climax of the novel "occurs when Bayard becomes a man and shoulders the responsibilities of his class by setting a moral example in a dangerous situation which he survives triumphantly."<sup>3</sup> Lyall H. Powers calls the novel a bildungsroman because Bayard goes through an optimistic development, and like a true hero, he learns "the virtues of love, courage, responsibility, and honor" in Southern terms, "but well beyond its boundaries" (Powers, p. 125). Although this theme does seem to be quite prominent, his final act still raises the doubt whether Bayard has really been able to repudiate his tradition and society; the risk involved in his confronting Redmond reminds one of the implication that there is danger in the very name "Sartoris" since the Sartoris males have a suicidal tendency in their pseudo-courageous games with death.

The narrator of The Unvanquished is Bayard himself as an adult. Commonly viewed, his intention seems to be "to translate a fairy tale into adult terms" (Jehlen, p. 51); but actually, he "arranges highlights, gives uninsistent emphasis, and selects details from the plethora of early impressions . . . [from which] emerges another lesson, strictly moral and difficult to accept" (Powers, p. 127). So, The Unvanquished, though categorized as one of Faulkner's more trivial works, has a depth of meaning which is

worth noticing as it brings out one of Faulkner's deep rooted convictions about his own South, and his own people. Also worth noticing, the point of view in the novel is mostly that of young Bayard; the older narrator Bayard intrudes on this point of view when certain clarifications of the situations need to be introduced or when certain judgments need to be passed.

In "Ambuscade," at the beginning of the novel, twelve-year-old Bayard plays at war with Ringo, his black companion of the same age. It is the time of the Civil War. Having no idea of what real war is like, the two boys "regale themselves in day-dreams of chivalry" (Bradford, p. 431); for them, the war is a fictitious event built up by listening to heroic tales of their race, and its gallantry in the war itself. The two boys carefully construct their battleground "behind the smokehouse that summer" (p. 3) preparing for themselves "the very setting of the stage for conflict" (p. 4). Their emphasis on the "living-map," their own battlefield, is an insistence that the model is very much a reality for them. As children, and like most children, Bayard and Ringo prefer romantic fiction to actual fact; they imagine that the distant faint-blue "cloudbank" in the North represents the actual battlefield, a place of dream, where the heroic John Sartoris takes part in a romantic battle, among clash of sabres, banging of guns, and loud cries and the noises of horses and soldiers. To Bayard, the war represents all that is noble in his race, and his



enactment of the role of General Pemberton mingles his day-dreams with the flinging of dust as he cries "Yaay! Yaay!" (p. 7). Abundant use of images like dust, smoke, cloud, and the color gray symbolizes vagueness and shadowed reality. Bayard is not yet ready to accept the real cause of the war or the violence of it as he and Ringo "hold intact the pattern of recapitulant mimic furious victory like a cloth, a shield between [themselves] and reality, between [them] and fact and doom" (p. 4). Bayard is also not willing to believe Loosh, a young slave, when he interrupts their game sweeping their precious living-map flat, informing them of the defeat of the Confederate soldiers:

"What?" Ringo said. "What he mean?"

"Nothing," I said. I stooped and set Vicksburg [the living-map] up again. "There it is."

(p. 6)

But Bayard is aware that there is something vast and urgent going on out there; he knows of the siege at Vicksburg and he knows that the blacks are restless; nevertheless, the significance of these remain unexplained for him. The two boys are simply in an exciting world of chivalric romance, in which, as Cleanth Brooks analyzes, they "can try to shoot a Yankee soldier, in which the boy's father can appear as if by magic out of the woods, or in which enemy troops can suddenly emerge from nowhere" (Brooks, p. 85).

In this fairy-tale world of war, heroism, courage, and

illusion, the brave and great John Sartoris is a story-book hero on a horse, with his "sabre hanging loose yet rigid" (p. 9). He is larger than life and possesses Herculean strength. The very odor of his "clothes and beard and flesh too . . . [is] the smell of powder and glory" (p. 11). As the matured narrator later recollects, his father's magnificent proportion was really "an illusion of height and size which he wore" (p. 11). For the boy, according to Marjorie Pryse, the size of the living-map and his father constitute that microcosm which is based on his error of proportion, and romanticism is the cause of his misconception; therefore his

loss of innocence is as inevitable as the loss of the war. . . . [Also] the scale of the microcosm is inversely proportional to the exaggerated size of the imaginary world; [thus] both scale model and fantasy are significant distortions of reality.<sup>4</sup>

Bayard's romanticism, his day-dreams of chivalry, keep him away from the actual drawbacks of his world. The matured Bayard, the narrator, justifies his childhood illusions based on an awe of and wonder about his great father: "He was not big; it was just the things he did, that we knew he was doing, had been doing in Virginia and Tennessee, that made him seem big to us" (p. 10). He was, after all, the only hero he saw and lived with.

Bayard's romantic imagination carries him so far that even when Father tells him stories of the war, true reports of the battle, places, and warriors, what he and Ringo really hear are "the cannon and the flags and the anonymous yelling" (p. 17). While helping Father mend a stock-pen, he imagines himself to be part of a troop--drawn up into a kind of order by the Colonel's command. His father, working swiftly through brushes and briars, seems to be on his horse and in a grey field-officer's tunic, his sabre flashing and glinting; he gives orders in a voice "not loud yet stentorian: 'Trot! Canter! Charge!'" (p. 14).

After Vicksburg and Corinth are known to have "fallen," Bayard and Ringo sense a kind of excited urgency among the adults at home. They are mystified when half-awake and half-asleep they watch or dream at night the preparation to hide the family silver. Reality and dream blend for young Bayard as he tries to recollect whether he really heard or only dreamed of his father warning Louvinia, the housekeeper, about Loosh. Naturally, the two little Confederates appoint themselves to spy on Loosh's whereabouts. Ringo, like a trusted assistant, admits full faith in Bayard's dream because "'hit can't be a lie case ain't nobody there to tole hit to you'" (p. 23). For the two boys, the dream is more powerful than spoken words although one represents a state of imagination, the other a state of reality; dream here is presented as truth by the boys. Loosh does act strangely; he goes away and returns very excited, though sleepless; the

boys overhear him relating to his family the news about an inevitable freedom of his race, very soon! Loosh believes that General Sherman is coming down to sweep the earth free of slaves. His statement conveys deep meaning to the boys. With apprehension and concern, they run screaming to Granny: "'They are coming! They're coming to set us free'" (p. 26).

This humorous but ironic reaction of the two boys emphasize their imagination and the dream-state in which Bayard reacts as a black in his insistence that General Sherman is "'going to make [them] all free'" (p. 26). The significance of the actual meaning of the sentence is overshadowed by the fear of a more imminent danger: "'They're just down the road'" (p. 26). Sharing Ringo's pallet that night, Bayard wishes, as does Ringo, that his father were present at home now. However, since he is not, the two boys decide, innocently but guided by the social code of behavior, that the responsibility of saving Granny, the house, the plantation, and the slaves is Bayard's now: "'We'll have to watch the road . . . it'll have to be us'" (p. 27).

Two days later, as Bayard and Ringo lie side by side in the cool, shady, and quiet cedar copse to "watch the road," alternate states of real sleep and dream keep them occupied. In that half-dreaming and half-sleeping condition, Bayard is frightened to imagine that "the house and stable and cabins and trees and all were gone . . . and it was growing darker and darker" (p. 27), an innocent foreshadowing of what is really going to happen. Also, in this

state of waking and sleeping, Bayard is shocked to spot a Yankee looking at their house through a field glass. Then follows a volley of activities. Real dream is transformed into actual dreamlike reality as the two boys seem to be running forever, falling over the fence, at last reaching the house (which kept moving backward), removing the heavy musket from over the fireplace, carrying it like a heavy log, and firing at the enemy. The act is a dream-come-true for the two boys although they are thoroughly frightened by the discovery of a whole army in the smoke, dust, and scream of a horse. Later, hiding under Granny's out-stretched skirt, the boys are actually relieved to learn that only a prized horse of the Yankees is wounded and no man is killed. Although the whole incident takes place in their game-world, it brings the first spark of the real war in Bayard's life. He also notices that his grandmother tells her first lie.

In "Retreat," there is a simultaneous waxing and waning of Bayard's romantic dream as he watches the effort of his elders to preserve the family myth in the form of a chest of silverware, a symbol of renowned heritage. As he accompanies Granny on her way to Memphis to save the chest of silver, Bayard is once again made conscious by Buck McCaslin, a family friend, about his responsibility of enacting the role of John Sartoris' son. At the same time, Bayard's preserving and carrying along a pinch of dust from the Sartoris' soil symbolize his own sense of love for the family, home, and property. During the same trip, Bayard

and Ringo enjoy an exciting adventure, another dream-come-true, with John Sartoris and his men against helpless Yankee campers. This escapade still preserves the most imaginative glamor and thrill of war, and it is still game-like and very much conforms to their own dream-world. Reality is converted into dream as this incident and Colonel Sartoris' escape the next day, right under the enemy nose, once again blend romance, myth, legends, and imagination for young Bayard since he cannot separate one from the other.

It takes the burning of Bayard's childhood home by the Yankees to strike his world of romance so that reality, in terms of the adult world, can be introduced into his innocent world. The chapter "Raid" becomes symbolic as Bayard's thought patterns are replaced gradually by the sleeplessness of a troubled conscience and by the real violence of war; he starts evaluating the familiar world of his childhood. All of a sudden he begins perceiving the difference between Ringo and himself. Although he has always known Ringo to be the son of his father's slaves, the dark color of his skin, or the fact that his father considered Ringo smarter than him even when Ringo belonged to an "inferior race" had not disturbed Bayard. Ringo had been his constant companion, a sharer of all his experiences; they fed from the same breast, called his grandmother "Granny" together. In their unconscious, dream-filled world, the two boys have been one--"not even people any longer, [but] the two supreme undefeated like two moths, two feathers riding above a

hurricane" (p. 8), the symbol of those innocent black and white people who remained above the turmoils of the time but who have been drawn into the unnecessary violence under new circumstances. Bayard is vaguely familiar with the concept of a "nigger" and how the concept came into being, but in their own world, Ringo's being a "nigger" had no significance at all. Now suddenly, Bayard begins to pity Ringo not only because he cannot see the railroad or the rushing locomotive anymore since the Yankees destroyed the track, but also because he discovers the sad truth that Ringo belongs to the same race, without heritage, in its mad pursuit of the bright shape of freedom which would lead him to nothing but disillusionment.

On his way to Hawkhurst with Granny and Ringo, Bayard sees the cruel scars the war had left on the beloved land: houses burnt, plantations looted, people beaten up, women left behind. But for a boy of his age, the worst wound that the war could have inflicted is the destruction of the railroad. When Drusilla, his cousin at Hawkhurst, relates the incident of the Confederate locomotive racing for the last time, Bayard suddenly starts thinking. The amazed and incredible question springs up in his mind: "Where could we have been? What could we have been doing, even a hundred miles away, not to have sensed, felt this, paused to look at one another, aghast and uplifted, while it was happening?" (p. 106). For the first time in his life, Bayard feels his painful present being choked by an ignorant past. Quite

shaken by the actually impending doom of the real war, Bayard realizes that from now on he "probably wouldn't be able to go to sleep at all" (p. 113). All his romantic imaginings, his dreams, have kept him ignorant of the true meaning of life, of people, of their worries, and their behaviors. From this point on, Bayard's romanticism gives way to the grimly realistic worries about his future course of action, or what he may do to improve the Southern way of life.

Soon after this, in "Riposte in Tertio" Granny's tragic death at the hands of the bushwhacker Grumby and the degenerated Ab Snopes, both of whom exploit the helpless remnants of war, help Bayard suddenly step over the last threshold to maturity, at fifteen. To do so, however, he has to cross a nightmarish maze when, accompanied by Uncle Buck McCaslin and Ringo, Bayard chases Grumby to avenge his grandmother's death in "Vendee." He seems to hunt Grumby as in a dream, travelling in circles in the same forest, like a sleepwalker, when his days and nights get mixed up; they do not care about the passage of time, or scarcity of food and shelter. The reality of the long and confusing chase is mixed up with the nightmare of the reality of the adult world. Although fatigued by sleepless nights and unbearable hardships, the two boys do not break down; the same Southern spirit of indomitability is kept intact in their suicidal escapade. Cleanth Brooks calls this chase a "harrowing experience . . . a commission that should not have been laid



upon a fifteen year-old boy, but Bayard feels that his grandmother's murderer ought to be brought to justice" (Brooks, p. 86). Bayard wants to avenge his grandmother's murder for two apparent reasons: it is a ritual, expected of him as a man to retain the honor, dignity, and courage attached to his name; and it is also due to a deep personal grief and shock born out of love for his grandmother. The outcome of his search, mutilating Grumby's arm after killing him to pin it on his Granny's grave, is horrible but childish. It is an immature gesture based on the mythic Old Testament vengeance: an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth. Bayard is still hovering between childhood and maturity, between accepting and disowning the norms of his society.

The post-Civil war days bring drastic changes to the Southern way of life. There is no food or money, since there are no crops; the slaves wander freely; criminals like Grumby are rampant; carpet-baggers and scalawags exploit the emotional condition of the white people; reconstructionists try their utmost to rebuild their lost properties. Unfortunately, the situation works advantageously only for the ruthless and the greedy. Among all these upheavels, a new problem is introduced in "Skirmish at Sartoris": some people want to place the government in the hands of the totally inexperienced blacks, an act which John Sartoris, an ardent reconstructionist now, cannot allow simply because he cannot accept the idea of being under the leadership of the

"inferior race"; his obstinate devotion to the plantation aristocracy cannot tolerate such changes in the social structure. At a moment when the world is changing, the attempt to hold back all the brutal forces of the past seem wrong to Bayard. He sees his own father becoming cold, ruthless, violent, and tyrannical. Confused by these conflicting and degenerating situations and events, Bayard realizes that dreams like those of his own childhood imaginings, or those of his father, step-mother, and grandmother are destructive because they move well beyond the point of what is necessary or what is real. He has by now started to trust his own instincts.

Even though Bayard himself has started his career with the murder of Grumby, an action before which we always see him in the background since Granny would not have allowed his contributions in the mule-stealing business, he knows that something needs to be done to break the cycle; the Southern code needs to be revised. The opportunity comes soon after his father is murdered, in "The Odor of Verbena"; the male code of behavior demands that Bayard avenge the murder. Professor Wilkins, a quiet old teacher at the college where Bayard, twenty-four, now studies, offers him a pistol and a horse, the male symbols of courage. Ringo suggests "bushwhacking" Redmond as they had done to Grumby; Drusilla offers him, in her own ritualistic manner, the two dueling pistols as she pins on his coat-lapel the sprig of verbena; George Wyatt, his father's assistant, offers him his

own pistol. But Bayard, who has transcended all his romantic dreams, criticized his father's dream for power, defied his step-mother's seductive dream for revenge, has chosen his course of action. He refuses to cause any more bloodshed.

Bayard's act of non-violence proves to be a difficult trial. He carries on himself the heavy burden of his family name, associated with courage, honor, and boldness, love and grief for his father, and above all his own sense of responsibility. He does transcend the social demands and modifies the revenge-code of his people, but he has to confront Redmond in a duel of some kind. He cannot avoid this risky action, the display of his courage. The mythic eye-for-an-eye has culminated in "Thou shall not kill" (p. 249), but he must confront his enemy to embody his community's values. Although he refuses the pistols offered by various people, he knows that he has still to prove his worth so that he is not dishonored in his people's eyes. Only Aunt Jenny, his father's sister, who does not want Bayard to be exposed to this danger, sees this need of his:

"Don't let it be Drusilla, a poor hysterical young woman. And don't let it be him, Bayard, because he is dead now. And don't let it be George Wyatt and those others who will be waiting for you tomorrow morning. I know you are not afraid."

"But what good will that do?" I said. "What

good will that do? . . . I must live with myself, you see." (italics mine)

"Then it's not just Drusilla? Not just him? Not just George Wyatt and Jefferson?"

"No," I said. (p. 276)

Throughout the last scene, Bayard suffers from a violent panting, resulting from deep grief, regret, fear, and also the choking pressure of a desire to prove himself to his people and to himself. After all, he himself has been a Southerner by birth and has been educated and bred by the same code which he had accepted when he was a child, even though he is trying to modify it now. The very acts of facing Redmond, standing firm to face the shots of the older man (a nervous killer now), and driving him away from the town of Jefferson are born out of mental courage which needs to be applauded; and that is exactly what Bayard wants: "'You see, I want to be thought well of'" (p. 280). The panting, which Bayard suffered from earlier is released now as he cries whole-heartedly; to cry earlier would have been unmanly and un-nerving; once his responsibility is over, he gives vent to his emotions.

The community, George Wyatt, Drusilla, and Aunt Jenny are stunned initially but soon compliment his action. That Bayard is not a coward has been proved and everyone, including Bayard, is relieved to know it.

Significantly enough, throughout his last action,

Bayard is accompanied by the sprig of verbena given to him by Drusilla the night before. Bayard does everything the following day "enclosed in the . . . fierce odor of the verbena sprig" (p. 285), the odor which remains in Bayard's consciousness even at that terrible moment of confrontation. Even after his courageous deed, he finds another sprig of verbena left by Drusilla, before she leaves town, as an acknowledgement of his courage and victory. This last sprig of verbena signifies yet another important thing: the promise of a renewal, the expectation of cyclical evolution: this is not the end. Similar situations may arise as the Southern society travels through war and peace. The lingering presence of the odor of verbena, which symbolizes power and glory, also indicates the "lingering presence of history, geography, and personal grief" (Pryse, p. 359). The sprig of verbena is not dead; it is fresh and alive as Faulkner himself confirms:

the fact that that sprig of verbena was alive, now an accolade, that the verbena, even though it looked like it had been stamped out by machine and was traditional was still alive, and there would be another one next year. And that was an accolade of optimism too, that she could have left a note scrawled on a piece of paper but that would have been dead paper and dead ink. This was alive, a promise of renewal for next year. (Gwynn

and Blotner, pp. 255-56)

Bayard himself appears to have realized that this is just one faint gesture of nonviolence in a world where the backdrop is woven by a concept of powerful dictatorialness, racism, and violence. He has a certain conviction that his tiny revolution against the code will not change the age-old beliefs of his people. Melvin Backman's analysis of the autumnal equinox, which "could not seem to occur" (p. 283) as Bayard moves along the street in the hot sun and in a cloud of verbena to Redmond's office, needs to be mentioned at this point. Backman relates the belated autumnal equinox to the Southern code of behavior:

The autumnal equinox is the harbinger of the season when the land may rest from its summer's labors and renew itself for another spring. That the equinox never occurs in "An Odor of Verbena" suggests that the South is not yet ready for renewal. One Christian act of nonviolence cannot put out the bright sun of Southern violence.

(Backman, p. 124)

Bayard knows this sad truth. Accompanied by the sound of a mockingbird, Bayard suddenly thinks that he need not see the body of his father again because his father will be always there in his mind throughout his life:

maybe what Drusilla meant by his dream was not

something which he possessed but something which he had bequeathed us which we could never forget, which would even assume the corporal shape of him whenever any of us, black or white, closed our eyes. (p. 291)

So, it seems as if Bayard cannot shake off the father figure and all that it represents, although he wants to do so, for an unhindered personal growth.

The novel, thus, does not seem to end in optimism as expected. Bayard's nonviolent victory does bring to our mind all the lessons of brotherly love, judgment, and decision, based on justice, truth and honesty, which he learned from his grandmother's early teaching; he has also learned to evaluate and criticize the actions of his loved ones. But he has not overcome his desire to exhibit his courage, and this we know is a dangerous habit of the Southerners. Once the duty of confronting Redmond is over, Bayard allows his tears to flow freely: "'Now it can begin again if it wants to'" (p. 290). This statement is interesting and significant. Not only is it directed toward his relief to have successfully passed his test of courage and responsibility, but it may also be interpreted in the following way: I have done whatever I could to redeem the code; I have no more responsibility; now I can begin once again to live by the code. Frankly speaking, Bayard's meeting with Redmond is not very different from his meeting with Grumby. In both,

he acts as if in a "dream-like state in which there was neither time nor distance" (p. 286); the only difference lies in his handling of the situation. Similar situations may arise in the future, and in all of them we would expect Bayard to act the same way as he has done in these two instances: to face his enemy courageously. He has developed the ability to confront a crises. What is unvanquished, then, is not Bayard's final victory over his society but his ability to see his own reality, the personal choice of action, his privacy. By disowning the oppressive burden of a life of violence, Bayard, in a way, has succeeded in achieving the sanctuary: the Dream of Privacy; and so he remains the unvanquished. On the other hand, it is significant to note that he still remains romantic in his ability to face danger, if the need arises. This characteristic of his nature comes down to him from the indomitability of his society; so, ultimately his romanticism, influenced by his social structure, remains unvanquished too since even he cannot completely escape his childhood dreams.



NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> Edmond L. Volpe, A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner (New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964), p. 77. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Warren Akin IV, "'Blood and Raising and Background': The Plot of The Unvanquished," Modern Language Studies, 2, No. 1 (1980-81), 3-11.

<sup>3</sup> Myra Jehlen, "Death of the Prodigal," Class and Character in Faulkner's South (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1976), pp. 47-73. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie Pryse, "Miniaturizing Yoknapatawpha: The Unvanquished as Faulkner's Theory of Realism," Mississippi Quarterly, 33 (Summer 1980), 343-354.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Any social system or moral code tends to limit the individuality of a man, but by being skeptical of such external pressures, man can learn the lessons of life. While such social limitations teach him how to behave with the people of his own kind, his individuality teaches him how to behave with the rest of humanity. The ability to make a strict distinction between the two is what an individual needs to learn from his experiences. The personality of a man born in the South was generally molded by a myth of uniqueness, the color of his skin, and the fame of his family name. This is the picture of the social system that we get from The Unvanquished, or any other novel by Faulkner. Eventually, family tradition, fame, masculinity, chivalry, prove to be stronger than the attempt of any individual to fight them. And this is the fact which Faulkner seems to hint at with a profuse mention of the lingering odor of verbena at the end of The Unvanquished. The legendary past will not cease to exist, and as long as it remains the dreams of individuals will also be completely molded by it.

After his autobiographical story of the first twenty-four years of his life, we meet Bayard Sartoris II again in

Sartoris, a novel which Faulkner wrote before The Unvanquished. In Sartoris, the same Bayard is at the end of his life, the last few years left before his tragic death. Deaf and old, now, he and old man Falls recapitulate anecdotes of the Civil War and Reconstruction, of the days of their own youth. The fond memories haunt them; Colonel John Sartoris and his stories keep them alive. Even Aunt Jenny, who warned Bayard again and again in "An Odor of Verbena" not to shed any more blood, is churning up tales of her brave brothers and their Confederate heroism, in Sartoris:

she had told the story many times . . . and as she grew older and the tale itself grew richer and richer . . . until what had been a harebrained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth, was become a gallant and finely tragical focal-point to which the history of the race had been raised.<sup>1</sup>

Both old man Falls and Aunt Jenny transmit the stories of the past, but in different ways. Whereas Falls continuously inflates the tales with the passing of days, Aunt Jenny and Bayard sometimes relate them with sarcasm and judgment. Nevertheless, "family history, as Miss Jenny presents it, is like Colonel Sartoris 'dang der'nger,' a treasured relic of the past, still loaded, still serviceable."<sup>2</sup> She deeply believes now that the Sartoris males are fated to a doomed foolhardiness, that any change is impossible.

Likewise, Bayard, though cynical about his ancestor's behavior still has a secret collection of family relics and treasures which he preserves in the darkness of his attic "smelling of dust and silence and ancient disused things" (Sartoris, p. 85). This secret collection in a locked old cedar chest, with "a scent drily and muskily nostalgic, as of old ashes" (Sartoris, p. 86), consists of several things from the past: a brocade garment "dustily yellow," most probably the same old ball-gown that Drusilla wore in "An Odor of Verbena;" a rapier, "a Toledo, a blade delicate and fine . . . just such an implement as a Sartoris would consider the proper equipment for raising tobacco in a virgin wilderness . . . a heavy cavalry sabre and a rosewood case [which contains] two dueling pistols" (Sartoris, p. 86), and a deringer; a long-necked oil-can made of silver and decorated with an ornate wreath with the inscription "Virginia--August 9, 1873." And, among many other things, there is a brass-bound Bible, with yellowish papers mellow with years. Old Bayard muses with this Bible in his hand and all the memories of the past come flooding through his mind:

and again he ran panting through undergrowth while the fading thunder of the smoke-colored stallion swept on in the dusk and the Yankee patrol crashed behind him, crashed fainter and fainter until he crouched with spent, laboring lungs in a brier thicket and heard the pursuit rush on. (Sartoris, p. 88)

As Bayard sits and muses, for a sudden moment he seems to see his own skull staring at himself from the past. Once again, Bayard seems to realize that there is no escape from his haunting past, neither for him, nor for his "dauntless hero" of a grandson, Bayard III. The ghosts of his fathers still haunt them as they fantasize about a heaven which is "filled with every man's illusion of himself and with conflicting illusions of him that parade through the minds of other illusions" (Sartoris, p. 88).

Old Bayard II has witnessed the death of his son John Sartoris II in 1901 by yellow fever and an old Spanish bullet-wound. Recently, one of his twin grandsons, John III, has died in the First World War, and Bayard III, "the other grandson still possessed quickness and all the incalculable portent of his heritage" (Sartoris, p. 86). Although we really do not enter the mind of the old Bayard, we still feel that he is gradually weakening, not fighting anymore, and succumbing to the past. Young Bayard III, on the other hand suffers from irrational guilt at being unable to prove himself a hero, like his martyr twin brother John, and from the very beginning of the novel, we see him fighting against an imaginary cowardice. To make things worse, neither Aunt Jenny or Grandfather Bayard help him overcome his dangerous feelings. The completion of the cycle seems inevitable when Old Bayard, with the intention of preventing the young Bayard from driving fast in his automobile, develops a special fondness for riding with his grandson. Very soon, the

old man dies of a heart attack during one of those wild rides, and young Bayard commits suicide both out of remorse for being responsible for his grandfather's death and to meet the destined end. As Arnold Goldman observes, instead of interfering with his grandson's dangerous desire for stunt, "Old Bayard can only postpone Young Bayard's day of reckoning; he cannot re-interpret the family past . . . or explain how it has come to be interpreted as it is so as to offer his grandson either an alternative mode of response or the possibility of freedom from the net closing about him" (Goldman, p. 113). Thus, both the namesakes end their lives in an anticipated manner. Both seem to regret that they have not trod the requisite path. Thus ultimately, the Sartoris code wins over Bayard's effort to change it; the romantic dream of his childhood, though transformed somewhat, seems to prevail till the end, making him helplessly give in to his mythic past.

At the end of Sartoris, Miss Jenny stands at the family cemetery contemplating the past life of her family and she thinks what a joke it has been for Bayard II being born "too late for one war and too soon for the next. . . . They had played on him--forbidding him opportunities for swashbuckling" (Sartoris, p. 298). She knows that Bayard's end is natural since even he, with all his unwillingness to repeat family history, has been infected with "the virus, the inspiration and example of that one which dominated them all"--John Sartoris I (Sartoris, p. 298). Incidentally, although

that day when he was supposed to take vengeance on his father's murder, Bayard had acted against the expectancy of his community, he ultimately had his revenge in his older days. On the headstone of his father's tomb, he had inscribed the words "'For man's enlightenment he lived / By man's ingratitude he died' . . . This inscription had caused some furor on the part of the slayer's family" (Sartoris, p. 299).

Faulkner seems to have been concerned with the Southerner's defect in interpretations of history and the possible effects due to such interpretations. As Arnold Goldman comments, "Faulkner charged the recitation of [the] past with psychological implication: it is a matter of who 'recalls' what in Southern history, when and why" (Goldman, p. 109). Instead of citing exactly what happened in the past or what certain people actually did, the Southerners had a tendency to interpret facts in their own desired way. Not only did they interpret the past in their own way, but they also started believing their own interpretations and passed on the story to their inheritors. Their whole life began to be molded by such myths, and dreams of wish-fulfillment seemed to be a natural outcome of this. Michael Millgate explains this whole process in relation to Faulkner's treatment of the past:

in the narrative prologues what Faulkner stresses again and again is that in the process of

surviving through time mankind exhausts many versions or avatars of itself, each version becoming obsolete in its turn and giving way to a new life. Life, as Faulkner so often insisted, is motion: men and societies change, become more complex, more self-conscious: there are increasing restrictions on individual freedom, although these are not necessarily inimical to the fulfilment of individual potential; the fundamental human strengths and weaknesses remain essentially unchanged.<sup>3</sup>

In The Unvanquished, this is exactly what Faulkner seems to show us through the various types of dreams of the various stereotypical characters of the South.



NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup> William Faulkner, Sartoris, A Signet Classic (New York, N.Y.: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1964), p. 25. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold Goldman, "Faulkner's Images of the Past: from Sartoris to The Unvanquished," The Yearbook of English Studies, 8 (1978), 109-124. Subsequent paginal references to this source will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Millgate, "'The Firmament of Man's History': Faulkner's Treatment of the Past," Mississippi Quarterly Supplement, 25 (Winter 1971-Fall 1972), 25-35.

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