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POPULAR FAULKNER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF “THE NATIONAL VOICE”
ACROSS THE BAYARD AND RINGO STORIES

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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To Claire,

as a monument

to our adventure in Oklahoma.

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Popular Faulkner: The Development of "The National Voice" Across the Bayard and Ringo Stories

Many critics have taken Faulkner's decision to write a "cosmos of my own," his fictional Yoknapatawpha county established in 1929 with the writing of *Flags in the Dust*, as a withdrawal from contemporary issues of the nation at large. The high-modernist style, regional inflection of its content and his peak popularity coinciding with the rise of New Criticism in the United States literary scene have led to a dominant tradition of Faulkner novels being read in a formalist vacuum. Thus, recent studies like Ted Atkinson's *Faulkner and the Great Depression* and Kevin Railley's *Natural Aristocracy* have been both unique and invaluable for placing Faulkner's work in the ideological framework of the Great Depression-era United States. For Atkinson, that means locating

> Faulkner's most important novels within a framework that examines the ideological milieu in which their writing took place. For the various social and political formations—from the New Deal to the American Liberty League to Southern Agrarianism to the Dixiecrat revolt to the Communist Party to the Popular Front—the fundamental challenge posed was quintessentially American: how to make many voices speaking out in plurality function as a whole. In turning from the dynamics of this world to plan "a cosmos of my own," Faulkner represents this dilemma as a problem of form [...] Implicit in the form are the assertions that a collective purpose can be served and that a whole story can be told.[1]

Despite the importance of excavating this framework, the focus on only Faulkner's novelistic production leaves the feeling that the whole story is not being told. In fact, the text Atkinson discusses at his monograph's conclusion, *The Unvanquished*, has a

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[1] Ted Atkinson, *Faulkner and the Great Depression*, (Athens, GA and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2006), 53-52.

unique story of its own—moving from the pages of the most influential magazine in the history of American media to popular and critical success as a novel before eventually being largely forgotten by Faulkner's audience. Following the history of these texts—the Bayard and Ringo stories as they were written for the *Saturday Evening Post*, revised for the subsequent novel *The Unvanquished*, and revived for a final time in "My Grandmother Millard"—it is possible to delineate the development of what Faulkner termed "the national voice,"[2] with his works expanding the extent of his reading public.

That the first Bayard and Ringo stories were published in *The Saturday Evening Post* is of greater significance than just the high fee they acquired for the author. The *Post* was, quite simply, a dominant influence in American media throughout the first four decades of the twentieth century. Reaching as many as "one out of every nine American readers" at its height, the magazine maintained a "powerful, because essentially unchallenged, [hold] on mass society."[3] More amazing still, the success of the *Post* was due to a single man, George Horace Lorimer, who, in the words of Jan Cohn

> set out to create America in and through the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Week after week he crafted the issues of his magazine as an image, an idea, a construct of America for his readers to share, a model against which they could shape their lives. Certainly, there were other magazines, other carriers of culture, and other visions of America, but for over a quarter of a century the *Post* was

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[2] William Faulkner, *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, Edited by Joseph Blotner, (Franklin Center, PA: The Franklin Library, 1976), 204.

[3] Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989): 5.

> unrivaled in codifying the ground rules that explained and defined Americanism. Despite the vast changes in American society between 1899 and 1936, what the *Post* achieved was the fullest expression of a broad American consensual view.[4]

Lorimer his hand on every issue, reading and reviewing every word to appear on its pages, ensuring that the worldview of the magazine stayed consistent on all fronts. From its news, editorials, fiction, to advertisements and photos, Lorimer built his ideal, hardworking American. This American was "a compendium of nineteenth-century values; he worked hard, saved money, and assumed the duties of citizenship responsibly," and, "was pragmatic and self-reliant, dedicated to his own social and economic betterment, but always within the constraints of law and decency." His America, the background against which this ideal citizen lived, was a "land of opportunity, a land without fixed classes or social barriers, [where] it was entirely possible to rise without abridging the rights or opportunities of others," and that "Progress was limitless, both personally and nationally, and hard work and honesty were the only prerequisites for success."[5] For just a nickel per week, Americans of the early twentieth century could turn to the *Post* for balanced news, opinions, guidance, how-to articles, along with some art, and a good amount of fiction in the form of short stories or serialized novels.[6]

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[4] Cohn, 5.

[5] Ibid., 10.

[6] Lorimer insisted the price remain a nickel throughout his entire tenure, expanding and contracting the magazine as needed to ensure profitability. With issues at times exceeding two-hundred pages and some still exceeding one-hundred at the height of the Great Depression, the *Post* was almost always a good value.

It seems clear that Faulkner and the *Post* enjoyed a testy relationship due to the fundamental differences between editor and author. The meticulously edited magazine, with attention to every word, theme, and action, could not mesh with Faulkner's staccato bursts of short story production, writing whatever came to him and sending off the result to every magazine that would pay a suitable fee. Further, Faulkner's tendency toward darker tones or themes excluded his work from consideration in what always remained a family magazine. As John Tebbel, both a biographer and former employee of Lorimer, writes, "Only one ironclad rule was imposed on every writer: there must never be an off-color situation, an indecent word or suggestion in a Saturday Evening Post [sic] story."[7] Considering the gamut of Faulkner stories ranging from the lewd ("Afternoon of a Cow") to the grotesque ("A Rose for Emily"), it is not difficult to see how this rule disqualified many of his stories before even reaching the demanding eyes of Lorimer. After having stories rejected in 1927, Faulkner famously warned the *Post*: "hark in your ear: I am a coming man, so take warning."[8] Facing more rejections and the failure of his warning, he included a long, humorous postscript in a 1931 letter pleading for publication:

> P.S. The aforesaid Faulkner has a new baby and a new roof, both acquired on credit; hence his motives in writing you would not have been pure. Needless to say, mine are.

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[7] John Tebbel, *George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1948): 47.

[8] Quoted in Cohn, 247.

> P.P.S. Speaking of this baby: the other day this Faulkner told a friend, an old farmer, the good news.
>
> "How much did it weigh?" farmer says?
>
> "Three pounds," Faulkner says.
>
> "Well, don't feel bad about that," farmer says. "What with this Hoover prosperity and the drouth last summer, a fellow does well to get his seed back."[9]

Warning and comedy, however, gave way to resentment when it came to the Bayard-Ringo stories: while the *Post* accepted the first three stories, they refused to pay what Faulkner expected for the series. At a time where Faulkner was split between short stories, his novel *Absalom, Absalom!*, and his work as a scriptwriter in Hollywood, always with a bill or debt threatening, the *Post*'s expectations that he not only take a lesser fee but also use precious time making specific revisions led to understandable frustration. After having the second arc of stories sent back, Faulkner responded angrily to his story agent Morton Goldman in 1934:

> As far as I am concerned, while I have to write trash, I dont care who buys it, as long as they pay the best price I can get […] anytime that I sacrifice a high price to a lower one it will not be to refrain from antagonizing the Post; it will be to write something better than a pulp series like this.[10]

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[9] Quoted in Cohn, 248.

[10] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 104.

This letter, taken out of context, is usually used as the definitive proof that Faulkner's interest in the stories, and later *The Unvanquished*, was purely monetary, positioning his novels like *Absalom* as the "something better." Such a reading, however, ignores the fact that he met with the *Post*'s editor, made the changes, and that the driving force behind rewriting and publishing *The Unvanquished* was Faulkner himself. The present dismissal of the Bayard-Ringo stories as second-rate Faulkner focuses on a few frustrated lines between agent and author, ignoring the significant context, authorial investment, and original reception of the work.

Despite the influence of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Faulkner's relationship to the magazine, and the centrality of George Horace Lorimer's role, the famous editor is of so little importance to Faulkner scholarship that "Lorimer" fails to appear in the index of many monographs, even those dealing with *Post* stories or *The Unvanquished*. This seems especially glaring in light of the fact that Faulkner met with Lorimer while revising the Bayard-Ringo stories for the *Post*. David Minter's biography, for example, does not mention the editor at all, much less the meeting, and Joseph Blotner's few references—two in his biography of Faulkner and a single footnote in the *Selected Letters*—are made about "Graeme Lorimer," who was George Horace's son and an associate editor. However, Hans Skei's work in *William Faulkner: The Short Story Career* points to George Horace Lorimer as the editor Faulkner dealt with at the *Post* (even then, only in a footnote),[11] and we know that it was George Horace Lorimer was who Faulkner dealt with directly before operating through an agent, Goldman, in 1931.

[11] Hans Skei, *William Faulkner: The Short Story Career* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981): 117-118, note 6.

Further, the descriptions of both Tebbel and Cohn strongly suggest Lorimer's role at the *Post* ensured that it was the elder George Horace whom Faulkner would have interacted with.[12] To refer back to Faulkner's letter about the meeting, we only get (the misspelled) "Lorrimer, Sat. Eve. Post."[13] For Lorimer's part, records are in ways even more sparse: he left only a small collection of correspondences that "are too fragmentary to serve as more than autographs,"[14] reflecting his refusal to write an autobiography because "it was being written every week in the Post."[15] Thus, a biographical project that attempts to recover the relationship to the two men seems both difficult and of niche interest to both Faulkner and Lorimer scholarship.

This thesis instead seeks to map the point of contact between Lorimer's America of the *Post* and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha county. In writing and rewriting his stories to meet the exigencies of the *Post*, Faulkner's work by necessity took on a contemporary political relevance not seen in his earlier work. By examining the content and context of Faulkner's Bayard-Ringo stories in the *Post*, their revision into *The*

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[12] Graeme's function as associate editor is difficult to discern: with few references to the son in Tebbel's work, none in Cohn's, and nothing of note available on the internet, his role seems to be largely relegated to collecting material for G.H. Lorimer to review, politely declining unwanted contributors, and filling the masthead on each issue. This is somewhat surprising considering Graeme is pointed out as an important source for Tebbel's work in the foreward (viii). Further, Tebbel's work notes that Graeme left the *Post* sometime after 1934 to write, though it remains unclear on exactly when (236). What is clear is that no one in the *Post* organization had any level of final creative control other than G.H.L., who read and approved every line of each issue.

[13] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 114.

[14] Cohn, 18.

[15] Tebbel, 2.

Unvanquished, and the final iteration as "My Grandmother Millard," we can chart the development of a "popular" Faulkner learning to become "articulate in the national voice." To use the more specific terminology of Michael Warner in "Publics and Counterpublics," there is a growing reflexivity in the Bayard-Ringo texts that demonstrates the ability to "characterize the world in which [they] attempt to circulate […] [and then] attempt to realize that world through address."[16] In effect, we see the development of Faulkner simply making a poetic world in Yoknapatawpha to what Warner terms "poetic world making."[17] Far from a nostalgic nod to the past, Faulkner uses these stories to respond to contemporary issues facing the nation. Written alongside the great novel, the first Bayard and Ringo stories represent Faulkner's popular *Absalom, Absalom!* written for the national audience of *The Saturday Evening Post*. In recomposing the texts as *The Unvanquished*, elements from the stories and novel are fused to simultaneously satisfy both of the then-distinct Faulkner publics and resolve the weaknesses in each. Then, finally, "My Grandmother Millard" closes the Bayard-Ringo saga with an almost propagandistic story that most clearly demonstrates aspirations toward constructing an American public, as well as the author's continued reliance on the characters and setting as valued tools in such work.

The Bayard and Ringo Stories

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[16] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics" *Public Culture* 14 (1) (2002): 81.

[17] Ibid., 82.

It is well-recounted in Faulkner scholarship that his most significant foray into Civil War fiction began with a letter to his publisher Hal Smith in February of 1934. In only a paragraph, Faulkner sketches the basics of the Sutpen tale and his reliance on Quentin Compson's voice to ensure "that it is not complete apocypha." "I use his bitterness," Faulkner writes, "to get more out of the story itself than a historical novel would be… To keep the hoop skirts and plug hats out, you might say."[18] Using the working title left over from *The Light in August*, he tentatively called the project "DARK HOUSE," though it would eventually be released as *Absalom, Absalom!* two years later and eventually become one of Faulkner's most respected novels.

Faulkner was not, of course, working on *Absalom, Absalom!* in isolation. While it may have been his most serious project from an artistic point of view, it would also not produce royalties for years. With the concerns of managing Rowan Oak, supporting his family, and paying various taxes looming, publishing short stories and completing script work in Hollywood proved the most reliable sources of income. *The Saturday Evening Post*, having paid handsomely for previous stories, was a natural target for "boiling the pot." Thus, in an attempt to create a reliable stream of income, Faulkner began writing the Bayard and Ringo stories with *SEP* publication in mind. These stories focused on the childhood experiences of Bayard Sartoris—a character introduced as an old man in the very first Yoknapatawpha novel *Flags in the Dust*[19]—and his slave sidekick Marengo (Ringo) Strother as they lived during the Civil War and Union

[18] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 97.

[19] While *Flags in the Dust* was written in 1927, it was at first only published as the considerably shortened *Sartoris* in 1929. Not until 1973 would the original, uncut manuscript be released under its original title.

occupation. Written through children's eyes, the stories present the most romantic images of the conflict in Faulkner's oeuvre, with swashbuckling Confederate cavalry, incompetently humorous Yankees, and "good" slaves burying the family silver dutifully outside the plantation home. It would be wrong, however, to accept these images uncritically as Faulkner's own viewpoint or a concession to audience expectations. Bayard's romanticizing frame is used to blunt a dark, starkly realist view of the conflict's effect on civilian populations. Far from a nostalgic nod to the past, Faulkner uses these stories to respond to contemporary issues facing the nation.

A point that has been rarely noted in Faulkner scholarship is the complicated publication history of these five stories. The first arc of the Bayard and Ringo stories, "Ambuscade," "Retreat," and "Raid," appeared late in 1934, after Faulkner began work on *Dark House* and the first round of Roosevelt's New Deal programs had added approximately three billion dollars to the national debt. The second arc, comprised of the stories "The Unvanquished" and "Vendée," would not appear for two more years—a time frame in which Faulkner would finish the renamed *Absalom, Absalom!* and the more controversial "Second New Deal" began the process of adding seven billion more dollars to the national debt. However, Faulkner did not simply work on the stories in two bursts of activity but worked and reworked the stories throughout the entire period between 1934 and 1936.

The first three stories—the 1934 arc—are tinged with a sense of adventure that most warrants the charge of "romanticism" from critics. Indeed, the stories read more like *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* than anything from Yoknapatawpha. Beginning with the two young boys "playing Vicksburg" in the yard, the stories plunge

readers into a war that feels at times no less fanciful than a children's game: the boys shooting blindly at a Union scout and killing the regiment's prized race horse, Colonel Sartoris and "Lieutenant Marengo" scaring a group of Yankees out of their clothes through trickery, and gullible Federal cavalrymen left holding their saddles as the family makes off with their horses. These romantic, even fun episodes of the war are effective in overshadowing the darker elements: the soldiers stealing the family silver and burning the plantation, the boys observing the destroyed countryside left in the wake of occupation, and the horde of ostensibly emancipated slaves being violently abandoned to their fate by exasperated Northern forces. The effect is that war as a conflict is presented with the romanticism of a child—unsurprising considering our narrator is a young boy who idolizes his father's involvement in the conflict. It is the social and property cost of the conflict, the scourge of destruction and want away from the frontline and apart from the clash of arms, that is presented with the blunt realism of a child who seemingly fails to realize the connections between the home front and frontlines.

Faulkner's audience, however, would realize the connection, and, further, the similarity between the ravages of the war and those of the ongoing Depression. Readers see the family, deprived of commodities like sweets, reading a cookbook for dessert, imagining a coconut cake; sharing a dilapidated cabin with hung sheets for walls; and writing letters on pieces of scrap with "pokeberry juice." "One national crisis," Atkinson says of the Depression, "prompted American cultural memory to reflect on another as a way of coping with the hardship and hoping for recovery."[20] *The Saturday*

[20] Atkinson, 223.

Evening Post's investment in Civil War fiction, in keeping with Lorimer's vision, stemmed from both popular taste as well as the conflict's heightening relevance to the ongoing Depression.[21] Even short stories like Faulkner's needed to speak to the ongoing situation, Cohn finds:

> Even those stories most innocent of 'intention' were partners in the job of constructing America for the *Post* audience; westerns, historical romances, sports fiction were all spun out of the collective web of a comprehensible society, a society built on fair play and individual initiative and common sense.[22]

The fact that Faulkner had managed to publish three war stories even prior to the Bayard-Ringo stories—"Thrift," "Turnabout," and "Mountain Victory"—reflects the trend toward such fiction since the beginning of the Depression. This was, further, particularly important in light of G.H. Lorimer's "open revolt" against Roosevelt and his New Deal.[23]

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[21] Atkinson further points out how "During the Depression, Americans could find cultural representations of the Civil War in abundance," providing a list of the many novels and films produced at the time: novels including T. S. Stribling's *The Forge* (1931), *Unfinished Cathedral* (1934), and *The Sound Wagon* (1936); Roark Bradford's *Kingdom Coming* (1933); Caroline Gordon's *None Shall Look Back* (1937); Allen Tate's *The Fathers* (1938); Stark Young's *So Red the Rose* (1934); Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936); as well as films like D. W. Griffith's *Abraham Lincoln* (1930); John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940); *Operator 13* (1934); *The Littlest Rebel* (1935); *The Little Colonel* (1935); *Jezebel* (1938); *So Red the Rose* (1934); and *Gone with the Wind* (1939) (222-223). By 1958, the *Saturday Evening Post* had published enough Civil War stories to fill an anthology: *The Post Reader of Civil War Fiction* (New York: Doubleday, 1958).

[22]Cohn, 7.

[23] Tebbel, 198.

Lorimer's—and thus, the *Post*'s—resistance to the New Deal at first hinged on the plan's experimental nature and the perceived foreign nature of the ideas. Believing in "some New Deal objectives," but objecting to "Mr. Roosevelt's methods of attaining them,"[24] Lorimer felt the programs misguided at best and insidiously Marxist at worst. In a statement of the *Post*'s position, the questions around the New Deal transcend party affiliation:

> THE SATURDAY EVENING POST is neither a Republican nor a Democratic organ… [The *Post*] does not condone the abuses of power and trust of the Republican party while it was in office, and it cannot indorse those policies and experiments of the New Deal that look to the left… It is safer to put over one sound plan than a dozen doubtful experiments. Recovery is important, but the fundamental issue today is the preservation of Democracy and our traditional American liberties along with recovery […] It is impossible to escape the conclusion that today we are having government by amateurs—college boys, irrespective of their age—who, having drunk deep, perhaps of the Pierian spring, have recently taken some healthy swigs of Russian vodka. We cannot solve our problems with a discredited European ideology and a Marxian philosophy.[25]

"The question before the American people," the editorial asks readers, is "Do we want a democratic or collectivist system?" Framed by cartoons displaying a distraught "democratic ideal" surrounded by caricatures of militarism, Nazi-ism, Fascism,

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[24] Tebbel, 199.

[25] "The Great Illusion," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 206, Issue 41 (1934): 24.

Imperialism, and Communism reflecting “political, social, [and] economic turmoil,” the reader is expected to quell “[t]he great illusion of the moment” by returning to American values.[26] Thus, the *Post* at first avoided outright conflict with the president, suggesting to readers that recovery was better accomplished replacing the “Brains Trust” with reliance on traditional, common-sense American thinking.

We see this sense of distrust—as opposed to outright hostility—in the early arc of Faulkner’s stories. Particularly important to the first three stories, in this context, is the centrality of the Sartoris family silver. Colonel Sartoris returns home in “Ambuscade” to hide it, Granny attempts to take it to Memphis in “Retreat,” and finally they must chase down a Yankee officer in “Raid” to attempt to recover their silver. This is more than a trope of Civil War fiction, however, as Atkinson points out:

> In Civil War lore, the buried or lost family treasure is an elusive and illusory signifier for once-held status and material wealth. In terms of relating [Faulkner’s stories] to its Depression context, however, the Sartoris family silver represents economic security and the viability of property rights, assuming the Faulkner’s [writing] does not join L. Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* in staging an allegory of the debate over replacing the gold standard with a bimetallic one.[27]

While the stories are not repeating Baum’s allegory, an allegory belonging to what was quickly becoming the previous era of American politics, the stories should in fact be

[26] “The Great Illusion,” 25.

[27] Atkinson, 230.

read against the then contemporary issues *Saturday Evening Post* readers would recognize: the leaving of the gold standard and the nationalization of silver. Figures like Garet Garrett, an important writer for the *Post*, made this issue a major point of the magazine's common-sense agenda. More pointedly, Garrett's article "The Forgotten Road," chastising the British government and Roosevelt's administration for leaving "the sound-money road" of the gold standard, would have been read alongside "Ambuscade," appearing in the same issue.[28] Through the extension of the Trading with the Enemy Act, Executive Order 6102, and Executive Order 6814, Roosevelt outlawed the hoarding of gold and nationalized the country's silver, essentially removing the country from the gold standard and neutralizing any thought of a silver or bimetallic standard. Despite being of little political significance today, the issue of silver as a monetary standard was formational in establishing the Fourth Party System of the Progressive era after the economic depression of 1893 and the subsequent Republican victories caused the nation to adopt the gold standard in 1896. Progressives, farmers, and populists of the South, West, and Middle West looked to "free silver" to bring more money into the economy to ease the depression, while conservatives and investors wanted the *de facto* gold standard to be made official for the metal's tendency toward deflation and ease of international exchange. Herbert Hoover's administration made maintaining the gold standard a central element of their platform, fearing the hyperinflation experienced by the paper German mark, but Roosevelt felt stemming a

[28] Garet Garrett, "The Forgotten Road," *The Saturday Evening Post* vol. 203, iss. 13, 32.

run on the banks of greater importance and moved the country toward fiat currency for the first time since the Civil War.[29]

In a similar move, the Sartorises attempt through the first three stories to get their silver to the market—represented by Memphis—only to fail and return it home to be buried and taken out of circulation. Federal forces, an apt representative of the federal government, raze the homestead and make off with the silver just as, in less dramatic fashion, Roosevelt nationalized the metal. And when Granny leads her odyssey to retrieve their wealth from the Union forces, she's met with bureaucratic incompetence in spite of her clarity—describing to Colonel Dick and his orderly exactly her possessions as "[A] chest of silver tied with hemp rope. The rope was new. Two darkies, Loosh and Philadelphy. The mules. Old Hundred and Tinney."[30]—the orderly produces a document, equal parts official and flawed, that Faulkner elects to represent it in its entirety:

Field Headquarters,

----th Army Corps,

Department of Tennessee

August 14, 1864

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[29] It should be noted that it was actually Richard Nixon who *de jure* ended the gold standard in 1971, FDR *de facto* ended the standard by devaluing the exchange rate.

[30] William Faulkner, "Raid," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 207, Issue 18 (1934): 77.

> *To all Brigade, Regimental and Other Commanders:* You will see that bearer is repossessed in full of the following property, to wit: Ten (10) chests tied with hemp rope and containing silver. One hundred ten (110) mules captured loose near Philadelphia in Mississippi. One hundred ten (110) Negroes of both sexes belonging to and having strayed from the same locality.
>
> You will further see that bearer is supplied with necessary food and forage to expedite his passage to his destination.
>
> By order of the General Commanding.

Granny at first fears that the mistake is so obvious as to surely cause the group trouble, but the party quickly finds the document's authority transcends reason or practicality. At Ringo's prodding, they requisition not only the outrageously large number of mules but also the horses of Union cavalry unit, left "[standing] under a tree by road, with their saddles and bridles on the ground beside them" while its commander tells his sergeant impotently, "What else can I do? […] It's the general's own signature!"[31] Thus, despite the travails of the family and the desolation witnessed by Bayard, the three-story arc represents a relatively mild rebuttal of the first round of New Deal policies taking the form of humor at the expense of government bureaucrats. The tone of the stories remains upbeat and bright, thanks to the narrator's naivete, and the action resolves with little anguish. While the Depression's devastating nature is mirrored through the war, Faulkner goes to lengths to describe Federal leadership in positive

[31] Faulkner, "Raid," 78.

terms—with Granny going so far as to confidently rebut a Confederate officer's warning, stating, "My experience with Yankees has evidently been different from yours"[32]— leaving an impression that while the policies might be misguided or inefficient, they are not quite sinister.

This all changes dramatically in the second arc of the *Saturday Evening Post* stories, "The Unvanquished," and "Vendée," where the *Tom Sawyer*-like simplicity of the first three stories are replaced with a darker revenge-tragedy narrative more closely mirroring the Henry-Bon elements of *Absalom, Absalom!* So total is this change that even the weather plays a part: the sunny days of youth are replaced with constant references to darkness and storms. Appearing two years after the first stories, in the latter half of 1936, the concluding segments of the Bayard and Ringo adventure explore the potential for corruption suggested comically at the close of the first arc and thrust the boys forward into an early maturity. When reviewing the historical factors for this radical new trajectory, two particular factors stand out against the rest: the increasingly divisive nature of the Second New Deal and an unparalleled level of attention to the *Post*'s message.

The changing situations of the late twenties and thirties had tested the *Post* and Lorimer's central thesis on the American character. From the boom, to the crash, to the New Deal, Cohn argues that "Lorimer found Americans turning away from the last of the quintessential characteristics of Americanism […] [and that where] The nation had abandoned hard work and thrift in the boom years; under the New Deal it jettisoned

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[32] William Faulkner, "Retreat," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 207, Issue 15 (1934): 82.

self-reliance."[33] The dole had been a fear of the *SEP* at least since the editorial "The Dole Evil" in 1931, warning that if America followed the British path the dole would ensure "Even the most fortunately placed of citizens will shrug their shoulders and refuse to take responsibility."[34] While the first programs had only drawn the distrust of Lorimer, the Second New Deal's more radical programs encouraged outright opposition. 1936 being an election year, Lorimer threw all of the *Post*'s influence against Roosevelt's reelection campaign in an effort to stem disaster.

Another important factor weighed in the balance as well: already an older man and unknowingly suffering the early stages of a fatal illness, Lorimer was keenly aware that his time at the *Post* was coming to an end, and he was planning to retire in January of 1937. Waging a personal crusade against the sitting president as his last action as *Post* editor, Lorimer took an unprecedented level of control during the 1936 campaign season. Despite the hard work of its editor, Alf Landon's crushing defeat in November was the first time "he had been so wrong in interpreting America, after three decades of near infallibility," proving that "the Post had lost its political influence."[35] "The Unvanquished" was published just over a week after the election; "Vendée" just weeks before Lorimer's retirement.

Thus, Lorimer's insistence on revisions, pushing the stories' publication back years and requiring face-to-face meetings between editor and author, were both intentional, a final effort to reach and maintain the American public he had built at the

[33] Cohn, 13.

[34] "The Dole Evil" *Saturday Evening Post* Volume 203, Issue 34 (1931): 20.

[35] Tebbel, 204-205.

Post, and totally unlike Faulkner's previous fire-and-forget experience with the short story as a genre. While there is little historical evidence available as to what exactly was said, the sheer time elapsed between the completion of the stories first draft in late 1934, the meeting in October 1935, and eventual publication in the Fall of 1936 suggests Lorimer's need for the stories' coherence to his vision and Faulkner's begrudging willingness to invest valuable time in spite of the unsatisfactory fee.[36]

Lorimer's influence no doubt impacted the course of the narrative, but it is also abundantly clear that Faulkner increasingly came to share a similar stance toward the New Deal—increasingly antagonized as Roosevelt increased its scope. While Faulkner remained publicly reticent on political issues during this period, Blotner recounts that "Out at Greenfield Farm two of his mules had names of a different kind from the rest. One was called Jim Farley [Roosevelt's campaign manager]; the other, Eleanor Roosevelt."[37] Even in later work like "The Tall Men" and *Go Down, Moses*, appearing after Faulkner began developing a more public persona, his criticisms come through characters rather than personal statements. Where the first New Deal programs were the subject of bureaucratic comedy, the programs of the second are scathingly referred to as "a fine loud gabble and snatch of AAA and WPA and a dozen other three-letter reasons for a man not to work."[38] These policies, as Faulkner describes through the McCallums of "The Tall Men," began with

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[37] Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography – One Volume Edition* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2005), 412.

[38] William Faulkner, *Collected Stories of William Faulkner* (New York: Vintage, 1995), 58.

> "[…] the Government [interfering] with how a man farmed his own land, raised his cotton. Stabilizing the price, using up the surplus, they called it, giving a man advice and help, whether he wanted it or not […] [then] the Government telling them how much they could raise and how much they could sell it for, and where, and when, and then pay them for not doing the work they didn't do […] even if they never had no not-cotton to be paid for."[39]

The concept of the dole, of men being paid not to work, struck Faulkner, along with many conservatives, as deeply unethical and a potentially corruptive force. These programs, bringing the formerly independent farmers into urban areas "and transform[ing] them into recipients of public handouts," upset the balance of life. "He didn't like what he saw," said his younger brother John Faulkner, "what the W.P.A. was doing to them, his people."[40] John felt as strongly about the negative effects of programs like the WPA to begin a writing career of his own, creating satirical novels on the topic. Roth Edmonds, a character in *Go Down Moses*, demonstrates a similar cynicism about the country's direction in the midst of the New Deal and on the eve of the Second World War, asking his fellow hunters, what will happen

> "After Hitler gets through with [the country]? Or Smith or Jones or Roosevelt or Willkie or whatever he will call himself in this country? […] And what have you got left? […] Half the people without jobs and half the factories closed by strikes. Half the people on public dole that wont work and half that couldn't

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[39] Ibid., 57.

[40] Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography Two Volume Edition*, Volume 2 (New York: Random House, 1974) 1070.

work even if they would. Too much cotton and corn and hogs, and not enough for people to eat and wear."[41]

Once the dole had "sap[ped] the virility and self-reliance of our race," in Winston Churchill's negative description, what would be left of the country? Speaking again through the marshal of "The Tall Men," Faulkner reflects: "Life's a pretty durn valuable thing […] [and] I don't mean just getting along from one WPA relief check to the next one, but honor and pride and discipline that make a man worth preserving, make him of any value." "Maybe," he wonders, "it takes trouble, bad trouble, to teach it back to us."[42]

In "The Unvanquished" this bad trouble occurs. Granny and Ringo, having learned the absolute power of a signature to a bureaucrat, turn their solitary indiscretion into a proper scheme: the pair working together to scout Federal forces, forge requisition orders, and steal hundreds of mules. Abner Snopes then takes the animals to Memphis to sell back to the Union Army for easy money. Just as the New Deal administrators erroneously paid for "not-cotton," the Union Army finds itself paying for the same mules. Despite the communal good Granny accomplishes through this scheme, distributing money and excess mules to local families in need through the church, corruption proves an unstoppable contagion. The mere presence of a Snopes, as anyone familiar with Yoknapatawpha would recognize, strongly indicates moral decay. Thus, after being caught by the Federals, Ab Snopes suggests running the scheme a final time

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[41] William Faulkner, "Delta Autumn" in *The Portable William Faulkner*, edited by Malcolm Crowley (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 638.

[42] Faulkner, *Collected Stories*, 60.

on a group called Grumby's Independents—ostensibly Confederate raiders raiding their own countryside—and "Granny listening and believing him because she still believed that what side of a war a man fought on made him what he is." Telling her "all [she] had to do was to write out one of the orders and sign [General] Forrest's name to it" the job seemed the easiest yet, as "he, Ab, would guarantee to get two thousand dollars for the horses."[43] Despite everyone's pleas that she reconsider, Granny adamantly forges the document, telling Bayard and Ringo "I am taking no risk; I am a woman. Even Yankees do not harm old women." Bayard, struggling for words recall the moment, enters the abandoned compress well after hearing the shot, finding the once indominable Granny

> Look[ing] like she had collapsed, like she had been made out of a lot of little thin dry light sticks notched together and braced with cord, and now the cord had broken and all the little sticks had collapsed in a quiet heap on the floor, and somebody had spread a clean and faded calico dress over them.[44]

As if to punctuate the darkened atmosphere that has descended and the raised stakes, this is the first time death is witnessed in the stories. Bayard struggles to put this into words, for the first time leaving realism for a more Faulknerian metaphor.

The story that follows, "Vendée," becomes both a revenge tragedy as well as *bildungsroman*, following the boys as they hunt down and eventually kill the criminal Grumby, bringing his body back to display as a trophy. Where Bayard acts a relatively passive observer to this point, he proves himself capable of heroic action in the moment

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[43] William Faulkner, "The Unvanquished," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 209, Issue 20 (1936): 128.

[44] Ibid., 130.

and successfully upholds the Sartoris family honor. What is most notable, however, is the recognition at the end of the story by the boys that "It wasn't [Grumby] or Ab Snopes either that kilt her […] It was them mules. That first batch of mules we got for nothing."[45] Corruption, the anathema to civic republicanism and Lorimer's representative American, stands out as the true enemy. In a time with a watermark need for communal cooperation and personal responsibility, the New Deal legislation threatened to introduce corruption at the community level, inhibiting recovery. Having Granny, the ostensible moral compass of the stories, succumb to corruption for commendable purposes demonstrates how such corruption affects not only the selfish, like Ab Snopes, and criminal, like Grumby, but also the morally upstanding. The theme of misunderstanding or failing to understand leading to such corruption is the common thread between Faulkner's stories of this period. Just as Pearson, the government bureaucrat of "The Tall Men," failed to understand the "country people" under his authority which caused him to fail, so too are the Union soldiers duped by their unfamiliarity and assumptions. Once the source of easy money fails, as when the Yankees retreat from Jefferson or when Roosevelt's plan collapses, the people will be left in a dark and turbulent place, having lost their American sensibilities.[46]

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[45] William Faulkner, "Vendée," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 209, Issue 23 (1936): 94.

[46] This is not to mention even Grumby's status as an "alien" of sorts in Yoknapatawpha and the war at large. The opposite to Lorimer's American was the alien or immigrant, and as such the *Post* could be seen as xenophobic or even racist at moments. "The *Post* had long seen nearly all aliens as radicals" Cohn writes, and during the Depression "[they came to see] nearly all radicals as aliens" (223-224).

Just three issues after the conclusion of the Bayard-Ringo series, the longtime editor stepped down. In Lorimer's last act as head of the *Post*, writing a full-page farewell addressing the past and future of the publication, we see the attitude conveyed through the stories mirrored in editorial language:

> As we have repeatedly stated on [the pages of the *Post*], we are in sympathy with some of the New Deal objectives. Our criticism has been for hasty measures that have not been thought through, by which it has sought to remake our country overnight […] In my own lifetime I have seen such ruthless exploitation of men and resources, but in spite of this America has always forged ahead on the courage and initiative of its private citizens. And steadily, through all that period, I have seen business practices and ethics grow better; I have seen sentiment developing against the waste and exploitation of our natural resources, and a public conscience hardening against the old abuses. Could a paternalistic government have done better? I venture to doubt it. Granting all the waste, the ruthlessness, and the loose ethics of the past, America has done a pretty good job and no Ism would have done a better one. To exchange one form of ruthlessness that is steadily growing less, for another that is steadily hardening, would not be a sound trade. Every time we enact a panacea into law, we take something fine and sturdy from the American character, for character cannot be imposed from without.[47]

[47] George Horace Lorimer, "Looking Forward," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 209, Issue 26 (1936): 24.

Convinced of the possibility inherent in his vision of America, a vision central to the public he wrote for each week, we see the emphasis on personal responsibility and sense of citizenship as central to the American character—a sense of character under assault from the "ruthlessness" of the New Deal. While Faulkner published several earlier stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*, the Bayard-Ringo series was the first time that Faulkner had meaningfully extended Yoknapatawpha to that American public.[48] "The more punctual and abbreviated the circulation, and the more discourse indexes the punctuality of its own circulation," Michael Warner states, "the closer a public stands to politics."[49] While it may have been used to inflect the political needs of Lorimer, the *Post* proved Faulkner's first exposure to a regular circulation of discourse outside of the largely artistic publics of literary magazines. Even then, Faulkner had never published a multi-part work outside of the novel form—many of his stories mentioning other works, but never truly building off of them.

The Unvanquished

Two days after Lorimer's farewell to *The Saturday Evening Post*, Faulkner wrote Bennett Cerf, his publisher at Random House, about gathering the Bayard-Ringo stories, along with a sixth story the *Post* had not purchased, and "getting them out as a

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[48] Some of the other stories were set away from the county during the First World War ("Thrift" and "Turn About"), the end of the Civil War ("Mountain Victory"), or away on hunting trips ("A Bear Hunt"); others taking place within Yoknapatawpha but making little sense until reworked into the rest of his oeuvre later ("Red Leaves" and "Lizards in Jamshyd's Courtyard").

[49] Warner, 68.

book."[50] By the summer of 1937 he had completed a seventh and final story, "An Odor of Verbena," and in October he left for Random House in New York to complete the transformation from collection to novel. The finished product, *The Unvanquished*, appeared on shelves in 1938, and while the novel has not retained a place of importance within Faulkner studies, it was a commercial and critical success at its publication, successfully merging the until-then distinct audiences of his short stories and novels. More importantly, his revisions not only reframe the material for a new, wider public, but also significantly revise the nature of the original texts on which *The Unvanquished* is based.

Often lost in discussions on *The Unvanquished* is the fact that Faulkner expended significant effort to unify the collection into a proper novel, deepening its connections within the Yoknapatawpha mythos, both to past novels as well as future projects. For example, the murder of the Burdens in "Skirmish at Sartoris" sheds important light on the events of *Light in August*, while important connections between *The Unvanquished* and *Absalom, Absalom!* are added, interweaving the two works with details of how Thomas Sutpen's rise played an integral role in bringing Colonel Sartoris back to Mississippi and restages the confrontation between the two men after the war and their dreams for the South's future. Looking forward, the McCaslins and Ab Snopes, who have their roles deepened in the novel, go on to play important roles in *Go Down, Moses* and Faulkner's long-planned Snopes trilogy. Most importantly, Bayard Sartoris, through "An Odor of Verbena" is reinvented once again: moving from the ineffectual old man of *Sartoris*, to the observer-turned-avenger of the *Post*, to be finally

[50] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 120.

refigured in "The Odor of Verbena" as the just figure fit to later be Gavin Stevens's ally against Flem Snopes.

The reworking of the entire novel hinges on the new final story, exchanging the youthful immediacy of the *Post* stories for the nostalgic tone of an older, reflective Bayard. From the first line, the prose takes on a more measured, Faulknerian tone, nearly doubling the word count in the process. Compare, for example, the *Post*'s opening lines, "BEHIND the smokehouse we had a kind of map. Vicksburg was a handful of chips from the woodpile and the river was a trench we had scraped in the packed ground with a hoe, that drank water almost faster than we could fetch it from the well,"[51] to *The Unvanquished*'s more developed reply:

> BEHIND THE SMOKEHOUSE that summer, Ringo and I had a living map. Although Vicksburg was just a handful of chips from the woodpile and the River a trench scaped into the packed earth with the point of a hoe, it (river, city, and terrain) lived, possessing even in miniature that ponderable though passive recalcitrance of topography which outweighs artillery, against which the most brilliant of victories and the most tragic of defeats are but the loud noises of a moment. To Ringo and me it lived, if only because of the fact that the sunimpacted ground drank water faster than we could fetch it from the well, the setting of the stage for conflict a prolonged and wellnigh hopeless ordeal in which we ran, panting and interminable, with the leaking bucket between wellhouse and battlefield, the two of us needing first to join forces against a

[51] William Faulkner, "Ambuscade," *The Saturday Evening Post* Volume 207, Issue 13 (1934): 12.

> common enemy, time, before we could engender between us and hold intact the pattern of recapitulant mimic furious victory like a cloth, a shield between ourselves and reality, between us and fact and doom.[52]

Though *The Unvanquished* never reaches the complexity or difficulty of *The Sound and the Fury* or *Absalom, Absalom!*, there is undoubtedly a marked maturity to its prose. Where the magazine's opening serves only to reveal the simple boyhood nature of the protagonists, *The Unvanquished* uses the same moment as a memorable metaphor, both foreshadowing the events of the novel and arguably better describing the perceived stakes of such childhood games.

By interposing Bayard's mature reflections on the frame of the original narration, the text manages to be both artistic and accessible. To return to Warner, "Discourse is understood to be propositionally summarizable; the poetic or textual qualities of any utterance are disregarded in favor of *sense*."[53] Unlike the writing of his high novels, *The Unvanquished* meets this threshold of discourse by retaining in its most basic form the comprehensible and collapsible frame of the *Post* stories, while adding only in moments charged with emotion the "Other aspects of discourse, including affect and expressivity, [that] are not thought to be fungible in the same way." It is exactly these artistic aspects of discourse are expected of a Faulknerian novel. "Publics more overtly oriented in their self-understandings to the poetic-expressive dimensions of texts—including artistic publics […]—lack the power to transpose

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[52] William Faulkner, *The Unvanquished* in *William Faulkner: Novels 1936-1940* (New York: The Library of America, 1990): 321.

[53] Warner, 83. Italics in the original.

themselves to the generality of the state," but by remaining selectively artistic, the revised *Post* stories of *The Unvanquished* retain their contemporary relevance, playing still on the elision of *a* public and *the* public, while introducing the aspects expected by the smaller artistic public.

Faulkner's original plans for the stories, extending Bayard's story into the period of Reconstruction, were apparent from 1934, before even finishing the second arc of *Post* stories. "The Reconstruction stories do not come next," Faulkner wrote Morton Goldman, "there must be one or two stories still between the War-Silver-Mule business and the Reconstruction."[54] Thus, the Grumby-revenge narrative of the second arc, a product of Lorimer's exigencies for the *Post*'s crusade against Roosevelt, were but a mere bridge between the *Post*'s expectations for Civil War fiction and Faulkner's desire to explore Bayard's development in Reconstruction. It is in the Reconstruction stories, "Skirmish at Sartoris" and "An Odor of Verbena," we see arguably the stories' most interesting character, Drusilla Hawk, developed and Bayard live up to his namesake.

Originally written for the *Post* and rejected several times, "Skirmish at Sartoris" is a much-revised version of the earlier story "Drusilla" that was published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1935. The story is an odd comedy of manners that records Drusilla Hawk's struggle against the ladies of Jefferson played out against Colonel Sartoris's defense of the city against carpetbaggers attempting to rally Republican votes among the freed blacks of the region. Drusilla, we are told, joined Colonel Sartoris's regiment after her bit-piece role in "Raid," drawing the ire of the town's women for going to war "in the

[54] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 100.

garments not alone of a man but of a common private soldier."[55] The final story in which Bayard acts as a naïve narrator, the story is shocking for its cavalier handling of Drusilla's tragic plight against the Southern ladies' social order and the Colonel's double-murder in the process of rigging an election. Ending with a rebel yell from the Colonel's former troop celebrating the new marriage of John Sartoris and Drusilla, it is understandable how the story struggled to find publication outside of the context of the novel. "Skirmish" is in fact itself a necessary bridge to the novel's final and longest chapter, "An Odor of Verbena."

While Faulkner offered "Verbena" to Morton Goldman for potential publication in 1937, his letter points out that its size would more than likely be prohibitive. Taking place in 1874, years after the previous chapters, the story depicts Bayard as a young man finishing law school when his father is murdered by a former business associate. Expected to take up the chivalric code once again and kill Mr. Redmond as he had Grumby, an older, wiser Bayard reflects on the actions of his father objectively, seeing the Colonel for the first time not as a romanticized, gallant leader but as a man reliant on, if not obsessed with, violence. Despite everyone expecting revenge, from Drusilla and the Colonel's deputy George Wyatt to his law professor, Bayard is unable to overcome Granny's words "*Dies by the sword. Dies by the sword.*"[56] Bayard confronts Redmond unarmed, allowing the man to shoot twice at him from point-blank range, showing such courage as to cause the already-shaken man to leave the town forever.

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[55] Faulkner, *The Unvanquished*, 449. Underlining in the original.

[56] Faulkner, *The Unvanquished*, 465.

Bayard, emerging victorious and without blood on his hands, stops the cycle of violence and proves himself *le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*.[57]

We see, in effect, a rewriting of the *Post* narrative accomplished in the expansion of *The Unvanquished* that deepens the moral stakes of the series, better bringing it into line with Faulkner's vision of "America." Bayard's killing of Grumby is the ultimate action of the original stories, of simple good triumphing over evil. The older Bayard of the novel eschews such a Manichean view for a more representative vision that provides space for the tragic (Drusilla), the simple (Thomas Sutpen), the tawdry (Ab Snopes), the ungovernable (Colonel Sutpen), the distraught (Ben Redmond), as well as the dishonorable (Grumby). The charges, then and now, that the novel is a celebration of the "lost cause" conveniently miss the reevaluation and condemnation of the antebellum mythos, the rejection of Colonel Sartoris's militant values. What is missed in such readings, unable to see past an assumed allegiance to the stars and bars of a time gone by, is the shift in model undertaken in the novels (re)composition. Where *Absalom* relied on *Hamlet*[58] and the *Post* stories resembled children's tales, *The Unvanquished* looked away to *The Oresteia* of Aeschylus.

The Oresteia, of course, is the three-part Greek tragedy detailing the murder of Agamemnon upon returning from the Trojan wars, and the ordeals of his son, Orestes, who is forced by the honor code to avenge his father's death. Orestes' subsequent

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[57] "The knight without fear and beyond reproach," the traditional description of the legendary French knight Pierre Terrail, seigneur de Bayard (or, simply, the Chevalier de Bayard).

[58] See Duncan McColl Chesney, "Shakespeare, Faulkner, and the Expression of the Tragic," in *College Literature* 36, no. 3 (2009) for one of many discussions on the similarities between Shakespeare's tragedy and *Absalom, Absalom!*

torment at the hands of the Furies forces the goddess Athena to contrive a trial, which, with her deciding vote, decides Orestes will not be killed for his actions—bringing justice to Athens and stemming the repetitive cycle of revenge violence. Just as the Greek drama recounts the shift from retributive justice to legal justice, so too does *The Unvanquished* act out an essential reformation. Bayard's subversion of the Southern chivalric code, exchanging the Old Testament morality of "an eye for an eye" for Granny's New Testament "all who draw the sword will die by the sword." As Faulkner would later describe, in a lecture at the University of Virginia: the chivalric code of the South became covered by "a certain amount of romanticism, and by certain participants in it had come to be accepted—the romanticism I mean—as the most valid part of it." Figures like Colonel Sartoris demonstrate the belief "That if you were romantic and gallant about [chivalry], it didn't matter whether you were moral about it or not." The antebellum South, as well as the moral code to which "lost cause" supporters appealed, were "In that sense […] obsolescent, and it's a good thing [they are] past."[59] In the "new" South that Faulkner wished to explore through works like the Snopes trilogy and *Intruders in the Dust*, it was not the violent cavaliers of Southern past that would unite and build the country, but the learned and skilled like Bayard Sartoris, Gavin Stevens, and, should he not have been killed, Charles Bon.[60]

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[59] William Faulkner, Edward McAleer's Undergraduate Class in Contemporary American Literature, Tape 143-d, *Faulkner at Virginia*, May 1, 1958. http://faulkner.lib.virginia.edu/display/wfaudio25#wfaudio25.9

[60] See Kevin Railley's *Natural Aristocracy: History, Ideology, and the Production of William Faulkner* (Tuscaloosa, AL & London: The University of Alabama Press, 1999).

Quentin Compson is thus correct in his description of “the deep South dead since 1865 and peopled with garrulous baffled ghosts.”[61] While modern critics like Atkinson read *The Unvanquished* as “a [challenge to] the validity of achieving a collective or objective vantage point from which to steer through the course of harrowing developments with any modicum of certainty,”[62] we can see that this is in effect only half right. While Bayard does not achieve a collective or objective vantage point, his faith in morality and the law provides him with the certainty to literally walk down the barrel of Redmond’s gun, remaining . Quentin is driven mad by the competing voices of the past, left hysterically denying Shreve’s questioning until his eventual death. It is Bayard who provides a path to the future, out of the darkness and discord of a society forced into reconstruction after a devastating Depression.[63] Like the Greek model, *The Unvanquished* reflects the reconstruction of a new social order after the cataclysm of the Depression.

While the novel has fallen out of favor among critics, due to its perceived Lost Cause content, the writer’s angry description of the *Post* stories as “trash,” and the natural comparisons to the vaunted *Absalom, Absalom!*, one should not lose sight of the fact that the novel arguably did more to expand Faulkner’s audience than any of his

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[61] Faulkner, *Absalom*, 4.

[62] Atkinson, 238.

[63] Jay Watson’s *Forensic Fictions: The Lawyer Figure in Faulkner* (Athens, GA & London: University of Georgia Press, 1993) is the best source for further information on Faulkner’s use of the lawyer as an archetypal citizen. While the book focuses almost entirely on Gavin Stevens, Faulkner’s most celebrated and important lawyer in Yoknapatawpha, it provides important detail on the writer’s view of the law “as a way of life” (3).

previous work. Contemporary reviews of the work were largely favorable, especially compared to his previous work. "*The Unvanquished*," Edwin Muir of *The Listener* wrote, "is more simply, and better, written, than the last few novels which Mr. Faulkner has given us."[64] Many critics praised this as the penultimate Faulkner, finally marrying the two opposing faces of Faulkner's fiction: the "stylized and morbid mystic attempting a sequence of novels on the scale of an epic" finally meeting "the less publicized, but more authentic author, [that] is a sharp and brilliant narrator of short stories."[65] What is more, the novel was the first that brought him respect in his community—Oxonians celebrated the novel as the first "that they can understand, can enjoy, can leave lying on their living room tables."[66] Further, the novel proved popular enough to have its rights purchased by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for a hefty sum. While a film was never made—Faulkner liked to joke that the rights were purchased as a contingency against losing *Gone with the Wind*—the popular appeal of the book was great enough to warrant critics' comparisons of the two books' cinematic potential, one finding "where *Gone with the Wind* is purely Hollywood, *The Unvanquished* is coated with the expressionism of the foreign studio."[67] Indeed, despite the contemporary interest in *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* it was *The*

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[64] *William Faulkner: A Literary Companion*, Edited by Nicholas Fargnoli (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), 282.

[65] Ibid., 285.

[66] Quoted in Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography—One Volume Edition,* 392.

[67] *William Faulkner: A Literary Compainion*, 271.

Unvanquished which commanded America's attention to Faulkner to an extent only exceeded by his 1949 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Far from viewing this as a forgotten work, *The Unvanquished* should be seen as the shift in Faulkner's work toward a more productive public address. Where previous work proved reactive to social and historical formations in the United States, *The Unvanquished* marks a turn in Yoknapatawpha toward a constructive public. In contrast to the scattered voices of his previous novels, we here are guided by the solid voice of Bayard. The solidity of this singular voice provides the basis for the identification necessary for public reflexivity. Like Lorimer's farewell to the *Post*, *The Unvanquished* looks to the past and future simultaneously, weaving the text within what had already passed and what was yet to come. This is in line with Warner's claim that "The projective nature of public discourse […] is an engine for […] social mutation."[68] It is this forgotten novel that most definitively marks Faulkner's move from viewing writing as either art *or* financial opportunity, instead realizing its potential for productive public discourse.

"My Grandmother Millard"

If Faulkner had not previously felt the need to enter public discourse, the coming of war solidified his resolve. Unable to join the war effort due to his age, Faulkner did what he could do to reach peace, when

> the time of the older men [would] come, the ones like [himself] who are articulate in the national voice, who are too old to be soldiers, but are old

[68] Warner, 81.

> enough and have been vocal long enough to be listened to, yet are not so old that we too have become another batch of decrepit old men looking stubbornly backward at a point 25 or 50 years in the past.[69]

Weeks after writing these lines to stepson in late 1942, himself enlisting soon after, Faulkner received word from Harold Ober that the final story in Bayard-Ringo series had been published. "My Grandmother Millard and General Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Harrykin Creek" appeared in *Story* magazine's March-April edition later that year. Describing a humorous incident that occurs at Sartoris plantation sometime before or during the first *Post* stories, the tale is told now by a much older Bayard after the Spanish-American War at the turn of the century.[70] Failing to bury the silver in time, Granny has the family silver hidden in the backhouse—the story's term for an outhouse—where, incidentally, Cousin Melisandre had also taken shelter. The approaching Yankees, not to be fooled by Granny's trick, are taken by surprise when a gallant Confederate cavalier fights them off, leaving an embarrassed Melisandre in the rubble of the then-destroyed backhouse. The two fall in love at first sight, but Melisandre, the archetypal Southern belle, is taken aback when she hears her savior's name is "Lieutenant Philip St-Just Backhouse." The connection between the name and the impropriety of the incident at the backhouse leaves her hysterically screaming. In the comedy of manners that follows, General Nathan Bedford Forrest, conveniently an old friend of Granny and Backhouse's commander, must come and invent a "battle of

[69] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 204.

[70] When he has, by the chronology of "A Rose for Emily" (1930), taken the title "Colonel" Sartoris in honor of his father and is the mayor of Jefferson.

Harrykin Creek" on paper with the loss of Lieutenant Backhouse as well as a new commission for the newly-respectable Lieutenant Philip St-Just Backus, thus allowing the cavalier and belle to be married.

"My Grandmother Millard" is undoubtedly the least respected of all the Bayard-Ringo stories, but it is notable for its confirmation of Faulkner's shift toward a public voice. "I think it's a good funny story," he told Harold Ober, "and I think it has its message for the day too: of gallant indomitability, of a willingness to pull up the pants and carry on, no matter with whom, let alone what."[71] Despite its connection to the previous stories, "My Grandmother Millard" was rejected by the *Post* and seven other magazines, "because they objected to the outhouse motif,"[72] before being purchased for the lowly sum of $50. In sharp contrast to the frustration seen at the *Post*'s lower rate for the original stories, Faulkner was simply glad the story saw publication, telling Harold Ober, "I'm glad you finally placed the story: I still think it is amusing."[73]

While "My Grandmother Millard" was not a commercial success, the circumstances around its publication demonstrate the sustained interest of the author in Bayard Sartoris's story, as well as a willingness to return to the stories as a mode of public address. The story even deepens Bayard's connection with what was quickly becoming Faulkner's most useful literary figure: Gavin Stevens. The newly minted

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[71] Diane Brown Jones, *A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of William Faulkner* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 471.

[72] Jones, 466.

[73] Faulkner, *Selected Letters*, 205.

Melisandre Backus of the story would serve as the ancestor to Melisandre Backus Harriss, further intertwining the lives of his characters.

Faulkner scholars are largely in agreement that there is a shift in his work between the rejection of *Flags in the Dust* and *The Sound and the Fury*.[74] There is also a widely acknowledged shift in his reception after winning the Nobel Prize in Literature. Between the publication of *The Unvanquished* and winning the Nobel Prize, there is a shift in his public. Faulkner would go on to repeatedly use a similar method of story-to-novel composition, revising works such as *The Wild Palms [If I Forget Thee Jerusalem]* (1939), *The Hamlet* (1940), *Go Down, Moses* (1942), and *Knights Gambit* (1949) into existence from various short stories. The fact that *Intruders in the Dust* (1948) inspired enough interest to be bought and made into a film within just a year of its publication speaks to the national public that Faulkner developed in this period.

It is *The Unvanquished*, however, that demonstrates Faulkner's serious move to be "articulate in the national voice," taking steps to transform his writing and himself to better reach a wider American public in what he viewed as increasingly dangerous times. By adapting the two different Faulkners that Americans had come to know, the short story writer of the magazines and the serious writer of dark novels, we can see his fiction transforming from artistic reproduction to something more clearly resembling public address. In the complicated history of this often-overlooked text, we can better put into evidence Faulkner's changing conceptions of his public audiences as well as the roles he imagined for himself in relation to those audiences.

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[74] Railley, 41.

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