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THE IRONIC VISION IN THE FICTION OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ AND
WILLIAM FAULKNER

The University of Oklahoma

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE IRONIC VISION IN THE FICTION OF
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ AND
WILLIAM FAULKNER

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By
BARBARA JUNE CRAIG
Norman, Oklahoma
1983

THE IRONIC VISION IN THE FICTION OF
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ AND
WILLIAM FAULKNER
A DISSERTATION
APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

BY

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ABSTRACT

THE IRONIC VISION IN THE FICTION OF GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

BY: BARBARA JUNE CRAIG

MAJOR PROFESSOR: ROBERT CON DAVIS, Ph.D.

Using Alan Wilde's and D. C. Muecke's theories of irony in the twentieth century, of which the central irony is finite man's attempts to understand and control an infinite world, this dissertation looks at William Faulkner's and Gabriel García Márquez's use of irony to reexamine the lapserian myth. In such novels as The Sound and the Fury, Sartoris, Light in August, The Unvanquished and especially Absalom, Absalom! and One Hundred Years of Solitude, these novelists elaborate an entropic vision which postulates that the world is winding down and society is reverting to chaos. Through an "ironic consciousness," which characterizes modernist literature, they debunk the myth of a heroic past, the Civil War heroes and illustrious founding fathers in particular. Through the use of ambiguity, they create a tension of opposites, of love and hate, held in balance by paradoxical irony. The capricious and irrational fates have grown tired of such arrogant and willful men and have doomed them to extinction.

Similarly, these authors debunk the myth of the brave new future. In a fallen, "irremediably flawed" world there is a disjunction between past and present which prevents con-

tinuity of culture, ethics, traditions, and family lines. A fragmented historical perspective leaves man feeling estranged, disoriented, and adrift. The life force has become debilitated, and there is a total failure of regeneration, primarily because of such factors as sex role reversals, perversions, mental deficiencies, impotence, and suicide. Thus, formerly successful and powerful families become attenuated.

Although Faulkner has been called a modernist because of his use of disjunctive irony and García Márquez has been called a postmodernist because of his use of suspensive irony in the form of magic realism, this categorization fails to take into account Faulkner's extensive use of mediate irony, typical of the pre-modernists, and the fact that, irrespective of his magic realism, García Márquez's characters never arrive at the postmodernists' felicitous acquiescence. Both Faulkner's and García Márquez's visions are essentially entropic and primarily modernist.

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To the many friends who consoled, commiserated, and cheered me along, I extend sincerest thanks. And finally, I owe special gratitude to my family, who endured and suffered, survived and celebrated right along beside me each step of the way. I dedicate this work to my mother.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
The Emergence of the Ironic Consciousness	3
Faulkner and García Márquez, Modern Ironists	16
The Lapsarian Myth in Faulkner's and García Márquez's Literature . .	20
II. DEBUNKING THE LAPSERIAN MYTH . . .	30
The "Heroic Past" Revisited	30
A Brave New Future: "not for me died not"	55
"stalemate of dust and desire" .	79
Houses Built on Sand	96
III. THE SUTPENS AND THE BUENDÍAS: TWIN DESTINIES	102
The Myth of the Brave New World: A Failure of Generational Continuity..	131
IV CONCLUSION	176
BIBLIOGRAPHY	190

THE IRONIC VISION IN THE FICTION OF
GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

. . . Faulkner has been the single greatest influence on our literature in the past twenty years or so. This is as true of regional as of urban literature. . . . it marks an attitude. Faulkner was the paragon of the dedicated artist, visionary, and weaver of absolutes. And, as our narrative art comes of age, it inherits this eternal vocation.¹

Whenever the name Gabriel García Márquez is heard in literary circles, soon afterwards one will also hear the name William Faulkner. Indeed, at the close of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, García Márquez himself acknowledged his debt to his "master" and claimed the duty and right to disseminate to this present generation the message of hope which Faulkner expressed during his own acceptance speech. In an interview with Mario Vargas Llosa, García Márquez recognized the great influence Faulkner had on Latin American novelists: "I believe that the greatest debt which we new Latin American novelists owe is to Faulkner. . . . Faulkner is a part of everything having to do with the novel in Latin America. . . . the great difference between our predecessors

and us is Faulkner; he was the only thing that happened between those two generations."² Although the Latin American author's name is closely linked with that of the North American writer, some questions and disagreements have arisen concerning the basis for the association. Vincenzo Bollettino, in Breve Estudios, expresses the feeling of a critical hiatus when he observes that "Until now the critics have strongly insisted on matching García Márquez and Faulkner without having isolated the elements of the North American writer that influenced the Colombian."³ Is the debt thematic, as Ernesto Volkening asserts? Is it stylistic, as James E. Irby believes: Or does it, as Vargas Llosa says, have "more to do with the design of the work, globally considered, than with details of theme and form"?⁴ Harley Oberhelman, observing that the presence of Faulkner in García Márquez's fiction is "at times an influence and at other moments a confluence of the minds,"⁵ has painstakingly documented García Márquez's literary contacts with Faulkner and concludes that "the cornerstone of [Faulkner's] effect has been his ability to draw out universal, eternal verities from regional soil."⁶

Katalin Kulin, on the other hand, says that literary influence alone is not sufficient to account for the fact that "it is William Faulkner who exerts the most direct and enduring influence on the majority of [Latin American] writers." She believes it is, as García Márquez himself claims, the similarity between the childhood world of Faulkner and the envi-

ronment in which García Márquez grew up.⁷ Furthermore, how do these two writers fit into the broader literary movements of this century? Alan Wilde includes the name of William Faulkner among his list of the great absolute ironists of the modernist movement.⁸ García Márquez, on the other hand, has been cited as one of the outstanding postmodernists.⁹ What, precisely, do these classifications imply concerning these authors' choice of and treatment of themes?

If, as Alan Wilde asserts, the primary difference between the "principal literary movements of approximately the last hundred years" (2) is the progressive development of an ironic perspective, an ironic consciousness, then a study of the ironic vision in the works of these two novelists should help answer some of the above questions and should offer new insights into the fiction of these two often-linked Nobel Prize recipients.

The Emergence of the Ironic Consciousness

. . . it is certainly the case that in the twentieth century, the ironic vision of life so overwhelms the arts that by now we perhaps take for granted its almost ubiquitous presence. (Wilde, p. 13)

. . . the basic metaphysically ironic situation of man is that he is a finite being striving to comprehend an infinite, hence incomprehensible reality.¹⁰

In Irony and the Ironic, D. C. Muecke classifies irony into two major categories: Instrumental Irony and Observable Irony. The first kind has been with us probably from the beginning of time and shows itself in the earliest literature.

It is recognizable by its primary characteristic of displaying a discrepancy between appearance and reality. Examples are readily available: saying the contrary of what one means, praising in order to blame and blaming in order to praise, mocking, using understatement or hyperbole, and so on (17). It is called "instrumental" because the writer (or speaker) uses this form of irony as a tool, or an instrument, to draw attention to or correct a situation or condition. The second major category, Observable Irony, differing radically from the first, made its appearance, says Muecke, near the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Its development roughly paralleled and can be seen as the product of the progressive loss of faith in an ordered universe, a benevolent, just creator, the absoluteness and infallibility of science, and finally in man's ability to cope with his world. This process culminated in what Wilde calls "skepticism in thought and relativism in ethics" (6). Observable Irony is an irony in the very nature of things. Examples are the tricks of fate or fortune in which man is the victim, the malevolent god to whom man is a plaything, the absurdity in life, a "catch 22" situation, and efforts that produce the opposite of what was intended.

In mapping the emergence of the ironic consciousness, Muecke draws some contrasts between the two kinds of ironies. These differences are important in fully understanding the implications of Observable Irony. In Instrumental Irony,

someone is being ironical, that is, "someone [is] realizing a purpose by using language ironically" (19), whereas in Observable Irony, "someone is being the victim of irony" (19): the focus has shifted from the doer to the one done to, that is, from active to passive. In the first, irony is intentional and is used to accomplish something; in the second, it is unintentional and exists in the very nature of things. An important corollary to the shift from someone being ironic to things seen or presented as inherently ironical is the generalizing and universalizing of what had been local, occasional, particular. Instead of a finite ironical act, the world itself can be seen as ironical; the human condition in that world becomes the central irony. In other words, irony is no longer only a rhetorical technique; it is now a metaphysical view of the universe.* In this view, life is "irremediably flawed" (Muecke, p. 22), and man is the ironic victim of a hostile or indifferent fate, that is, of a Cosmic, or General, Irony; he is the "ironic, that is, unsuspecting, victim of circumstances or events" (20). He may work hard and live frugally in order to provide for his old age, only to have all his savings wiped out by a fire or stolen by a spendthrift. Man, in other words, is ironically the tennis ball of the gods

*The irony exists, not as a product of something a doer does, but because of the way a viewer sees life. The actor does not create the irony by something he does; in a sense, it is "created" by the manner in which one views life--although one may see it as inherent in the world, it is the subjective view which objectifies it: the verb is still "see" and not "is."

and is bandied about according to their whims. Thus, an ironic consciousness has developed which leads to a writer's having an essentially ironic view of life, which is characterized as being detached and objective (18-22).

According to Muecke, Friedrich Schlegel has described "the basic metaphysically ironic situation": man "is a finite being striving to comprehend an infinite hence incomprehensible reality" (23). Man is compelled by his nature to seek answers where no answers are available. If nature is "a dialectic process of continual creation and decreation" (23), then man, a part of that process, is doomed from the beginning. Even though he is "'programmed' to grasp the world, to reduce it to order and coherence" (23), his efforts will always be less than satisfactory and complete. A sense of the "dual-its of inner and outer life" (93), resulting in an "antithesis between inner and outer world," is the result of turning inward while at the same time regarding the "outer world as over-complex, dehumanized, and alienating" (93). The world view is fragmented into subjectivity and objectivity, and man is compelled into a "quest" for wholeness, for meaning, for a lost unity, for a "reintegrating of subjectivity and objectivity" (94). The irony inherent in man's attempts to achieve the impossible order is more complex than previous ironies. Life is thus seen as a dialectic process, with an "open dynamic dualism" (24): a paradox of creation and de-creation, of unreflecting and of self-consciousness. Schlegel

finally asserts that "Paradox is the conditio sine quo of irony, its soul, its source, and its principle" (24). Opposites are balanced against one another to achieve a poise, thus avoiding one-sidedness. The ironist who does this has "achieved a more or less detached or objective stance" (26). This "tension of opposites" reveals "an author's ambivalent attitude towards his characters" (28). The opposition is not between a good and a bad, a desired and a feared, "but between two sides in which both good and bad are mixed" (28). Things are seen to have "a double contradictory reality" (45), that is, reality is paradoxical.

Muecke says that irony in the twentieth century has culminated in "galloping relativism," a relativistic philosophy in which meaning is deferred as experience is open to "an endless series of subversive interpretations" (31). There is no single, literal meaning; the incongruities are an inherent part of existence. In this relativistic concept, irony is closely related to ambiguity. Muecke refers to Lukács' belief that because inner and outer life are at odds with each other, any novel today which "truly reflects its social context will necessarily be a story of dissonance, breakdown or failure" (95).

Alan Wilde poses a useful new approach to the study of twentieth-century irony in Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Ironic Imagination (1981). He summarily dispenses with the traditional classifications, such

as Impersonal, Self-disparaging, Ingénu, Dramatic, and so on, which considered irony primarily as a "series of techniques and strategies" (3), in favor of a tripartite division which charts irony's development, beginning with Kierkegaard, "as a mode of consciousness, an all-encompassing vision of life" (3). According to Wilde's theory, there are three broad categories: (1) Mediate Irony, (2) Disjunctive Irony, and (3) Suspensive Irony. These three classes are roughly parallel to and are subsumed by the division of literature into (1) premodernism, (2) modernism (which subdivides into high, or early, and late modernism), and (3) postmodernism. While various stylistic characteristics also distinguish these literary classifications, each division tends to have a characteristic view of the world, man's place in it, and man's ability to affect it. Likewise, each of these ironic visions has an "anironic" vision, which Wilde explains as follows:

. . . if irony is best viewed as a mode of perceiving the world and if that perception involves in one way or another a fundamental sense of disunity, then it is hardly surprising that ironists generally, if not inevitably, react to the lapses, discontinuities or randomness that confront them by positing, in the face of an unsatisfactory world, redemptive, or at least consoling, visions of unity. (81)

That is, in response to the vision of disparity there is "a complementary, more conceptual vision of wholeness or singleness" (30) that is "anironic."

Premodernist literature, where "mediate" irony is most frequently encountered, tends to present the world in a fallen or "lapsed" state. Irony mediates a satiric vision

of a previously unified world now broken into disunity and disharmony. The distinguishing feature of this view is that the paradisaical condition is recoverable or still obtainable; the deviation can be corrected. Some of the great novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for example Tom Jones, David Copperfield, and Pride and Prejudice, utilize mediate irony. In the anironic vision of these novels, the world is coherent, rational, harmonious, and comprehensible. There is a commonly accepted standard against which to measure the current lapsed condition, and through diligent efforts, a perfected condition can be attained. Wilde tells us that in the case of mediate irony, the anironic "offers a contrasting societal, or at least earthly, vision of integration and connection, harmony and coherence: paradise regained and made reasonably or imaginatively terrestrial" (30).

Modernist literature, which presents the world as "inherently disconnected and fragmented" (10), employs "disjunctive" irony. Man is adrift in a world without meaning. No longer is there a possibility of regaining a lost paradise. The basic idea of unity is shattered, and the most man can do is seek to control the disconnections. In such works as Jude the Obscure, A Passage to India, and The Great Gatsby, the flawed world cannot be repaired. The anironic vision of the modernist perception of fragmentation is a "vision of oneness or fusion. . ." (30). Disjunctive irony's most extreme form, absolute irony, recognizes the disconnections and attempts to

shape the confusion and uncertainties into "an equal poise of opposites: the form of an unresolvable paradox" (10), as in such works as To the Lighthouse, A Portrait of the Artist, Absalom, Absalom! and The Waste Land. In these works there are equal and opposed possibilities. The absolute ironist is further distanced from his world and, therefore, observes it more objectively. He realizes there are "simultaneously valid possibilities" (35), that is, paradoxes, which cannot be resolved.

Postmodernist literature, through its "suspensive" irony, presents a "yet more radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency, and even absurdity" (10). Like the modernists, the postmodernists also no longer believe in the possibility of paradise, God-made or man-made; but, unlike their predecessors, they have acquiesced to the quandary, the disorder, the perplexities, and uncertainties, eventually settling for the everyday pleasures and small satisfactions that come with acceptance and a "low-keyed engagement" (10) with the world. The anironic vision, or the alternative for coping with the acceptance of randomness and quandary, is "the desire for unmediated experience, for direct participation in the world" (69). Such surfictionist writers as Ronald Sukenich and Raymond Federman represent one branch of postmodern literature, but the most representative and, according to Wilde, most important writers in this category are authors like John Irving (The World According to Garp),

Stanley Elkin (The Living End), and Donald Barthelme (The Dead Father) who write a kind of generative irony that allows an assent to the randomness of life and creates "tentatively and provisionally, anironic enclaves of value in the face of--but not in place of--a meaningless universe" (148).

In the progression from mediate, through disjunctive, and on to suspensive irony, the artist's portrayal of the world and the human condition in it has become progressively more fragmented and less hopeful of man's ability to change that situation. Through the ironic consciousness the world is seen to have lapsed from good to bad, from hope to despair, from rationality to irrationality, from coherence to chaos. At least momentarily, the lapserian view culminates in an entropic vision. In postmodernist literature, the search for paradise "is now abandoned" (44) and man shows "a willingness to live with the uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen as random and multiple, even at times, absurd" (44).

It is clear that the theories of Wilde and Muecke, though coming at this subject from different directions, have many points in common. In particular, of course, they concur on the idea of an ironic consciousness prevalent in twentieth-century literature. Furthermore, they present a vision of the world as fragmented beyond man's ability to repair it. Finally, they see a cultural acceptance of that fact. Beyond this point, Wilde has refined his theory further to include

an assent to and even an engagement with chaos: his theory somewhat tentatively proffers a "generative" irony which, through its questioning of the myths and its focusing on the quotidian, opens the way "to the exploration and creation of tentative, even momentary meanings or values in the world" (155). The generative ironist sees the possibility for the achievement of modest pleasures and for one's becoming involved with the world through choosing and conferring meaning. Wilde says "this alternative [the possibility of assent] presents itself . . . as a humanism of sorts," and he suggests that it may be "forging, tentatively, a morality, an ideal at any rate, and an irony for postmodern (or possibly post-postmodern?) man" (188).

Muecke's Instrumental Irony roughly corresponds to Wilde's Mediate Irony, while the former's Observable Irony, especially general irony, corresponds to Wilde's Disjunctive and partially to his Suspensive Irony. Wilde's Suspensive Irony, however, seems to be more a question of degree and emphasis than substance: Wilde emphasizes the element of assent, while Muecke only casually refers to an acceptance of the ironic view of life.

There is a major flaw in Wilde's critical theory which impedes taxonomy. Modernism, postmodernism, and post-post-modernism are not categories of the first degree but rather of the second degree. They are subdivisions within a larger division, or rather, they are a literary continuum which marks

the changes in man's responses to his world. The writer has responded to that world view first with a body of literature with a group of characteristics which have come to be designated as modernism, then with literature whose characteristics are labelled postmodernist, and finally with literature whose aggregate characteristics some observers call post-postmodernism. All of these categories are subsumed under and are a response to a larger categorization of philosophical views of the world. The philosophical category that they are subsumed under considers the world as chaotic, absurd, irrational. The mistake has been to call this whole world view "modernism" when that word designates only one area on the literary continuum which is a response to that world view. The view itself--that life is fragmented and irrational--has remained basically the same; the writer has experimented with ways of dealing with that loss of coherence.

The mistake Wilde makes but which Muecke manages to avoid is mixing the categories of the second order with those of the first order. The division which separates modernism from postmodernism is not comparable to the division of the first degree which separates a coherent world view from a fragmented one, although he calls these world views "pre-modernism" and "modernism." The unfortunate mixing of terminology leads the way to the confusion of categories. Had the metaphysical categories of the first magnitude been labelled otherwise (coherent-fragmented or pre-lapserian-post-lapserian,

for example), and the "modernism" terms reserved for the literary movements which were a response to that world view, Wilde's theory would have been more consistent.

The quality which distinguished twentieth century literature from what preceded it was a shift in man's interpretation of his world, a change in his world view. He perceived the world differently, that is, to be different. He reassessed his understanding of life and came to different conclusions about its nature. In other words, the world out there changed--or, so man believed, which is the same thing to the artist. The world is not coherent, logical, rational as once believed--it is absurd and chaotic. Muecke and Wilde both tell us this view was possible when man developed his ironic consciousness, but it may also be true that man's development of an ironic consciousness made this view possible. No shift of comparable magnitude in man's view of the world has taken place to herald a new movement. What we call post-modernism is only a refinement of the modernist movement. In this case, the shift has been in man's response to that world. After initial periods of denial, despair, defiance, he has finally come round to accepting, acquiescing, and may even be celebrating the chaos--but the chaos is still there--it is the invariable.

The lines that divide Wilde's categories are far from clear-cut in relation to chronology, theory, and even individual writers. As Wilde points out, writers may continue using mediate irony or disjunctive irony even into the latter

part of the twentieth century; furthermore, a post-postmodernism may be developing. The differences between the various categories are a matter of focus and emphasis. Finally, although the writings of any single author may be predominantly characterized by one type of irony or another, almost invariably other modes of irony are present in varying degrees and at various times in his writing. Although Wilde classifies William Faulkner among the outstanding absolute ironists of the disjunctive variety, a great portion of his writings, including The Unvanquished and episodes in Sartoris, bears characteristics of mediate irony, and some of it, such as Absalom, Absalom!, approaches suspensive irony. And although the most acclaimed of Gabriel García Márquez's fiction has definite postmodernist markings, irony of the mediate and the disjunctive brands are everywhere present in his writings, the first in such stories as No One Writes to the Colonel, the second in "There Are No Thieves in This Town," Leafstorm, and Chronicle of a Death Foretold. While an individual work may be an outstanding example of one type of irony, it will also reveal traces of the other kinds. Keeping these qualifications in mind, nevertheless, one may gain new insight into the writings of an author by viewing them in relation to these distinctions in the twentieth-century ironic consciousness. Exactly where an individual work lies along the literary continuum which is the response to the fragmented world is of lesser critical significance. As John Barth points out, "actual artists, actual texts, are seldom more than more

or less modernist, postmodernist, formalist, symbolist
 The particular work ought always to take primacy
 over contexts and categories."¹¹

Faulkner and García Márquez, Modern Ironists

We read that irony is 'a view of life which recognized that experience is open to multiple interpretations, of which no one is simply right, and that the co-existence of incongruities is part of the structure of existence.' (Muecke, 31, quoting Samuel Hynes)

The twentieth-century ironist, focusing on the incongruities, the fragmentation, the failure to see experience as whole and harmonious, above all else is aware that "life is irremediably flawed or even contradictory" (Muecke, 22). The writings of an author with an ironic consciousness betray an essential "tension of opposites" and are permeated with "the curious special feeling of paradox, of the ambivalent and the ambiguous, of the impossible made actual, of a double contradictory reality" (Muecke, 45, emphasis added). The writings of Faulkner and García Márquez, as I will show, are constructed according to models of ambivalence and contradiction. The material of these models for both writers is the imagery of the American South and South America, Colombia in particular. Patent in this "Southern" material is a "love-hate" tension in treatments of regional history, of the legends and myths which transform that history, and of the character types which comprise its past and its present. The opposites which are held in tension and which, in

the case of absolute irony, are never resolved, revolve around the ambivalent themes of a fierce pride in the heritage of country and nation as opposed to the shame and humiliation of military defeat and economic decay. There is the conflict of a past affluence and family stability which was built on subjugation and slavery in contrast to the present's meagerness, family disintegration, and poverty which seem to be the end result of abolition, a new social conscience, humanitarian rights, or the twists of fortune. Kierkegaard said that the modern ironic consciousness feels alienated from the world to which it belongs: so the fiction of these writers expresses an estrangement from the milieu of which they are the product. This estrangement manifests itself in ambivalence and paradox. To the extent that these authors are intent upon revealing the sham and falseness of their worlds, they employ a corrective mediate irony and an anironic vision of justice and harmony. But to the extent that García Márquez and Faulkner's novels offer no answers, only questions, that they destroy the myths without offering substitutes in their places, that they see an irreversible trend toward fragmentation and toward social and cultural breakdown, they employ a disjunctive irony and become the subverters of their cultures.

The American South and South America's Colombia are lands which, in the face of military defeat, economic depression, and what seems to be moral degradation, turn to myths

of a past grandeur and harmony to sustain them through difficult times. The literary works of Faulkner and García Márquez are intent on subjecting those myths of war heroes, of the brave founding fathers, of dynastic lines, of new worlds, of familial harmony to the scrutiny of, if not objectivity, a searching reevaluation. It is on the modern ironic consciousness that these fictional worlds are built in the form of "a double contradictory reality" (Muecke, 45). The ambivalence is everywhere present, often in the form of the unresolved paradoxes of absolute irony.

It is the intent of this study to investigate the ironic paradoxes in the literary works of William Faulkner and Gabriel García Márquez through an analysis of their treatment of various aspects of the lapserian myth. In particular, I intend to focus on: (1) the myths of the heroic past which include the Civil War heroes and the brave founding fathers, and (2) the myths of a brave new world based on dynastic descent and regeneration. After a general and wide-ranging discussion of these themes in several of Faulkner's novels, I will show how they tend to coalesce in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude. These two novels represent the authors' most cogent and full treatment of the various tenets of the lapserian myth, treating both the myths of the glorious past from which the present has fallen on unfortunate times, and the myth of a future which will redeem the present, based on brave, strong,

just men and women. The entropic vision developed in these novels amounts to these authors' most extreme statements of dissolution.

When Alan Wilde includes the name of William Faulkner among the great absolute ironists of the high modernist period, he asserts certain qualifications for Faulkner's art, the most integral of which is "the conception of equal and opposed possibilities held in a state of total poise, or more briefly still, the shape of an indestructible, unresolvable paradox" (21). The opposing parts of the paradox are forever in a state "of fierce, unreconciled opposition" (25); the informing consciousness is in a crisis of profound and radical indecision (33). In such a condition, the artist comes to see himself as "estranged from the whole world to which [he] belongs" (33). This is the condition of the absolute ironist, and it is also the condition of William Faulkner, and with some important qualifications, of Gabriel García Márquez.

Wilde says that "absolute irony defines the crucial point, the furthest perceptual thrust" (40) of the disjunctive type of modernist irony and was followed by "apparent" paradoxes in suspensive irony in postmodernist literature. The works of García Márquez pose the same essential paradoxes as are evident in the works of William Faulkner, and although he achieves a partial resolution through, first of all, a qualified assent, and finally a very tentative generative

irony (which represents the furthest thrust of the suspenseful vision), his final statement is as bleak and ominous as Faulkner's.

The Lapserian Myth in Faulkner's
and García Márquez's Literature

The novels of William Faulkner and Gabriel García Márquez present the nostalgic view that the land and man have suffered a fall. The Old South exists no longer; the glory that surrounded the heroic Civil Wars in Colombia has passed. Inherent here is the sort of longing which led Wordsworth to ask in "Ode on Intimations of Immortality": "Whither is fled the visionary gleam?/Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" In the substructure of Faulkner's and García Márquez's works is a definite break between the "then" and the "now," between the ancestors and the descendants, between an old way of life and an emerging one. The essence of this dichotomy is manifest in an unresolved ambivalence which permeates every aspect of the treatment of these themes and holds the conflicting attitudes in a "tension of opposites," characteristic of a writer with an ironic consciousness, as Muecke has pointed out (28). Muecke also speaks of paradox, ambivalence, ambiguity, and contradictions, characteristics also inherent in these authors' attitudes toward their countries and their countries' pasts. Irving Howe, in William Faulkner, points out Faulkner's "fluid mixture of affection and disgust"¹² for Yoknapatawpha

County and its inhabitants. García Márquez's literature exhibits a similar mixture of attraction and repulsion. An element of that attraction derives from the nostalgia for the "good old days" that are seen to be somehow innocent or prelapsarian. Perhaps the single greatest factor which motivated both García Márquez and William Faulkner was their sense of the inexorable flux of time in a downward flow. Times were changing. Times had changed. This sense of the passing of an old order was the most poignant influence in the novelists' early years and has persisted throughout their lives. The Lost Garden of Eden syndrome is evident in almost everything they have written, because it was imbibed from the cradle. Both novelists were born into environments obsessed with the past; both communities experienced daily the direct consequences of those past events. Shreve, Quentin's roommate at Harvard (Absalom, Absalom!), puts it succinctly when, frustrated in his attempts to understand the South, exclaims:

We dont live among defeated grandfathers and freed slaves . . . and bullets in the dining room table and such, to be always reminding us to never forget. What is it? something you live and breathe in like air? a kind of vacuum filled with wraithlike and indomitable anger and pride and glory at and in happenings that occurred and ceased fifty years ago? a kind of entailed birthright father and son and father and son of never forgiving General Sherman, so that forevermore as long as your childrens' children produce children you wont be anything but a descendant of a long line of colonels killed in Pickett's charge at [Gettysburg]?" 13

Both novelists felt a profound attachment to the worlds of

their childhood, and both writers watched those worlds succumb to the inevitable changes of the modern world. The muse which inspired their works was named Nostalgia.

According to the lapserian myth, as it is usually imagined, the world has suffered a fall from a previous ideal state. The present condition is a debased falling away from a more heroic, glorious, moralistic, harmonious world. There are several variations on the lapserian myth, each one less hopeful about establishing a harmonious world. First, there is the corollary that says the ideal state is recoverable. Through a purifying quest, man can get back to his ideal state. A second variation tends to ignore the postulate of a past harmonious time and focuses on the possibility of a future improvement in man's condition. Both of these corollaries are prevalent in literature which employs a mediate irony. The third and least sanguine variation on the lapserian myth acknowledges the debased and fragmented condition of the world, doubts that things were ever any better, and also seriously questions the possibility of ever improving the situation. In its most extreme form this last variation becomes an entropic vision which sees cultural order as being reduced to chaos. The disjunctive ironist most typically has this world-view.

Raymond Williams, in The Country and the City, makes the point that one part of the lapserian myth, the longing for the "good old days"--a lost paradise in which life was

simpler, more innocent, and more harmonious--is prevalent throughout literary history. Through an elaborate genealogy, he traces this nostalgia back through all ages, ultimately to Eden, making the point that the lost paradise is a personal perspective and is always just beyond a viewer's horizon in backward direction. Williams concludes: "Of course we notice the location [of the good old days] in the childhood of their authors Nostalgia, it can be said, is universal and persistent."¹⁴ However, interest in a prior time is especially manifest, Williams points out, during periods of transition from one social order to another, "a period in which another order . . . [is] being successfully pioneered. For behind that coincidence is a conflict of values which is still crucial" (35). Throughout Faulkner's and García Márquez's literature, that conflict of values is the cornerstone for the ironic framework. Williams goes on to point out that the lapserian myth is so powerful in modern thought that "it is difficult to over-estimate [its] importance" (96). However, in the disjunctive irony of Faulkner and García Márquez, this myth is eventually shattered. These authors grant that the time for heroic deeds performed by bigger-than-life people has passed and that modern man is wandering aimlessly in a purposeless and valueless, fragmented wasteland; that the present, as John Irwin says in Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge, is inadequate in comparison to the past¹⁵; that it is a

"'post'-everything" as Patricia Tobin asserts in Time and the Novel¹⁶; and that there is a "predominant feeling of loss and pain" (96) as Williams says--but they take a second look at that past, through the eyes of the ironist, and conclude that even then it was not "heroic," in the sense we commonly use that word. With subtle and even insidious irony, these authors debunk the idea of heroism. Employing an "observable" irony, they object to the "idealized representations of human nature" (Muecke, 22) by asserting that life is "irremediably flawed."

Typically, there are no "heroes" in the novels of Faulkner and García Márquez. That is to say, there are no untainted characters whose conduct is an example to be emulated by those around them and by succeeding generations, as "heroes" traditionally are. There are few admirable characters who serve as a standard to sustain effort and hope. As Muecke points out, these authors, like other modernist writers, see "as 'objectively' ironic the fact that men are a mix of contradictory qualities" (22). The heroic acts of Colonel Compson, Colonel Sartoris, the Carolina Bayard, Thomas Sutpen, José Arcadio Buendía, Colonel Aureliano Buendía, the Patriarch, and many others among the founding fathers, the revered ancestors, are frequently motivated by vainglory, obsession, and foolhardiness. Often their worth and success are, as in the case of the mountain folk in Absalom, Absalom!, "measured by lifting anvils or gouging eyes or how much

whisky[they] could drink and get up and walk out of the room " (226).

Moreover, in the ironic paradox which comprises these writers'"tension of opposites," the present and future are also devoid of heroic characters. The "hero" of the later generations, while often presented as possessing a higher sense of justice and a more refined sense of honor than his frontier predecessor, is ineffectual, impotent, or perverted. Out of this clash of idealism and cynicism comes a hybrid form of vitiated nostalgia and unresolved tension. Williams, describing the origin of this tension, points out the conflict between the life we get to know and value and the life we become aware of through mature experience and education. He describes a customary life we

see and learn from the ways our families live and get their living; a world of work and of place, and of beliefs so deeply dissolved into everyday actions that we don't at first even know they are beliefs, subject to change and challenge. Our education, quite often, gives us a way of looking at that life which can see other values beyond it Often we know in ourselves, very deeply, how much those educated values, those intellectual pursuits, are needed urgently where custom is stagnation or where old illusions are still repeated as timeless truths. (198)

It is this combination of habit and re-evaluation which leads to García Márquez's and Faulkner's ironic vision.

The past becomes demythologized. A type of antimyth emerges in the writings of these two authors. Still longing for the ideal age but realizing the past they were mesmerized by did not fulfill that ideal, they construct antitheses

of the heroic myth. Writing within the framework of the myth, they punch holes in its aura of heroism. They view the romanticized version of the past with the cold, hard cynicism of the realist, seeing therein not heroes but men with human weaknesses and failures. Faulkner presents a picture of the antebellum South, the Civil War days, and the postwar collapse which humanizes and debilitates the would-be heroes and which takes the veneer of glory and tragedy off the episodes and events surrounding them. Equally, García Márquez punches holes in the treasured legends and myths on which his oppressed country feeds. His heroes, too, are ineffectual, vain; his events and episodes are ridiculous and futile. The ironic approach the authors use sometimes borders on parody and contains elements of satire and even burlesque. For example, in a Clark Kent/Superman type of transformation, the heretofore meek and mild Aureliano, "solitary and elusive," easily manipulated and passive, bursts from his placid domino table/phone booth at the darkest, most desperate moment of Conservative invasion to lead his people in what promised to be a glorious resistance to governmental encroachment on individual freedom of the innocent and defenseless. With roaring hooves and in a cloud of dust, our hero emerges as the true savior of the oppressed, amid cheers and exhortations. Aurelito becomes the formidable Colonel Aureliano Buendía, the Liberal hope!

The irony in this parody of the old familiar tales of

heroes and saviors is undeniable when the chapter immediately succeeding this miraculous transformation begins: "Colonel Aureliano Buendía organized thirty-two armed uprisings and he lost them all."¹⁷ Our rising expectations are immediately dashed and we find ourselves reminded of such Faulknerian heroes as the Carolina Bayard and General Jeb Stuart who lead their troops headlong into the enemy camp to capture a supply of coffee, all the while spouting exquisite Southern courtesy, at the head of "the goddamnedest army the world ever saw."¹⁸

Repeatedly, in Don Quixote fashion, García Márquez and William Faulkner parody, satirize, and shatter the chivalric romances of heroic deeds. These iconoclasts enter the sacred temples of tradition and methodically set about smashing the time-honored idols of myth. The resultant disjunction in received values, mores, philosophical outlook, and orientation to history creates a vision of fragmentation and incomprehensibility. These two writers, through the employment of this disjunctive irony, remain suspended between the two poles of their dichotomy.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann, Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin American Writers (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 24.

²Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa, La Novela en America Latina: Diálogo (Lima: Carlos Milla Batris/Ediciones Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, 1968), p. 52.

³Vicenzo Bollettino, Breve Estudio de la Novelística de García Márquez (Madrid: Playor, 1973), p. 89. Quotation translated from the Spanish by the author.

⁴Mario Vargas Llosa, García Márquez: Historia de un Deicidio (Barcelona: Barral Editores, S. A., 1971), p. 140.

⁵Harley Oberhelman, The Presence of Faulkner in the Writings of García Márquez (Lubbock: Texas Tech Press, 1980), p. 5.

⁶Oberhelman, p. 16.

⁷Katalin Kulin, Creación Mítica en la Obra de García Márquez (Budapest: Editorial de la Academia de Ciencias de Hungría, 1980), pp. 57-62. Quotation translated by the author.

⁸Alan Wilde, Horizons of Assent: Modernism, Post-modernism, and the Ironic Imagination (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 40. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁹See for example John Barth, "Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction," Atlantic Monthly, Jan. 1980, pp. 65-71.

¹⁰D. C. Muecke, Irony and the Ironic (New York: Methuen and Company, 1982), p. 23. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹¹Barth, p. 71.

¹²Irving Howe, William Faulkner (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 37.

¹³William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 361. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹⁴Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 12. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹⁵John T. Irwin, Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 112.

¹⁶Patricia D. Tobin, Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 132.

¹⁷Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude, translated by Gregory Rabassa (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 104. All further references to this work appear in the text.

CHAPTER II

DEBUNKING THE LAPSERIAN MYTH

The "Heroic Past" Revisited

She had told the story many times since . . . and as she grew older the tale itself grew richer and richer, taking on a mellow splendor like wine, until what had been a hare-brained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth had become a gallant and finely tragical focal point to which the history of the race had been raised from out the old miasmatic swamps of spiritual sloth by two angels valiantly fallen and strayed, altering the course of human events and purging the souls of men. (Sartoris, 9)

Constantly reworking the tales of bigger-than-life men performing brave deeds, Faulkner's novels show an awareness of the airy substance on which those tales are based. The episode in Sartoris quoted above, in which Virginia Du Pre is presented sympathetically yet satirically, dramatizes the process of history and legend slipping over into myth. Many of the "heroic" deeds of the Civil War became heroic in retrospect and with the embellishment of active imaginations stimulated by the ennui and the wounded pride of military and economic defeat.

The gentle satire in this passage, combined with the warm environment of the fireside gathering, suggests the

ubiquitous presence of an unresolved ambivalence toward the past in the novels of William Faulkner. Faulkner's treatment of the first tenet of the Lapserian myth, the idea of a heroic or more nearly perfect past, varies widely from the commonly-held view of a lost paradise. Novels such as Sartoris, The Sound and The Fury, The Unvanquished, and Light in August, as well as Absalom, Absalom!, present a paradoxical view of the times of settlement and the period of the Civil War. Through an ironic vision, the legends of the renowned founding fathers and the brave war heroes are presented as both glorious history and as fantastic travesties. The "heroic deeds" of those golden days were often performed by "heroes" whose dominant attributes were a megalomaniac vision, over-weening pride, or plain foolish bravado. The irony operates on various levels, and in so far as it is intent on correcting a misconception or "holding up to ridicule . . . the dishonesty" (Wilde, 54) of the commonly-shared illusions, it is a mediate irony, often utilizing satire, as in the case of the passage which opens this chapter where the satiric irony exposes the false premise on which the legend is based. But the modern ironic vision seldom stops with mediate irony. Through the perspective of a disjunctive irony which fragments the view, an ambiguity is introduced. For example, though the values may have been false, those truly were heroic times; and in a manner, those men and women were bigger-than-life, though perhaps not for the same reason or in the same ways

commonly agreed upon. A cataclysm in history itself, which changes the rules by which men have lived, an unaccountable doom, a working out of an inherited sin, an inexorable fate--all characteristics of disjunctive irony which shatters the unified perspective--may reverse the fortunes and fame of these men, converting the hero to a villain or the winner to a loser.

In The Unvanquished, Colonel John Sartoris, the type of character central to Southern legend, is shown from two perspectives, at times complementary and at other times conflicting. On the one hand, we have the town's unadulterated admiration and respect for their Civil War hero and civic leader; on the other hand, we have the young son's ambivalent mixture of filial love and disillusionment, of pride and awakened consciousness. Both of these perspectives, however, are filtered through the reminiscences of the son looking back from a mature and indistinct future vantage point. In the first-person narrative, an older Bayard relates the events of his life which took place between his twelfth and twenty-fourth years. The reader neither knows the age of the narrator nor realizes until the final chapter that he has become a lawyer and a pacifist. There is only slight reevaluation of the experiences as they are narrated, but in that slender area of hindsight an ambivalence is evident in regard to the prevailing estimation of the events and the people, John Sartoris in particular. A tension of opposites exists in

the narrator's account of the events which tends to unmoor the reader's expectations.

The first view presented of Colonel John Sartoris is in a type of apology for the reverence the family feels for their head and benefactor. The purpose of this apology is to account for the high regard they hold him in and to acknowledge that this regard, in part at least, may be an illusion. The actual small stature of the Colonel is referred to time and again in an attempt to reduce the giant to man size, the imagination to reality. His real size is used to point up "the illusion of height and size which he wore for [the children] at least,"¹ and finally the illusion of grandeur is dismissed as resulting from the place John Sartoris holds as father and protector; the illusion of importance is discounted as arising from the family's familiarity with him: realizing a need to account for their feelings of respect, Bayard rationalizes that, although others were doing the same thing in the war, John Sartoris "was the only one we knew, had ever heard snoring at night in a quiet house, had watched eating, had heard when he talked . . ." (17). This small man, in other words, was a giant only in the minds of a few, privileged people:

Then we could see him good. I mean 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 . . . (17)

The narrator's need to demythologize and make human this person he respected so much is an attempt to gain control of

the present and eventual superiority over the past, which Bayard finally does in the act of becoming a pacifist and supplanting his father's code of honor with his own. The odor in his father's beard and clothes and flesh, which the twelve-year old boy believed to be "the smell of powder and glory, the elected victorious" (18), in hindsight, was recognized "to have been only the will to endure, a sardonic and even humorous declining of self-delusion . . ." (18).

Still grappling with an explanation of this "illusion," the narrator remarks about the diligence and speed with which his father works: "Father was everywhere, with a sapling under each arm going through the brush and briers almost faster than the mules; racking the rails into place while Joby and Loosh were still arguing about which end of the rail went where" (19). However, again contradicting this admiration, Bayard reflects that "it was not that Father worked faster and harder than anyone else," or that he looked bigger standing and giving orders; it was that ineffable "'way' he did it" (19).

These passages effectively undercut the heroic aura which surrounds the Colonel, attributing it to the impressionable nature of youth and the bias of family affiliation. In the narrator's attempt to demythologize his father, we see the undermining of the genealogical imperative of which Tobin speaks in Time and the Novel. Bayard's efforts to topple the giant are a part of his refusal to accept the basing of

authority and prestige on anteriority. According to Tobin,

Temporal anteriority thus acquires a metaphysical priority, prestige is affixed to the point of origin, authority resides in a claim to antiquity--and all lineal decorums receive their enabling postulate.²

Thus, Bayard, coming after his father in time, automatically owes him homage. In order to supersede his father, he must symbolically slay him--or, in this case, demythologize him by rejecting his standards and values, which is the theme of the novel as a whole and of Faulkner's ironic vision in general.

While the son grapples with a way to reconcile the image of the giant war hero with the bare-stockinged, snoring, small-statured man he calls Father, certainly the townsfolk have no ambivalence about the Colonel's grandeur. They rally behind him in his confrontation with the carpetbaggers, obeying every order he issues, and literally cheering him each step of the way. Clearly he is their hero and savior, and certainly his deeds of bravery will be passed on in legends to their grandchildren. Many years later, old man Falls, recounting the famous shoot-out with the carpetbaggers, confesses a fidelity bordering on fanaticism: "And, Bayard . . . I sort of envied them two Nawthuners, be damned ef I didn't. A feller kin take a wife and live with her fer a long time, but after all they ain't no kin. But the feller that brings you into the world or sends you outen hit . . ." (236). However, contrasted to this loyalty is the incident of the

Colonel's being voted out of his post of command by his first regiment. Perhaps the double view of the legendary Sartoris is best summed up in the two opposing speeches by Uncle Buck McCaslin:

Heard of him? Who ain't heard about him in this country? Get the Yankees to tell you about him sometime. By Godfrey, he raised the first damn regiment in Mississippi out of his own pocket, and took 'em to Ferginny and whipped Yankees right and left with 'em. . . . [His regiment] followed him and Stonewall Jackson right up to spitting distance of Washington without hardly losing a man I won't say God take care of you and your grandma on the road, boy, because by Godfrey you don't need God's nor nobody else's help; all you got to say is "I'm John Sartoris' boy; rabbits, hunt the canebrake" and then watch the blue-bellied sons of bitches fly. (48-49)

Immediately following this accolade, Uncle Buck voices another opinion;

John Sartoris is a damn fool; they voted him out of his own private regiment in kindness, so he could come home and take care of his family. . . . But that don't suit John Sartoris because John Sartoris is a damned confounded selfish coward, askeered to stay at home where the Yankees might get him. Yes, sir. So skeered that he has to raise him up another batch of men to protect him every time he gets within a hundred foot of a Yankee brigade. Scouring all up and down the country, finding Yankees to dodge; The best he can do is dodge and run away from Yankees until they have to put a price on his head, and now he's got to send his family out of the country; to Memphis where maybe the Union Army will take care of them, since it don't look like his own government and fellow citizens are going to. (48)

The awe in the captain's voice as he spots Bayard is typical of the admiration which most people feel for the Colonel. Uncle Buck points him out with "By Godfrey, there he is! There's John Sartoris' boy!" and the captain replied "I've heard of your father." After learning that the Colonel does

not have a full regiment, the captain replies incredulously: "'Fifty?. . . Fifty? We had a prisoner last week who said he had more than a thousand. He said that Colonel Sartoris didn't fight; he just stole horses.'" To this Uncle Buck retorts: "'That's it! That's John Sartoris! He gets the horses; any fool can step out and get a Yankee. These two damn boys here did that last summer. . .'" (49). This tendency to turn the misdeed, the infamous act into the very essence of the heroic act is typical of Faulkner's narrators and other mythologizers and reflects an ironic Southern ethic.

The unalloyed admiration early in the novel slowly becomes a questioning reassessment as Bayard matures and finally results in disdain and rejection. The ambivalence in the tone used to recount the war deeds of Colonel John Sartoris becomes a decided antipathy in the later chapters which recount the postwar deeds. Bayard becomes convinced that the hardness, the jaded sensitivities, the compulsion, and especially the intolerance are the inevitable consequences of a life lived according to the old code of frontier conduct. Compared to Bayard's "ruminant" pacifism, his father's "violent and ruthless dictatorialness and will to dominate" (170) were described as "carnivorous" (175). The awe has turned to repugnance and even pity. One is reminded at this point of an interview Faulkner had with Robert Contwell.³ From early childhood Faulkner dreamed of becoming an author like his famous progenitor. The character of Colonel John Sartoris

strongly suggests what is known of Colonel William Falkner, and the episodes in the novel closely parallel his biography. In the interview, to Contwell's surprise, Faulkner spoke of his illustrious great-grandfather in ambivalent, sometimes disparaging terms. While intensely interested in the Colonel's military career, Faulkner called his novel "pure escapism" and declared that "the Colonel had no humor and probably no sensibility." The Colonel was "an overbearing man. He had to be big dog." He wanted to be the best and most successful at whatever he did--fighting a war, building a railroad, running for the legislature, writing a novel--but soon lost interest in the project once his goal was achieved. The great-grandson said the Colonel provoked his opponent and former business partner into a confrontation by insulting him, laughing at him and spreading stories. Furthermore, "he had killed two or three men. And I suppose when you've killed men something happens inside you--something happens to your character. He said he was tired of killing people. And he wasn't armed the day Thurmond shot him, although he always carried a pistol.'" Typical of the ambivalence in his own characters, Faulkner went on to tell his interviewer with pride: "People at Ripley talk of him as if he were still alive, up in the hills some place, and might come in at any time. . . . he rode through that country like a living force."

Similarly, in The Unvanquished it is Colonel John Sartoris himself who realizes that "the land and the time too

are changing," and while the past seemed to call for men of his mettle, it is now time to "do a little moral house-cleaning" (175). When Colonel John Sartoris faces his opponent unarmed, declaring "I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity nor the end" (175), in effect he ushers in a new era and proclaims himself to be superseded. The ruthless demigod finally comes to realize how vitiated and debased his original ideals have become, how anachronistic his methods are. Sartoris acknowledges to his son, thus passing on the burden to the next generation, that the dream he had for his country, the goals of which justified the means of obtaining them, even the sacrifice of innocent lives, was no longer feasible by the old rules, which according to his standards were more honorable and moral. The new era ushers in a period of "consolidation, of pettifoggery and doubtless chicanery" (175) which would require a man of legal training to combat, instead of a man imposing his personal standards with a pistol. For this reason, he sends his son to study law, thus initiating a new standard. Many years after the Colonel's death, while visiting the graveyard where her illustrious relatives are buried, Jenny Du Pre speaks disdainfully of their "arrogant lusts," "vainglory," "swashbuckling," "strutting and swaggering," "bleak arrogance," and "haughty pride":

Fiddlesticks It always does me good to see all those fool pompous men lying there with their marble mottos and things. Thank the Lord, none of 'em will have a chance at me. (Sartoris, 379)

Colonel John Sartoris, cast in marble, with "orotund solemnity" and "pompous genealogical references,"

stood on a stone pedestal, in his frock coat and bare-headed, one leg slightly advanced and one hand resting lightly on the stone pylon beside him. His head was lifted a little in that gesture of haughty pride which repeated itself generation after generation with a fateful fidelity, his back to the world and his carven eyes gazing out across the valley where his railroad ran, and the blue changeless hills beyond, and beyond that, the ramparts of infinity itself.
(375)

In passages such as these, Faulkner taints his heroes, ironically debasing their glory and honor with pomposity and absurdity. The adulterated admiration is a part of the ambivalence inherent in his disjunctive irony. Seen as inherently shattered, the world offers no unalloyed values.

In a similar manner, Faulkner subjects another cherished hero to the scrutiny of his ironic perspective and also finds his story bastardized. The war escapades of the Bayard of the Carolina branch of the family, which through the myth making of Virginia Du Pre becomes the story of "two angels valiantly fallen and strayed, altering the course of human events and purging the souls of men" (9), were in reality the "hare-brained prank of two heedless and reckless boys wild with their own youth" (9). The war was just a convenient backdrop for the exaggerated sense of bravery and adventure of the two Southern gentlemen; Jeb Stuart and Bayard Sartoris had fought "in a spirit of pure fun: . . . as their actions clearly showed, [neither] had any political convictions involved at all" (10). In a wild night raid on the enemy

camp, deep within Federal lines, in pursuit of coffee, they led twenty other soldiers, drunk with heroics. A captured staff-major, refusing Stuart's senseless but "exquisitely courteous" offer of a steed, sees the absurdity of the reckless behavior:

"Will General Stuart, cavalry leader and General Lee's eyes, jeopardize his safety and that of his men and his cause in order to provide for the temporary comfort of a minor prisoner to his sword?" the major said. "This is not bravery: it is the rashness of a heedless and headstrong boy. There are fifteen thousand men within a radius of two miles of this point; even General Stuart cannot conquer that many, though they are Yankees, single-handed."

"Not for the prisoner, sir," Stuart replied haughtily, "but for the officer suffering the fortune of war. No gentleman would do less."

"No gentleman has any business in this war," the major retorted. "There is no place for him here. He is an anachronism, like anchovies. At least General Stuart did not capture our anchovies," he added tauntingly. "Perhaps he will send Lee for them in person." (17)

Accepting the dare of the anchovies, the Carolina Bayard turns and rides back into the pursuing Yankee troops, "with all Pope's army shooting at him. He rode yelling, 'Yaaaiiiih, Yaaaiiiih, come on, boys!' right up the knoll and jumped his horse over the breakfast table and rode it into the wrecked commissary tent, and a cook who was hidden under the mess stuck his arm out and shot Bayard in the back with a derringer" (17).

Recalling the hard times of the war and the fortitude of the Confederate "boys," old Bayard, now near seventy, agrees with old man Falls that "They were all pretty good men in those days. . . . But you damn fellers quit fighting

and went home too often" (227). During those "gallant, pinch-bellied days" (227), the country was laid waste, the honor of a people was trampled, the alleged sovereignty was challenged, and a whole socio-economic system was destroyed, but when old Bayard asks "Will, what the devil were you folks fighting about, anyway?" old man Falls answers, "Bayard, be damned ef I ever did know" (227). Ironically, these rebels fought "unwittingly" for the cause of the South, in a life-and-death game which had as much to do with personal pride, inflated honor, and adventure as with political and economic cause and patriotism. The superb irony inherent in the repartee between General Jeb Stuart and the captured Yankee major reveals the absurdity of trying to maintain the appearance of human dignity in the midst of the real sufferings of the war. Faulkner's fiction seems to say that these false values condemned the anachronistic Southern way of life to oblivion.

And so the truth is revealed, in John Sartoris's words, about "the goddamnedest army the world ever saw," and, in Aunt Jenny's words, about "the goddamnedest man in it" (18). The Civil War hero died, not in a battle defending his homeland from invaders, but in a senseless prank of hot-headed bravado that proved nothing.

This re-evaluating of the Civil War exploits and challenging of the myths are central in Faulkner's work and receive a much broader treatment in Light in August; here the myth is shown to have even more terrible and dour consequences.

The irony takes on a gloomier cast as the instrument of satire is complemented by an observable, or disjunctive, irony in the very nature of Southern culture. That is, the problem is not simply that of correcting a misrepresentation of the past, such as Jenny Du Pre's, by exposing the errors through the instrument of satire, typical of mediate irony; it is a much more complicated problem in which the historical perspective has been shattered and no unified vision is possible. The result of this disjunction which cancels out the past is a vitiated present and a voided future. Hightower, for example, is unable to live in the present because of a false past which is more real to him than his own life. This is, as Wilde says, "the estrangement, brought about by the inability to act" (22). The Reverend Gail Hightower, in Light in August, is the symbolic embodiment of the devastating effects the South has suffered because of its blind obsession with a past which, if it ever existed at all, is not retrievable. Memories or illusions of that past paradise serve only to cancel out the present, to keep one's back turned away from the here and the now, and to alienate one from his society.

Somewhat like his counterpart Miniver Cheevy in E. A. Robinson's poem, Gail Hightower was born too late--"about thirty years after the only day he seemed to have ever lived in--the day when his grandfather was shot from the galloping horse."⁵ Hightower has fallen temporal victim to what Tobin

calls "that time emptied of its previous riches, which pervades the modern sense of life and literature as an aftermath, as a 'post-' everything."⁶ He looks at his congregation and sees a phantom cavalry charge, flames, crashing horses, banners flying; his wife cries out in her loneliness and frustration for him and he hears only "the wild bugles, the clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves" (467). His obsession with "galloping cavalry and defeat and glory" (57) has left him impervious to the "hunger and eagerness" (461) of those who look to him for the succor and understanding which his calling gives them the right to expect. Byron Bunch, the antithesis of Gail Hightower, reflects in his simple country understanding that "a man will talk about how he'd like to escape from living folks. But it's the dead folks that do him the damage" (69). Similarly, Hightower himself reflects on how, when the war was lost, the men returned home "with their eyes stubbornly reverted toward what they refused to believe was dead" (449).

As a child, the young Hightower listened "with rapt, wide, half dread and half delight" as the old Negro slave woman repeated "with musing and savage sorrow and pride" how the child's grandfather, for whom he was named, "had killed men 'by the hundreds' as he was told and believed" (452). His one over-riding desire, to which he sacrificed everything--his wife, his calling, his place among the living--was to return to Jefferson, the site where his life died thirty

years before he was born, when his grandfather was shot from the saddle of a galloping horse during Van Dorn's cavalry raid to destroy Grant's stores. Never able to separate past from present, myth from reality, he tangled up his sermons from the pulpit with the wild ravings of a man obsessed by fiends:

. . . they were boys riding the sheer tremendous tidal wave of desperate living. Boys. Because this. This is beautiful. Listen. Try to see it. Here is that fine shape of eternal youth and virginal desire which makes heroes. That makes the doings of heroes border so close upon the unbelievable that it is no wonder that their doings must emerge now and then like gun-flashes in the smoke, and that their very physical passing becomes rumor with a thousand faces before breath is out of them, lest paradoxical truth outrage itself. (458)

In such frenzy, Hightower asserts that it does not even matter if the stories have been made up: "I still believe. Because even fact cannot stand with it" (458). And herein lies the ironic source of the South's paralysis: the truth does not matter; the myth, even when based on fiction, is truer than the reality. Fiction is preferable to truth. This incongruity is based on the unresolvable paradox postulating that man can arrive at objective truth through subjective means. This willingness to believe a falsehood, while knowing it to be false, is an example of the perfect "indestructible, unresolvable paradox" (21) which Wilde says characterizes absolute irony. Here we have a balance between conflicting but equally valid possibilities. The result of this unresolved tension, as Wilde points out, is

negation, estrangement, and paralysis. Faulkner's characters are immobilized by the fever that spread across a land ravaged by a military defeat which changed the entire complexion of its social, economic, political, and cultural life. In their estrangement from a world of which they are a part, they not only distort and fantasize, they do not even differentiate between fact and illusion, and they turn their backs on the present, thus aborting the future. Faulkner's obsessed characters seem to say that "real" life itself is a fictional fiction, a bogus fiction, an imitation of the imagination, which cannot match up to the true fiction of illusion and idealism. In telescopic fashion, elusive truth evades man, and, as Muecke points out, interpretation is deferred as experience is open to "an endless series of subversive interpretations" (31). Mr. Compson in The Sound and the Fury tells Quentin, "whether or not you consider it [taking one's own life] courageous is of more importance than the act itself than any act otherwise you could not be in earnest."⁷ In an existential fashion, the ironic consciousness says that truth is what one makes it, and the only value is to live by one's made-up "truth." An act has importance only as man assigns it value.

In a similar manner, when Quentin claims to his father that he and Caddy had committed incest, he says, in effect, that the idea of incest would have saved them, but, in reality, the act itself would have condemned them even more.

To be unjustly accused of a heinous sin ironically would vindicate them and steel them against censure. As Quentin explains:

i was afraid to [try to force her] i was afraid she might and then it wouldnt have done any good but if i could tell you we did it would have been so and then the others [lovers] wouldnt be so and then the world would roar away (195)

Quentin, like Hightower, is willing to believe a lie he knows is not true, but by so doing he will create his own reality. In an irrational, paradoxical way, the fiction of evil is more horrible than the evil itself, but it is also more purifying and ennobling. Like the narrator in Thomas Hardy's poem "Hap," who longs to be punished unjustly by "some vengeful god" because "Then would I bear it, clinch myself, and die,/Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited," Quentin could endure the pains of hell, steeled by the knowledge that he was being unjustly persecuted. The injustice of the punishment would outweigh any real injustice he or Caddy had committed, thereby absolving them of their sin. In the humiliation of its defeat and the knowledge of its sin, the South suffers under a tremendous self-hatred made possible by its narcissistic self-love, a hatred which can be expurgated only by self-mutilation and self-annihilation. In defiance of the destiny dictated by the Cosmic ironist--the "Player," as Faulkner calls him--the characters turn inward and declare themselves superior to the fates, to simple reality, and to truth. Paradoxically, this gesture both saves and condemns

them; they begin to self-destruct by rotting from within, but it is by their own decision. Like Milton's Satan, they believe that it is "better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven." At least they are the masters of their own doom.

Convinced that he is the reincarnation of his grandfather, Hightower finally comes to realize that he, as the avatar of a heroic Civil War leader, is "the debaucher and murderer of my grandson's wife [that is, his own] since I could neither let my grandson live or die. . . ." (465). The great Civil War myth has a strangle-hold on the present which prevents it from getting on to a future. Hightower's transgressions against his fellow man, in the form of alienating himself from human suffering in the present, are at least partially expiated by a moment of epiphany when he finally realizes the truth, not only about his grandfather, but more importantly, about what his obsession has cost him and, in consequence, others. That "fine shape of eternal youth and virginal desire" which is "like gunflashes in the smoke," looked at from another perspective, is in reality

a handful of men . . . performing with the grim levity of schoolboys a prank so foolhardy that the troops who had opposed them for four years did not believe that even they would have attempted it. (457)

Like the Carolina Bayard, they rode "through a grove where every hamlet had its Yankee bivouac" (457). At the moment of epiphany, Hightower accepts his responsibility for affecting lives; the phantoms of the past free him from bondage "so that it can be now Now" (466). The present is finally free to be.

Again, we have the legendary Civil War hero demythologized, not only brought down to earth, but somewhat mud-died in the process: "a swaggering and unchastened bravo killed with a shotgun in a peaceful henhouse, in a temporary hiatus of his own avocation of killing" (462). The irony evident in the juxtaposing of the Negro Cinthy's account of the incident and Hightower's account in the same paragraph leaves no doubt of the narrator's intent in debunking the myth. Cinthy gives the rational and sane, if somewhat sardonic, version of the incident:

It was just the one shot. "And of course he would be right in de way of hit Stealin' chickens. A man growed, wid a married son, gone to war whar his business was killen' Yankees, killed in somebody else's henhouse wid a han'ful of feathers." (459)

Not simply disregarding the facts, but recasting them in a different truth, making the very misdeed the source of the heroism, a truth that "even fact cannot stand with" (458), Hightower arrives at the "paradoxical truth [that] outrage[s] itself" (458):

It's fine so. Any soldier can be killed by the enemy in the heat of battle, by a weapon approved by the arbiters and rulemakers of warfare. Or by a woman in a bedroom. But not with a shotgun, a fowling piece, in a henhouse. (549)

The very indignity of the act, in a "paradoxical truth," is transmuted into another "gallant and finely tragical focal point" (Sartoris, 9), as in the similar case of the Carolina Bayard who willingly laid down his life for the cause of coffee and anchovies. We are also reminded of Uncle Buck's praise of Colonel Sartoris's discretion in stealing horses

and leaving the mundane killing of Yankees to those who had no higher skills. There is no element of sarcasm in the narrators' telling of these stories; the irony must carry the whole message. The paradoxical irony has reversed and inverted the possibilities until the conflicting perceptions are equally valid and equally invalid, a poise which results in disorientation and deferred meaning. The credulity with which the narrators relate the incidents is played off against traditional notions of honor and truth, resulting in the tension of absolute irony.

Another family entangled in the web of the heroic past is the illustrious Compson dynasty in The Sound and The Fury. Second in prominence only to the Sartorises, the original Compsons claimed such distinguished members as "a brilliant and gallant statesman" (Governor Quentin MacLachan Compson), a "leader of brave and gallant men" (Brigadier Jason Lycurgus Compson II), and a wealthy gentleman land and slave owner (Jason Lycurgus Compson) (6-8). Commonly called, at the height of its splendor, the Compson Domain, "With its slave-quarters and stables and kitchen gardens and formal lawns and promenades and pavillions laid out by the same architect who built the columned porticoed house furnished by steam-boat from France and New Orleans" (6), the magnificent establishment "was fit to breed princes, statesmen and generals and bishops" (7).

There are no novels or sections of novels which deal

exclusively with these early Compsons, so the reader learns about their grandeur only through allusion to them by later generations and through the "Appendix" which Faulkner wrote for Malcolm Cowley's The Portable Faulkner years after he wrote The Sound and The Fury. Several of the Compson characters appear also in Absalom, Absalom!. There is little doubt about the family's stature in Jefferson, but the caustic tone of the narrator of the genealogy in the Appendix betrays a tongue-in-cheek irony that refuses to take the protestations of honor and sincerity seriously. The tone is set by the narrator's observations about President Andrew Jackson:

. . . above them all [he] set not his wife's honor but the principle that honor must be defended whether it was or not because defended it was whether or not. (4)

Accordingly, the central irony is the seriousness with which the characters take themselves in this absurd and meaningless world. As the title indicates, Compson life is, after all, full of sound and fury. People like Quentin and his anti-thesis Jason are but players upon a stage, and all their strutting and fretting, defending "family honor" or amassing a fortune, are, if not pathetic and ludicrous, at least of no lasting import. The drama of the South plays on to act out "the blind tragedy of human events" (356), despite the "transient glare" (18) of their lives.

The early Compsons, like the early Sartorises and Hightowers, were over-blown, puffed up, foolhardy, dare-

devilish, rugged, flamboyant people like Brigadier Jason Lycurgus Compson who never "returned to juvenility because actually he never left it" (8). Eternally getting themselves into messes by "vocal and vociferant" schemes against the king, the president, or the other authorities, they were constantly on the move, fleeing, "running true to family tradition" (5). At its height, the Compson Domain "did produce or at least spawn a governor--Quentin MacLachan" (7), but he was "the last Compson who would not fail at everything he touched save longevity or suicide" (7). The off-handed deprecation implied by the afterthought "or at least spawned" is indicative of the gentle ridicule which helps to undercut the aura of grandeur which surrounds the Compson clan. General Jason Lycurgus Compson II not only failed at Shiloh and at Resaca, but he put the first mortgage on the land and started selling off fragments of the square mile to keep up the mortgage. Ironically, it is this same ancestor whom Quentin recalls with so much awe and respect as he imagines death as his grandfather's friend:

It used to be I thought of death as a man something like Grandfather a friend of his a kind of private and particular friend like we used to think of Grandfather's desk not to touch it not even to talk loud in the room where it was I always thought of them as being together somewhere all the time waiting for old Colonel Sartoris to come down and sit with them waiting on a high place beyond cedar trees Colonel Sartoris was on a still higher place looking out across at something and they were waiting for him to get done looking at it and come down Grandfather wore his uniform and we could hear the murmur of their voices from beyond the cedars they were always talking and Grandfather was always right. (194)

The double adulation is for both the progenitors in their "high places," "looking out across" the future years, and the Civil War heroes. Quentin's monologue places the number of Compson generals at three (121), but it does not really matter whether he is referring to the old Scottish and British warriors, or the Mississippi ones; the point is well made that in the eyes of their descendents, the founders are heroic figures, truly "high and mighty people," as Mrs. Caroline Compson complains enviously (122).

Reminiscent of the old Bayard's reevaluation of his "carnivorous" and "intolerant" father, Jason Compson IV, the last male Compson, provides a sardonic and embittered corrective to the idolizing of the heroic ancestors:

I havent got much pride, I cant afford it with a kitchen full of niggers to feed and robbing the state asylum of its star freshman. Blood, I says, governors and generals. It's a damn good thing we never had any kings and nresidents, we'd all be down there at Jackson [state asylum] chasing butterflies. (147)

The fact that these disparaging words are spoken by a thoroughly revolting character without scruples, compassion, or vision, compounds the irony. The ambiguities at the base of Faulkner's fiction have their origins in this paradoxical view of the past. Yes, those were heroic times, and, yes those were bigger-than-life men; but, no, those times were not "civilized," and, no, those men did not have the "human" and "sane" qualities necessary for survival and peace in a post-Civil War world in which the standards of the past are

invalid. Near the beginning of Sartoris, old Bayard and old man Falls reminisce about the glorious war days of Bayard's famous father Colonel John Sartoris who, even after his death, was a "far more palpable presence than either of the two old men" (1). The Colonel was "like the creatures of that prehistoric day that were too grandly conceived and executed either to exist very long or to vanish utterly when dead from an earth shaped and furnished for punier things" (2).

The disjunctive ironist, seeing the world as "inherently disconnected and fragmented" (Wilde, 10), presents a post-bellum South whose former unified standards of conduct have been invalidated but whose emerging code is unacceptable to those who remain true, at least in memory, to the ideals of an earlier age. The anironic vision which accompanies this sense of fragmentation and disorientation is a view of the South before the disruptive upheaval of the Civil War. In the anironic vision, the land is unified under a clearly defined code of conduct, an apartheid social system, and a stable economy. It was a time of security and cohesion. We do well to keep in mind at this point Raymond Williams' caution in The Country and the City not to confuse history with the remembrance of that past time as presented in literature: "We must not look . . . at what the country was really like: that is a utilitarian or materialist, perhaps even a peasant response" (18). That is, the ideal against which the present is compared is also a part of the fictional

world of the novel, although it may only be implied, as in the anironic. When that ideal itself is questioned, as it often is in Faulkner's literature, the irony becomes absolute, as Wilde tells us, and a sense of rupture and estrangement prevails. The familiar conflict between appearance and reality, between the real and the ideal, has transmogrified into the ever-shifting sands of relativity where appearance is the reality--that is, the reality is that there is no permanence, no truth, no reality.

A Brave New Future: "not for me died not"
(Sound, 194)

". . . an earth shaped and furnished for punier things."
(Sartoris, 2)

In Faulkner's literature, the first tenet of the lapserian myth--the heroic past--is replete with ironic, unresolved ambivalences. The narrators, and consequently the readers, are never sure of their own responses to those characters and events. As Muecke says of the twentieth-century concept of irony, the meaning is deferred and is open to multiple, ambiguous interpretations (31). Through the novelist's dramatic control, ambivalences are evoked from the reader which are comparable to those of the narrator. However, when dealing with the second tenet of the lapserian myth--the brave new world--the narrators are less equivocal, the focus shifting from a subjective narration to an objective dramatization. It is no longer a question of interpretation, no longer a "was it or wasn't it" reevaluation,

but it becomes a statement of observable fact.*

The unresolvable paradoxes dissolve into what Wilde calls apparent paradoxes in which the anironic offers a contrasting vision of unity and coherence. The perfect balance of tensions deteriorates into an entropic vision of decay, decadence, and eventual dissolution. A Cosmic ironist who sees man as the plaything of the gods, the gods' tennis ball, so to speak, in a game of life that is "irremediably flawed" (Muecke, 22), the ironic narrator at the end of Sartoris sees life as a kind of chess game in which man is the Pawn. The name of the outmoded game is "Sartoris," and the Player is bored with the out-of-date moves. The narrator hints that it is time to clear the board to make way for a new game with different rules; it is time to let the past be dead and let the Now be now:

. . . the dust was peopled with ghosts of glamorous and old disastrous things. And if they were just glamorous enough, there was sure to be a Sartoris in them, and then they were sure to be disastrous. Pawns. But the Player, and the game He plays. . . He must have a name for His pawns, though. But perhaps Sartoris is the game itself--a game outmoded and played with pawns of which the Player Himself is a little wearied. For there is death in the sound of it, and a glamorous fatality. . . . (380)

Whether the name is Sartoris or Grierson, de Spain, Compson or Sutpen, the message is the same--their ilk cannot survive

*The emphasis here is still on "observable"--that is, meaning is still a matter of interpretation, but it is presented as objective instead of subjective. The tone and style of presentation have changed.

in a world which has rejected the values of the past. They belong to a time and a place which are fast disappearing.

The Unvanquished, though an outstanding example of Faulkner's great comic ability and remarkable characterization, especially in such memorable characters as Granny Millard and Ringo, lacks the philosophical profundity and complexity of such novels as The Sound and The Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, and Light in August. And in its sanguine view of the world, The Unvanquished is free of the troubled and haunting forebodings which characterize the other novels. Written after the author's most notable fiction, The Unvanquished presages Faulkner's tendency later in his career to rewrite some of his fiction, casting certain characters in a more favorable light. However, in the Yoknapatawpha chronology the story predates Sartoris, telling as it does the Civil War exploits of Colonel John Sartoris. In this novel, the author either has not let go of, or is returning to, depending on the critic's vantage point, a mediate irony which postulates an emerging brave new world, a paradise regained. Faulkner's ironic vision here presents the fulfillment of the lapserian myth: mankind is on the way to regaining or recreating the lost paradise. The heroic main character redeems fallen man and ushers in a new period of justice. Although, as pointed out previously, the author is very ambivalent about the heroes of the past, he is decisive in this novel about the "heroes" of the present and the future. This decision, however, is

not typical of the entropic vision revealed in what is thought of as Faulkner's most characteristic fiction.

The Unvanquished is one of Faulkner's most consistently satiric novels and offers a clear example of the use of mediate irony. In this work Faulkner follows closely Wilde's prescription by

holding up to ridicule . . . through its controlled and witty verbal strategies, the triviality, complacency, and dishonesty of the lives exposed in its pages and, more importantly, presenting as the base for its attacks a comprehensible and coherent world, embodied in the symbolically central figure (54)

of young Bayard Sartoris. Envisioning a better world to come, where men will forgo violence in favor of rationality and will be governed by the law of the courts rather than by a personal sense of justice, where culture and sophistication will replace backwoods isolation and naiveté, and where man will not be ruled by brute force but by the consent of the ruled, this novel is sanguinely moralistic, a common characteristic of mediate irony. The ideal society is just around the corner in this rite-of-passage novel, where the protagonist's passage to a new level of consciousness symbolizes mankind's passage to a new period of justice.

In the half-defensive words of Colonel John Sartoris, the symbolic embodiment of the old, fallen world, the advent of a new age is heralded: "I acted as the land and the times demanded But now the land and the time too are changing" (175). No longer could giant men like Thomas Sutpen,

John Sartoris, and the early Compsons stride across a virgin South, reaping from and raping the land, forging their dynasties, imposing their own law, perpetuating the sin against the black race and against the white brothers: "The Southerner already knew he was wrong and accepted that gambit [the war] even when he knew it was the fatal one,"⁸ or so Faulkner had written in "Letter to a Northern Editor." The time finally came for a turn-over, a new code to supplant the old outworn one--a new code which recognized the dignity and value of a person, to replace a code which asserted that the end justified the means.

Bayard, mankind's surrogate in the new age, accepts the gambit. His rise to pacifism and his rejection of the old code of personal vengence proclaims a new level of morality and conscience: "I must live with myself, you see" (182). Where the father had imposed his own law on the land, the son has gone off to study law. Clearly a new era is at hand. No longer the creator, man becomes the receiver. The focus, as Muecke pointed out in the change from Instrumental to Observable Irony, has shifted from active to passive, and man becomes the victim of some fate beyond himself, of some Cosmic Ironist. Faulkner dramatizes what W. B. Yeats said in "The Second Coming": it is time for the "shape with lion body and the head of a man,/A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun" to sleep, making way for the code of the rocking cradle of Bethlehem. The old gods of vengence are supplanted by a

new religion, a religion of law, pacifism, and democracy. In the last chapter of The Unvanquished, with consummate skill, Faulkner invokes the three connotations of verbenas as victory laurel, peace olive, and love myrtle, simultaneously and individually, the lines of division melting in ironic twists, reversals, and parodies. The "odor" of verbenas--the overpowering smell of victory and courage which the Greek goddess of violence wears into battle, becomes an "order" of verbenas*--a society, a knighthood, dedicated to a new social law, into which Bayard is the first initiate. Drusilla's induction of Bayard as the new standard bearer to carry on the traditions of his forefathers becomes, ironically, an initiation into a new order of peace and law; instead of the laurel to crown victory, we have the olive to signify peace; instead of the weapons for killing, Bayard accepts the flower of pacifism.

To prove himself worthy to be the standard bearer for a new consciousness, Bayard has to pass through the valley of temptation and prove his moral courage in combat against evil. The valley of temptation, in this case, as in so many other myths, is incarnated in the body of a woman. Drusilla, an inverted Eve figure, more like Lilith who commanded than like Eve who enticed, is described as "the Greek amphora priestess of a succinct and formal violence" (168). She urges

* Indeed, to the Southerner, the difference in sound between "odor" and "order" is slight.

him on with, "Oh you will thank me, you will remember me who put into your hands what they say is an attribute only of Gods, who took what belongs to heaven and gave it to you" (180). Here Drusilla echoes the argument Milton's Satan used successfully on Eve and Eve used finally to seduce Adam: "and ye shall be as Gods." In rapture she praises him: "How beautiful you are: do you know it? How beautiful: young, to be permitted to kill, to be permitted vengeance, to take into your bare hands the fire of heaven that cast down Lucifer" (180). Thus, Drusilla/Eve becomes the purveyor of evil, of the old Testament creed of an eye for an eye, of ambition and self-will. But while Eve is bringing about a fall from a perfect state into corruption, Drusilla attempts to preserve a fallen state and impede a rise. Both seductresses bring to culmination their temptation with an offer of their own bodies as the ultimate prize. Milton makes Eve's combination of love and lust for Adam her motivating force when she extends to him the apple. Adam's acceptance of the fruit is his affirmation of his love and lust for Eve. The sexual tension between Bayard and his young step-mother surfaced sometime before, as she forced Bayard to kiss her in the garden. It is she he returns home to, and it is she who exerts the strongest pressure on him to preserve the family honor by the old morality. While Adam completely succumbs to his love for Eve, thus accomplishing the fall, Bayard inversely rejects Drusilla's offers, thus accomplishing the

rise. When he rejects the guns, "the long true barrels true as justice, the triggers quick as retribution, the two of them slender and invincible and fatal as the physical shape of love" (180), thus rejecting the double symbol of sexuality and violence, he rejects the office of progenitor, of breeder of gods, and accepts the burden of guilt.

Ironically, it is not a feminine principle Bayard is rejecting when he refuses Drusilla's offer; it is the old goddess of blood and violence, a female goddess more masculine than mortal man. Drusilla, who rode with Colonel Sartoris's regiment in the Civil War, who dressed and fought as a man, who wore her hair cropped short, who commanded Bayard in identical tones to kiss her and to take the guns, and who had the slender body of a boy, is another avatar of the violence Bayard rejects. Her offer of the long-barrelled pistols which are "slender and invincible and fatal as the physical shape of love," suggests a hermaphroditic principle exclusive of any debilitating femininity.

During the rites of passage, Bayard, mankind's representative, denounces the code of violence and assumes the code of peace, divesting himself of the instruments of violence, the pistols, and donning the symbol of pacifism, the flower. When Drusilla first bedecks Bayard with the verbena sprig, it is as a victory laurel and as the woman's favor which he should wear into combat. Significantly, she crushes her own sprig and casts it away from her, declaring "I abjure

it. I abjure verbena forever more; I have smelled it above the odor of courage; that was all I wanted" (180). She had carried the verbena into battle with her. No sooner has she decorated Bayard with the flowers than she realizes her own mistake and the ironic appropriateness of beflowering him. The verbena is no longer the victory laurel but is now the peace olive. Her casting off of the verbena is a complete abjuration of anything feminine; his acceptance of the flower is an assumption of the feminine principle, although this fact is ironically unrealized at the time. The one thing he is aware of throughout his ordeal with Redmond is the all-pervasive fragrance which engulfs him each step of the way. Upon his return in the evening, the sprig still in his lapel, he finds Drusilla/violence departed and the flower of peace on his pillow, its fragrance "filling the room, the dusk, the evening with that odor which she said you could smell alone above the smell of horses" (192). A new age is ushered in.

For a moment at least Faulkner seems to give full credence to the brave-new-world myth. Through his mediate-irony vision, as Wilde would describe it, "the world is perceived as deviating or lapsed from some preexistent norm[;] the anironic [of this vision is] a contrasting societal or at least earthly vision of integration and connection, harmony and coherence: paradise regained or made reasonably or imaginatively terrestrial . . ." (30). But while critics may be right in seeing this novel as lauding the triumph of

pacifism over frontier justice, noting that it took more courage to confront Redmond unarmed than with a gun, from the vantage point of hindsight one realizes that this act also hails the advent of the decline of the Old South. When Bayard abdicates his position as law-giver, he forfeits his rights as patriarch, as father, and as god. Herein lies one of the central paradoxes which pervades all of Faulkner's literary works. Concomitants to law and justice, to democracy and civilization seem to be a debilitated life force, feminization, impotence, and a type of paralysis which makes it impossible to exert any meaningful action and to regenerate the line. An "indestructible, unresolvable paradox" (Wilde, 21) is the result of the absolute irony which projects a disjunction between the opposed visions. When Bayard, of the post-Civil War generation, refuses to take up the challenge of the "carnivorous animals," choosing instead the "ruminant" (175), he thus dooms his progeny to a life bound by the Book, the feminized and castrated new religion, and ultimate extinction. By refusing the old morality, Bayard takes upon himself the burden of guilt, the consciousness of wrongdoing; the point at which he first declares that he must be able to live with himself (182) is the moment at which he emerges as a being with a conscience and the point at which he can no longer live with anyone else. When he begins to "study" the laws of others and impose them on himself, his sphere of influence on others begins to shrink. He abdicates the throne

of the old gods and assumes the lowly cross of the scape-goat. As Flannery O'Connor observes in "Everything that Rises Must Converge," a raised consciousness marks the Southerner's "entry into the world of guilt and sorrow." Wilde identifies this "informing consciousness" as the "familiar action-impeding mechanism of self-consciousness in twentieth-century literature" (21) which paralyzes the "Hollow Men" and leads ultimately to estrangement from the world.

Bayard's conscious decision to supplant the old by a new code is the symbolic embodiment of an inevitable process that was fated from the beginning. Colonel John Sartoris recognized that a new era called for a new code which stamped his kind as obsolete. What was not realized at the time because of the flourish of heroism that marked the occasion (i. e., the courage it took to face the father's armed murderer unarmed, and the strength of character it took to frustrate the expectations of the whole society) was the feminization of the male, the abjuration of the male principle. Each generation thereafter would be a new breed of emasculated, ineffectual, impotent, egocentric, and guilt-ridden ghosts of men: the paralyzed Shadows estranged from their worlds. When the aura of bravado fades from their acts, their empty heroics are revealed as suicidal. Northrop Frye, in Anatomy of Criticism, calls this disappearance of the hero the "archetypal theme of irony and satire."⁹ In this entropic vision, or sparagmos, Frye tells us there exists

"the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world."¹⁰ Or, as Yeats said, "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned."

In other novels dealing with the descendents of the Civil War generation, Faulkner concentrates on exposing the brave-new-world myth. The violent, wild blood which marked the original Sartorises, which brought them both glory and damnation, re-emerges periodically in the following generations, but now impotent and paralyzed. Denied the stage and setting in which to act out their heroics, stripped of the aura of heroism, burdened by a heavy guilt, the later Sartorises are Byronically moody, melancholy, and above all, self-destructive.

With such auspicious beginnings as the descendents of these Southern "aristocratic" families could claim, one could logically expect "princes, statesmen and generals and bishops" (Sound, 7), as the narrator of the Compson genealogy tells us. Instead, through an ironic twist of fate, we find the lines attenuating out in the current period in a total failure of regeneration. Like hollow men, these ineffectual straw creatures go out not with the customary bang but with a futile whimper. According to this ironic vision in Faulkner's literature, the present, devoid of any possibility of

making meaningful statements about individual worth and the purpose of life, is a dry wasteland divested of ancient gods. Speaking of this time of impotence, John Irwin, in Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge, observes that "the ante-bellum South became in the minds of postwar Southerners that debilitating 'golden age and lost world' in comparison with which the present is inadequate."¹¹ The modern period is marked by a diluted life-force which perhaps indicates a refinement but which also signals impotence, paralysis, and, therefore, a breakdown of the old social structure. Patricia Tobin, in Time and the Novel: The Genealogical Imperative, discusses Faulkner's haunting sense of loss: "This present time becomes weakened, reduced, overwhelmed by the 'super presence' of the highly charged past. Experienced solely as an attenuation of the time of heroic potentiality, the present becomes 'catastrophic.'"¹² As in T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men," the efforts of the effeminate, impotent, or perverted contemporary man are paralyzed by the Shadow which separates the desire from the spasm, the idea from the reality, the motion from the act, the conception from the creation, and the potency from the existence. Faulkner's entropic vision postulates a lapserian period characterized by a continuous attrition of moral values, social structures, and traditions. The catastrophe of the contemporary times is the result of a general entropic trend in which the whole framework by which society has functioned for centuries is being dismantled;

standards are being broken; and the preordained pattern is being subverted.

The promise of peace which Bayard had won for the family and its descendents in The Unvanquished, the expiation for the sins of the founding fathers, is aborted in Sartoris, written before The Unvanquished, but preceding it in the chronological history of Yoknapatawpha County. Bayard's rejection of the family tradition of violence, personal justice, and wild exploits as a young man in his early twenties ironically produces an old man in his sixties and seventies who, according to his aunt Jenny, "had somehow flouted them all, had committed lese majesty toward his ancestors and the lusty glamour of the family doom by dying, as she put it, practically from the 'inside out'" (354).

The true focus, however, in the extinction of the Sartoris line in Sartoris is young Bayard, the grandson of the Bayard of The Unvanquished, who is marked by "the dark shape of that doom" (356) which cursed the family line. The young Bayard is a moody, haunted, aloof, guilt-ridden Byronic figure, pursued by the ghost of his twin brother who lost his life as a fighter pilot in the First World War. Repeatedly, the life of a Sartoris man is described as a "rocket to glare for a moment in the sky, then die away" (357-358), or a "shooting star across the dark plain. . . lighting it with a transient glare like a soundless thunderclap, leaving a sort of radiance when it died" (18), or "a glare of fallen

meteors on the dark retina of the world" (126). The family doom is tied to this momentary bright glare, "false and stubborn pride" (125), violence, and an early death. Other members of the family had managed to get themselves "decently killed" (230), usually at a young age. Young Johnny, Bayard's twin, found "a good excuse to get himself killed" (31), in a violent and fool-hardy air battle. Like the Carolina Bayard who rode into Yankee lines, Johnny was "hell-bent" on flying in a "goddam little popgun" (46) straight into enemy air space: "They flew all over him. Hemmed him up like a damn calf in a pen while one of them sat right on his tail until he took fire and jumped" (45), thus fulfilling the family doom of coming to "early and violent ends" (357). In her anger, Aunt Jenny accuses them of doing such foolish things because "It's in the blood. Savages, every one of 'em. No earthly use to anybody" (29). Even old Bayard has a premonition of the imminent demise of the family line. Breaking tradition by the relatively pacific life he has led, he is the first of his name to reach the age of sixty: "I reckon Old Marster is keeping me for a reliable witness to the extinction of it" (104). Horace Benbow, a family friend, observes that the Sartorises are a "funny family, always going to wars, and always getting killed" (167).

Young Bayard, though surviving the war, "still possessed. . . all the incalculable portent of his heritage" (90), and, therefore, the town held its breath in anticipation of

the disaster. Predicting the inevitable fulfillment of the family doom Horace observes:

Still, they've just gone through with an experience that pretty well shook the verities and the humanities, and whether they know it or not, they've got another one ahead of 'em that'll pretty well finish the business. Give him a little time But personally I can't see why he shouldn't be allowed to kill himself, if that's what he thinks he wants. (168)

And indeed young Bayard is suicidal. After wearing himself out with violence, alcohol, and injuries, he lies exhausted, reflecting on "that body which he must drag forever about a bleak and barren world with him" (160):

"Hell," he said, lying on his back, staring out the window where nothing was to be seen, waiting for sleep, not knowing if it would come or not, not caring a particular damn either way. Nothing to be seen, and the long, long span of a man's natural life. Three score and ten years to drag a stubborn body about the world and cozen its insistent demands. Three score and ten, the Bible said. Seventy years. And he was only twenty-six. Not much more than a third through it. Hell. (160)

The symbolism of the dark window, the awaited sleep, and the "nothing to be seen" beyond the window reveals a death wish born of ennui, frustration, and a lack of purposeful existence. Determined upon self-destruction after returning from the war, young Bayard immediately purchases a race car in which he terrorizes the countryside, "helling around," drinking, risking his life for the thrill of it, "spit[ting] in deestruction's face" (324), as old man Falls says. Trying to purge himself of the memory of Johnny's death through alcohol, Bayard, in a drunken rage, climbs on the back of a

killer horse and horrifies the whole town. Narcissa Benbow, the one stable character whose point of view the reader can most rely on, is irresistibly drawn to and repulsed and horrified by the wild antics of young Bayard. When her cat pounces on a bird which she tries fruitlessly to rescue, the worst curse she can sling at the animal is "Damn you! you--you Sartoris!" (75). Distraught over his escapade with the wild horse, she helplessly beats her fists on the telephone, shouting into the dark, "The beast, the beast" (155). And after he finally turns the race car over, almost killing himself, she sobs, "You beast, you beast, why must you always do these things where I've got to see you?" (218). And yet the whole purpose of her existence seems to be fulfilled by becoming Bayard's wife and bearing another male Sartoris.

But even the "serene and steady waves" (280) of her steadfast and comforting love which reach out and engulf Bayard unawares are not sufficient to save him from his doom. For a moment he succumbs to a "leashed and moody repose" (281). They would lie in bed at night "holding to one another in the darkness and the temporary abeyance of his despair and the isolation of that doom he could not escape" (289). When memories of Johnny and the war trauma start to haunt him, he goes daily "with a shotgun and the two dogs, to return just before dark, wet to the skin. And cold; his lips would be chill on hers and his eyes bleak and haunted, and in the yellow firelight of their room she would cling to him, or lie

crying quietly in the darkness beside his rigid body, with a ghost between them" (297). Finally, the cold "brooding violence of his temporary repose" (76) is unleashed and Bayard resumes his "headlong and heedless wastefulness [which culminates] in that which he had been warned against and that any fool might have forseen [sic]" (311): his reckless speeding provokes his grandfather's fatal heart attack and sends young Bayard fleeing from his family and home, never to return. Bayard himself recognizes the dishonor of this cowardly flight as a battle rages inside him between the shame of fleeing the responsibility for his grandfather's death and the anger and frustration for being helpless in the face of his doom. Staring into the fire, he alternates between self recrimination and blaming some other power:

Well, damn it, suppose it had: was he to blame? Had he insisted that his grandfather ride with him? Had he given the old fellow a bum heart? and then, coldly: You were afraid to go home. You made a nigger sneak your horse out to you. You, who deliberately do things your judgment tells you may not be successful, even possible, are afraid to face the consequences of your own acts. Then again something bitter and deep and sleepless in him blazed out in vindication and justification and accusation; What, he knew not, blazing out at what, Whom, he did not know: You did it! You caused it all; you killed Johnny. (311)

The "you" Bayard accuses is the Player, the Cosmic Ironist whose caprice determines man's fate in a world devoid of logic and whose decrees have no appeal. This passage also shows that young Bayard is heir to the Sartoris trait of

risking one's life in senseless, suicidal adventures, an offense of which Faulkner often accuses Confederate officers and the older generations. The stark contrast between young Bayard Sartoris, our modern hero, and his great-grandfather, Colonel John Sartoris, is evident as Bayard succumbs to his fate. Colonel Sartoris had shaped his own destiny, had taken the time and the place into hand and, until the end, acknowledged no force over his own. Young Bayard is ineffectual, directionless, haunted, and clearly the plaything of the fates, the tennis ball of the gods. He vaguely realizes this, and accepts it, at times vainly blazing out "in vindication and justification and accusation" (311).

Similarities between the two characters also exist, but they tend to be negative qualities which became pronounced in the Colonel only after the war when he, too, finally succumbed and relinquished the stage. John Sartoris had bequeathed his descendents his "haughty pride which repeated itself generation after generation with faithful fidelity" (374), his arrogance, bleak loneliness, and the inability to love. Aunt Jenny accuses young Bayard of a similar inability to love: "that cold devil? He never cared a snap of his fingers for anybody in his life except John" (56). And Narcissa affirms that Bayard is "so utterly without any affection for anything at all, so--so . . . hard No, that's not the word. But 'cold' eluded her" (250). Finally she comes to realize that "He doesn't love anybody. He won't even love the baby. He

doesn't seem to be glad, or sorry, or anything" (298).

These are the same realizations the Bayard of The Unvanquished arrived at when his father refused to react even to the confession of Bayard's and his step-mother's transgressions in the garden. Young Bayard also possesses his great-grandfather's intolerance which shows in the cruel "lipless and savage derision of his teeth" (119), and again, in "his bleak eyes and the fixed derision of his teeth" (253). One is unavoidably reminded here of the Colonel's "carnivorous" look which characterized his final days.

Colonel Sartoris's death somewhat redeemed him because he was rejecting violence and killing by facing his opponent unarmed. He probably knew it would mean his own death, but he accepted that consequence. Young Bayard's death is surrounded by no such honorable motives. He lets himself be taunted into taking up an experimental plane which all other pilots had rejected, calling it a "Mantrap" (365). Young Bayard's death was mere suicide. Ironically, in the attenuation of the life force through the generations, the positive attributes are weakened but the negative characteristics persist, dooming the line to eventual extinction. The Cosmic Ironist plays his joke on man.

And so, the Player has become tired of the game called Sartoris and wipes the board clean--well, almost. Though the main theme of Sartoris is the demise of the family line, the question of dissolution is debated but not fully resolved.

As young Bayard crashes in the airplane, his wife is giving birth to his son. The question of whether the quiet, stable Benbow blood will be able to tame the raging Sartoris blood is debated by young Loosh and his father, Dr. Peabody, long-time friends of the family: "Well, maybe that Benbow blood will sort of hold him down. They're quiet folks" His father grunted. "He's got Sartoris blood in him too" (378). Narcissa, considering herself forewarned of the dark family doom which she felt she could discern "standing beside her chair, waiting and biding its time" (356) to claim her son, forearms herself by "surrounding [her son] with wave after wave of that strength which welled so abundantly within her" (356). To evade further that doom, she has her son christened, not Johnny, as Aunt Jenny had insisted, but Benbow, her family name. Annoyed, but not daunted, Aunt Jenny retorts, "Do you think you can change one of 'em with a name? Do you think . . . that because his name is Benbow [instead of the accursed John or Bayard], he'll be any less a Sartoris and a scoundrel and fool?" (380).

Ten years later, in the sequel "There Was a Queen," the battle is still unresolved. While the boy's natural inclinations seem to be toward the Sartoris heritage, the main molder of that side of his character, Aunt Jenny, dies as Narcissa takes her son away from his dead grandfather's place at the head of the Sartoris table to eat beside her as she hovers over him. It is possible that Faulkner planned

to write another novel dealing with the last male descendent, Benbow "Borey" Sartoris. However, old Simon's wishful thinking at the time of the baby's birth that "de olden times comin' back ergain, sho'. Like in Mars' John's time" (367) ironically illustrates how wide of the "heroic" mark the later generations have been and how aware people are of the current lapsed state. The inexorable process of expiating the sin, the family doom, has created a rent between the past and the present, a disjunction in history, which cannot be mended.

Probably the most anthologized of all of Faulkner's works, "A Rose for Emily," is another story of the end of an old aristocratic family. The disjunctive irony inherent in the disintegration of splendor and influence is again accentuated by the character's inability to adapt to the changed situation. The author makes the reader painfully aware of the altered financial and social position and embarrassed for the unknowing victim of the irony. Many of Faulkner's common themes are present in this short piece: the demise of the line, the haughty family pride, the reduced circumstances of the family, the out-dated code of conduct, the crassness of the new generation, the isolation and loneliness of the victim, the dark family secret (this time, insanity), all amounting to a failure of regeneration.

Miss Emily's death marks the end of an epoch. Only her house remains on what "had once been our most select

street,"¹³ now surrounded by garages and cotton gins, and only she remains of the Mississippi branch of "the high and mighty Griersons" (122), who had held themselves above the rest of the town. Everything in "the house filled with dust and shadows" (128) indicates decayed opulence: the cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies, the "heavy, leather-covered furniture" (120) which was cracked and covered with dust, the tarnished gold head of the ebony cane, and the "close, dank smell" (120) of dust and disuse which permeates everything.

Considering his daughter too good for the suitors of her hand, the Colonel had "thwarted her woman's life so many times" (127), and when he finally dies, Emily is alone in the big house. She becomes to the town "a tradition, a duty, and a care" (119). Since the Grierson's wealth had disappeared, Colonel Sartoris had invented an honorable tale which allowed the town to remit Emily's taxes. A contrast is drawn between men "of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought" and "the rising generation" with "its more modern ideas" (120) which has to be restrained from imposing its crass values upon the "monument" to the past way of Southern life.

Emily herself is the very epitome of the Old Southern tradition, with her aloofness, her haughty pride with which "she vanquished them horse and foot" (121), refusing to discuss such vulgar subjects as taxes, not allowing numbers to

be placed on her door so that she could receive postal delivery, and intimidating everyone from the druggist to the Baptist minister and the tax deputation with her cold and dry voice, her erect torso, and her head carried high and disdainfully as she demands "the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson" (125). Doomed to extinction along with the "noblesse oblige" (125) they represent, the Griersons are another avatar of the "Pawns" of which the "Player" has grown tired. The irony is heightened by the first-person plural point of view. The ambivalent and constantly fluctuating attitude of the townspeople regarding their "fallen monument," the respect, envy, jealousy, wonder, desire for revenge, and plain curiosity regarding the representative of their past reveal the love/hate, pride/shame fragmentation of the historical perspective.

The attenuation of an old aristocratic line and the failure of regeneration again become the focal points in The Sound and The Fury, which tells of the decline and extinction of the renowned Compson family. Here Faulkner further debunks the second tenet of the lapserian myth, the brave new world which the illustrious progenitors won for their descendents. As in the case of the Sartorises, Hightowers, Sutpens, and Griersons, the Civil War marked the beginning of the decline of a line that should have produced princes, as Faulkner states. Prior to that point, great men cast in the same mold as Colonel John Sartoris forged a dynasty out

of the virgin wilderness by sheer force of will and determination. But the fates deserted the once favored giants, marking each succeeding generation with a moral paralysis that degenerated into nihilism, alcoholism, impotence, and, finally, suicide.

"stalemate of dust and desire"
(Sound, 143)

The Sound and The Fury traces the final break up of the Compson family in its last male descendents, Bengy, Quentin, and Jason and its female descendents, Caddy and her daughter Quentin. In this generation, the nemesis which began with the destruction wrought by the Civil War is culminated: the families and the way of life which brought the curse on the land are finally eradicated. The ironic fatalism and determinism which Mr. Compson espouses in his dipsomaniac bouts reveal an awareness of the inevitable changing of the name of the game from Sartoris (or Compson, Grierson, etc.) to, perhaps, Snopes. The Cosmic Ironist, the "Player," bandies man about in an absurdist fashion, according to "whatever issue the gods happen to be floating at the time" (196). Each member of the family is marked by the doom which he has inherited. They have all succumbed to a fatalism that prevents them from acting on their own and making a significant impact on their worlds.

Mr. and Mrs. Compson pass on to their children the belief in the family curse. Mrs. Compson, suffering under

neurotic feelings of class inferiority, asks, "what have you done what sins have your high and mighty people visited upon me" (122). She is sure the curse is retribution for the Compson's "bad blood" (123).

Reminiscent of Bayard's anger toward the capricious "you" who had willed his fate, the "Player" signaling cosmic irony, Quentin cries out "theres a curse on us its not our fault is it our fault" (176). Although all characters seem to be aware, to some degree, of the curse and the futility of attempting to contradict it, Mr. Compson is the character who voices the determinism most succinctly. He is an embittered, disillusioned, nihilistic, frustrated Classicist, a "cultured dipsomaniac" (13), who drinks himself into an early grave. He scoffs at illusions of family honor and female purity--two of the traditional cornerstones of the Southern ethic--, fails to earn enough money to support the family without selling off the last portions of the estate, and is unable to provide the cohesion and guidance needed to forestall the imminent break-up of the family. In his philosophy, man is no more than "a gull on an invisible wire attached through space dragged" (123). His freedom is only an illusion, subject to preordained limitations and the strictures of nature. Mr. Compson deprecates Quentin's belief in the myth of female purity, asserting that "Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature" (135). Incapable of making any self-willed exertion, man is merely

the sum of his misfortunes, of the climate, and of anything else which impinges upon him (123, 142). Men are only "accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from the trash heaps where all previous dolls had been thrown away the sawdust flowing from what wound in what side that not for me died not" (194). This allusion to Christ's suffering denies the redemption of the damned. Death and life alike are meaningless, and there is no salvation. Man's destination is the sawdust heap, and while alive, he lacks the fortitude and permanence to affect his world. A part of Mr. Compson's nihilism is a rejection of the Shintoistic reverence for the past, especially the familial heroes and their code of honor. It is absurd, he asserts, to adhere to a belief that any man is inherently superior. Mr. Compson's pragmatic, entropic view claims that "any live man is better than any dead man but no live or dead man is very much better than any other live or dead man" (121). Although Mrs. Compson accuses her husband of feeling superior at the expense of her brother Maury, the sarcasm imbedded in Father's observation that Uncle Maury's shiftlessness kept "at such a fine heat" Mr. Compson's "belief in the celestial derivation of his own species" (194) is totally lost on his wife. Here again Faulkner has constructed an ironic paradox which is built on an ambivalence toward the inherited Southern ethic. The indictment and deprecation spoken by the narrator or dramatized in events in other novels, are spoken here by a

character. But Mr. Compson has not arrived at this degree of enlightenment or disillusionment unscathed. The rejection of the illusions has cost him his sobriety. It is not only that one man is not inherently superior to another, it is that all men are inferior to what their pride leads them to believe. The irony is compounded by the fact that the Compsons are clearly morally superior to the Bascombs.

Mrs. Caroline Compson complains incessantly that the Compsons consider themselves better-born than her family, the Bascombs. The Bascombs could claim no governors and generals in their family tree. Mrs. Caroline constantly berates Caddy and Quentin, ironically claiming they "don't love me they never loved anything with that streak of Compson selfishness and false pride Jason was the only one my heart went out to without dread" (121). Neither Quentin nor Caddy is able to call out "Mother" in their time of need (114, 190). The false sense of pride which Mrs. Caroline lives by assures her that "Whoever God is, He would not permit [me to be flouted and hurt]. I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am" (315). The one offspring she feels naturally drawn to is Jason, and she desperately wants him to be allowed to escape the curse on the guilty Compson blood. This central paradoxical irony in Faulkner's literature--his ambivalent treatment of the past, showing at the same time its heroism and its shame, both admiring and deprecating it, indeed showing that the two elements mutually

nurtured and condemned each other--is highlighted in the Jason-Quentin contrast.

Faulkner constructs a dichotomy between madness and sanity and between honor and dishonor. At one pole are those characters who, though possessed by some illusion of grandeur and bravery, are, thereby, ennobled; at the other pole are those characters who are realistic and practical but who are mean of spirit and soul. To live by a code of honor and personal integrity is to be mad; to live by what is expedient and practical and, therefore, devoid of any human feeling, is to be sane but soulless. The ironic paradox which, according to Wilde, characterizes the absolute ironist is evident in this dichotomy.

Jason's "sanity" is contrasted with the traditional "madness" which is characteristic of the blood line of the "true" Compson descendents, but which is also the source of the qualities which save them from the crass materialism, the vulgarity, the selfishness, and the sin (as opposed to immorality, which here equates with respectability: Mr. Compson tells Quentin, "you are confusing sin and morality women dont do that your Mother is thinking of morality whether it be sin or not has not occurred to her" [121]) of the non-Compsons. The narrator of the genealogy draws the contrast between this "non-Compson" and the "true" Compsons":

The first sane Compson since before Cullodin and (a childless bachelor) hence the last. Logical rational contained and even a philosopher in the old stoic

tradition: thinking nothing whatever of God one way or the other and simply considering the police who not only fended off and held his own with the Snopeses who took over the little town following the turn of the century as the Compsons and Sartorises and their ilk faded from it. . . . though this was not difficult since to him all the rest of the town and the world and the human race too except himself were Compsons, inexplicable yet quite predictable in that they were in no sense whatever to be trusted. (16-17)

Jason Compson is one of the most despicable characters in Faulkner's fiction--completely selfish, totally lacking in compassion, and with no redeeming qualities, he has all the necessary characteristics to survive in the post-Civil War South. This character is juxtaposed to his brother Quentin--a true Compson, and, therefore, somewhat mad--whose sense of honor and decency marks him as an anachronism in the modern South and whose idealism dooms him to defeat.

The curse which plagues the Compson clan and dooms it to extinction is a vitiated life force which culminates, in Mr. Compson's words, in a "stalemate of dust and desire" (143). In this unbroken stalemate, life cannot go forward and replenish and revitalize itself: there is a failure of regeneration as the line comes to its inevitable end. Through the generations the life-force becomes enfeebled and diluted, and finally there is a complete failure of procreation. Because of the degeneration of inbreeding, crossbreeding, homosexuality, mental retardation, sterility, sexual mutilation, bastardization, and suicide, the final blow is struck against regeneration. Antithetical to everything the family stands

for, these factors finally bring about the annihilation of the lines, and in turn the subversion of the social order.

The diluting and enfeebling process is focused on in the Compson genealogy. The illustrious family line, which boasted such members as the daring Jason Lycurgus who won the solid square mile of land to be known as the Compson Domain and built the mansion and gardens, the distinguished Governor Quentin MacLachan, and the colorful Brigadier Jason Lycurgus II, came to its end. The present and last generation finally peters out in the escapes of Caddy and her daughter Quentin into a life of profligacy, in Bengy's oblivion of retardation and castration, in Quentin's choice of suicide, and in Jason's inhumanity and rejection of past and future and his suggested impotency.

The only Compson child who produces an offspring is Caddy, and she was pregnant by another man when her mother arranged a hasty marriage in a futile attempt to save the family from disgrace. Her daughter Quentin was "nameless at birth and already doomed to be unwed from the instant the dividing egg determined its sex" (19). Her fate was to run away from a tyrannical uncle at age seventeen and vanish with a bigamist. Ahead lay a life of misfortune, obscurity, and poverty.

Jason, not an heir to the Compson legacy, has rejected everything the family represented in the past. He deprecates the Compson's claim to respectability through

its illustrious predecessors, sarcastically blaming them for the family's present condition of near penury, retardation, suicide, profligacy, and loss of honor. With another illustrious ancestor or two, say a king or a president, the remaining members of the family would be fit for the insane asylum, too (14).

In a partial and perverted way, Quentin and his sister Caddy are true heirs to the Compson legacy of madness/honor, but neither one possesses the tenuous combination of the animal instinct for survival, a ruthless ambition, intellectual cunning, and an innate sense of justice and personal honor which enabled the earlier generations to establish themselves. Moreover, the times are not propitious for such qualities. In Faulkner's literature, one sure indication of the degeneracy of the times is the role reversal of male and female, especially, but not always, in sexual conduct. Some examples of perverted female characters are Temple Drake in Sanctuary (see, for example, Leslie Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel, pp. 311-313), Joanna Burden in Light in August, Drusilla in The Unvanquished, Judith in Absalom, Absalom!, and Caddy in The Sound and The Fury. Concomitant to the aberration of the female is an emasculation of the male, or a lack of male sexual potency.

It is Candace and not Quentin who holds the place in the Compson family which young Bayard held in the Sartoris

family. Like Bayard, she is restless, rebellious against the strictures of family and tradition, has an urge to shock the complacent, small-town mentality in which she was brought up, has a sense of personal and familial doom, and is self-destructive. Also like Bayard, her love for her brother is obsessive and obstructive, as is Quentin's love for her. The ghost which haunted Bayard was that of his twin, Johnny, the only human being he ever really loved. This obsessive sibling love is another symptom of the failure of regeneration. It is a manifestation of the isolating and alienating sin of pride, of which the Southern aristocratic families were guilty. The unhealthy and narcissistic attachments to the family or its individual members borders on perversion and incest and prevents its victims from being able to establish strong and replenishing ties outside the family. These attachments feed on themselves, devouring from within, until there is no will left to resist. In Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud speaks of the love between brother and sister as having an "inhibited aim," that is, the sexual aims have been suppressed into the subconscious, though this love "was in fact originally fully sexual love."¹⁴ Thus, Freud sees a basic conflict between the claims made on man by the larger society and those made by the family: "The more closely the members of a family are attached to one another, the more difficult is it for them to enter into the wider circle

of life."¹⁵ He goes on to say that society's prohibition against incestuous love "is perhaps the most drastic mutilation which man's erotic life has in all time experienced."¹⁶

Further, there are suggestions of strong attractions between Jody Varner and his sister Eula in The Hamlet, Darl Bundren and his sister Dewy Dell in As I Lay Dying, and the early Bayard and his cousin/step-mother Drusilla in The Unvanquished. The complex incestuous inclinations of Judith, Henry, and Charles are allowed to reach near fruition in Absalom, Absalom! with disastrous consequences. These incestuous tendencies are narcissistic and, therefore, fatal. They are symptomatic of the families' failure to regenerate themselves, and, seen on a larger scale, they represent the narcissistic and introverted love which crippled the South and brought on the Civil War. In The Sound and The Fury Caddy and Quentin's unnatural attachment for each other is a direct cause of the tragedy that befalls them.

Despite all the sardonic assertions by various male characters, especially Mr. Compson, that females are naturally suspicious, evil, and impure, Caddy is presented as a sympathetic character. For the most part, her brashness is refreshing, her daring is amusing, her transgressions are understandable, her sense of responsibility for Bengy is truly admirable, and her plight is pitiable. Her final sexual transgressions are foreshadowed at the age of

seven by her lack of the expected female inhibition for that place and time. The incident at the branch in which Quentin tries futilely to curb Caddy's daring and uninhibited behavior is indicative of their future actions. After getting her dress wet in the branch, an act which is sure to get her whipped, she defies Quentin's incredulity by taking her dress off to let it dry. When he slaps her for her boldness, she counterattacks with a water fight. She sassily reiterates that she won't get punished; she doesn't care if she does get whipped; she'll run away; and she hopes they all get spanked. From a seven year-old this is childish defiance, but it is indicative of the self-destruction drive which many of Faulkner's doomed characters demonstrate. This is the stance she maintains throughout her life and which leads to her ruin--she is disdainful of restrictions, does not even attempt to deny or hide her misbehavior, and seems to court disaster. She has the temerity to climb the tree to view the funeral scene; she fights Jason violently in defense of Bengy's paperdolls; and she insists on having the same rights and privileges as Quentin.

When Caddy begins to sneak around with the boys, and Quentin asks her why she let the boy kiss her, she replies, watching Quentin get mad, "I didn't let him I made him What do you think of that," and again Quentin slaps her (152). In the fight that ensues, we learn that Caddy's kissing the

boy was an attempt to pay Quentin back for kissing "a dirty girl like Natalie" (153). Both Quentin and Caddy are jealous of each other's sexual encounters. When Caddy returns to the barn after pushing Natalie down and finds Quentin hugging the girl, she chases Natalie away. Quentin taunts Caddy, trying to make her jealous, and when she answers in anger, "I don't give a damn what you were doing" (156), Quentin smears her with the stinking mud from the hog-wallow in which he was plunging. After an exhausting battle, they lie spent upon the grass, in the rain, blood streaking down Quentin's face from where Caddy tried to claw his eyes out, Quentin still determined to make Caddy care and Caddy still determined to hurt Quentin by denying that she cares. The whole scene is strongly sexual. Quentin never has the aplomb to deny how hurt he is by Caddy's sexual escapades with boys. It is Caddy who goes on to lose her virginity, while Quentin remains pure and virginal, a condition to be ashamed of in the South. This inversion of the male-female roles is another symptom of the general rupture of traditional patterns, the shattering of expectations which accompanies the disjunctive irony. In the lapsed South, former standards cannot be relied upon; things are out of kilt, presaging the breakdown of the social structure and the return to chaos.

It is evident that Caddy is infatuated by Dalton Ames' swashbuckling and masculinity. He is sophisticated

and good-looking, has traveled the oceans, is a crack shot with a gun, had killed men in the war, and hoists Caddy onto his shoulder with little effort. His macho double standard allows him to assert that all women are bitches but, at the same time, to show a sensitivity to Quentin's exaggerated sense of honor. When Quentin challenges Dalton to a showdown and then faints during the confrontation, not from fear but from overwrought emotions, Dalton lies for Caddy's sake and says he hit Quentin. By this act Dalton wins Caddy's unrestrained devotion, and Quentin's self-censure and disgust are irreversible. He reflects that he "passed out like a girl" (181) and remembers that he had tried to hit Dalton with an open hand and that Dalton subdued him by the wrists as Quentin had subdued Caddy. Quentin sees himself as emasculated.

Quentin's masculinity is further called into doubt at Harvard as the other boys tease him by claiming that his roommate Shreve is his "husband" (97), and by taunting him for being a virgin and not chasing after "the little dirty sluts" (97). His losing his knife at the branch is symbolic of his inability to prove himself sexually. His anger and hatred of Dalton Ames find an outlet as he imagines himself as Dalton's mother, at the moment of conception, "lying with open body lifted laughing, holding his father with my hand refraining, seeing, watching him die before he lived" (99). This thought occurs without Quentin's awareness of the implications of his identifying with the mother rather

than the father. And, finally, Quentin further rejects the masculine role when, after remembering the story of a man who castrated himself with a broken razor while sitting in a ditch, "flinging them backward over his shoulder," Quentin prefers "never to have had them [male genitalia]" (135), then he would be free from any responsibility for acting like a man, since he could claim no more knowledge of them than of the Chinese language. In a similar manner, Caddy rejects the feminine principle and imagines herself in the role of the dominant male. In his self-recrimination, Quentin implies an awareness of his own lack of masculinity as he remembers Caddy's identification with the male role: "'You know what I'd do if I were King?' she never was a queen or a fairy she was always a king or a giant or a general . . ." (191).

Quentin's main conflict is the discrepancy between what he thinks he should be--honorable, brave, defender of female purity--and what he comes to fear he is--weak, effeminate, unmasculine. Similar irreconcilable discrepancies exist in his views of Caddy, his father, and the purpose of life in general. This is the same ironic trap which incapacitated Hightower. Those who bought into the myths of an illustrious past, who ascribed to outmoded concepts of honor, virtue, heroism--a prelapsarian condition--are so appalled by the lack of those qualities in the present that they either reject the Now or are unable to make

the necessary concessions which would enable them to live a fruitful life. Looked at another way, these modernists are unable to achieve the acquiescence of the postmodernists. Those who do acquiesce, who accept the lapsed condition, pay a tragic price: Jason is a soulless man.

Quentin's early sexual impulses with Natalie could have developed, but his sister's promiscuity reenforces his self-doubts and creates a negative and perverted attitude toward sex. His repulsion and horror are most evident as he compares the dark image of Dalton carrying Caddy into the woods with the lustful "beast with two backs . . . the swine of Euboelius running coupled . . ." (167). Caddy, on the other hand, is sexually aggressive and even promiscuous. Thus, in Faulkner's novels sexually liberated women and sexually inexperienced men are social anomalies. Quentin's repeatedly echoing the question "Have you ever had a sister?" is meant to obviate explanations of his actions. A whole pattern of conduct and of family relationships is implied by that question: the male child in the Southern culture is the defender of family security and honor; the female offspring is the embodiment of family purity and wealth. Quentin fails in his efforts to protect the family honor, and Caddy refuses to be the symbol of family virtue. By negating their roles, they fulfill a doom which has hung over the family for generations and which foretells its dissolution.

In his futile attempts to maintain and defend the family honor, Quentin tries to force Caddy to abide by the conduct expected of a Compson lady. He tries to persuade Caddy to say she did not love the men, that her transgression was a single, isolated occurrence, that the man had forced her. He was especially humiliated when he thought that she was running around with "some darn town squirt" (152). In final desperation, Quentin tries to deny to Caddy that she had sinned with all those men; he frantically tries to convince her that it was he with whom she had sinned. Both Caddy and her father only pity Quentin's desperate attempts to deny what he perceived to be the greatest horror of all--the degradation of the family to commonness. Even incest is preferable to the humiliation of commonality; even being damned to an isolated place in hell would be preferable to admitting a "natural human folly" (195). The greatest sin of all, the guilt for which the South has to atone, is the sin of pride, which is, in essence, narcissistic and incestuous; Quentin is the quintessence of that sin. He would prefer the moral sin of incest to the social sin of downward class contamination. If Caddy and her virginity are the symbol of the family virtue and pride, then her fall is the fall of the family into decadence and dishonor. After Caddy's assignation with Dalton in the woods, Quentin pleads with her to say she does not love Dalton. When Caddy refuses, Quentin breaks down

crying, threatens to kill her, and later calls her a whore (176-177). He comes to realize that the family is cursed; the "Player" has doomed the family to damnation; there is nothing anyone can do to avoid the curse, and even suicide is preferable to surrendering to fate. According to Wilde, this extreme estrangement from the world, this belief in a capricious, irrational fate, and this last futile effort to oppose the Cosmic Player represent the last phase of modernism and of disjunctive irony. When all else fails, the only doors open are suicide or acquiescence.

Caddy also believes the family, or at least she, is accursed. She comes to realize that she, too, is driven by some self-destructive, suicidal urge. She proclaims at various times that she is possessed by some demon: "there was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me through their faces it's gone now and I'm sick" (131). She yields to her doom, calling herself bad and assuring Quentin that there is nothing he or anyone can do to evade the doom. Her willingness to marry the blackguard Herbert when she finds herself pregnant is a further defeat for Quentin because again she is compromising the integrity and honor of the family as the symbolic embodiment of its virtue. In complete frustration and dejection, Quentin chooses suicide over accepting the inevitable reality. The most that limited, finite man can do, pitted against an

infinite, incomprehensible, irrational universe, is choose not to be. Life, to the victim of disjunctive irony, is irremediably flawed and contradictory, as Wilde and Muecke point out, and man is bound to meet with frustration and defeat in his efforts to find some order and meaning in it.

And so the last of the descendents with true Compson heritage disappears and the family line comes to an end. The only things left are the stories told by the old men and women and the stone effigies in the cemeteries: the Cosmic Ironist has wiped his board clean.

Houses Built on Sand

In all of these stories recounting the rise and fall of important Southern families, the central symbol of prominence is the manor house. It is the outward manifestation of the family's power, stability, prestige, and permanence. The founding of a line is authenticated by the establishment of a geographical center, by the enclosing of a space; and the demise of that line is marked by the dissolution of those boundaries. The house, in both its literal and its familial sense, is a metaphor for life. When the House of Compson is ruined, the house of the Compsons is laid in ruin.

In "A Rose for Emily," the Grierson's home, standing on what was once the town's most select street, has become delapidated and decayed to the point that it is "an eyesore among eyesores" (119). Its once-expensive furniture is old,

dusty, and cracked. Everything in the house reeks of death and decay, presaging the demise of the family line.

When John Sartoris returned home from the Civil War to find his house burned to the ground, he rebuilt it in grand fashion, with portico and columns, formal parlor, drawing room with chandeliers, gardens, stables--"the aura of [Colonel John Sartoris's] dream just as a bride's trousseau and veil . . ." (167). Three generations later, in Sartoris, the parlor, which had been in constant use during the Colonel's day, is now seldom opened. The then-and-now description of the house is symbolic of the contrast between the past glory and honor of the family and the present pedestrian and mundane affairs of its members:

In John Sartoris' day [the formal parlor] had been constantly in use. He was always giving dinners, and balls too on occasion, with the folding doors between it and the dining-room thrown open and three negroes with stringed instruments on the stairway and all the candles burning, surrounding himself with a pageantry of color and scent and music against which he moved with his bluff and jovial arrogance. He lay also overnight in this room in his gray regimentals and so brought to a conclusion the colorful, if not always untarnished, pageant of his own career, contemplating for the last time his own apotheosis from the jocund mellowness of his generous hearth. (59)

The parlor came to be used less and less in succeeding years until "slowly and imperceptibly it lost its jovial but stately masculinity" (59). As Aunt Jenny sat listening to Narcissa play the piano among the shrouded furniture, she remembered former scenes of "figures in crinoline and hooped muslin and silk; in stocks and flowing coats, in gray too,

with crimson sashes and sabers in gallant, sheathed repose" (61). By the time the last generation was born, the room "stayed closed nearly all the time, and slowly acquired an atmosphere of solemn and macabre fustiness" (60). Just as these rooms would never be opened again, that family would never reclaim its lost vitality.

In a similar manner, the decadence of the Compson Domain, in The Sound and The Fury, paralleled the breakdown of the family. Through a long process of attrition, the legendary square mile,

forested . . . though rather a park than a forest . . . with its slave quarters and stables and kitchen gardens and the formal lawns and promenades and pavilions laid out by the same architect who built the columned porticoed house furnished by steamboat from France and New Orleans . . . (6)

was completely sold off for mortgages, Caddy's wedding, and Quentin's year at Harvard. The last Jason, freeing himself from the whole tradition ("In 1868 Abe Lincoln freed the niggers from the Compsons. In 1933 Jason Compson freed the Compsons from the niggers" (18).) left forever the house,

first chopping up the vast oncesplendid rooms into what he called apartments and selling the whole thing to a countryman who opened a boardinghouse in it. (17)

Thus, the renown Compson dynasty came to its inglorious end, a "rotting family in a rotting house" (17).

Faulkner's ironic consciousness allows him to see a disharmony in the South, which results in a failure to preserve historical continuity, cultural transference, and

familial descent. His lapserian myth, after reexamining the past, has evolved into an entropic vision in which the world is seen as winding down, social structures are disintegrating, and there is a total disjunction between the past and the present. The prevailing sense, as Tobin has pointed out, is one of catastrophe.¹⁷

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, Foreword by Carvel Collins, 1959 (New York: The Curtis Publishing Co., 1934), p. 18. All further references to this work appear in the text.

²Tobin, p. 11.

³Frederick Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1960), p. 55.

⁴Hoffman, p. 56.

⁵William Faulkner, Light in August, Introduction by Cleanth Brooks (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 57. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁶Tobin, p. 96.

⁷William Faulkner, The Sound and The Fury (New York: Random House, 1929), p. 195. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁸William Faulkner, Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters, edited by James B. Meriwether (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 89.

⁹Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 192.

¹⁰Frye, p. 192.

¹¹John Irwin, p. 112.

¹²Tobin, p. 112.

¹³William Faulkner, Collected Stories (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 119. All further references to this work appear in the text.

¹⁴Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, translated and edited by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1962), pp. 49-50.

¹⁵Freud, p. 50.

¹⁶Freud, p. 51.

¹⁷Tobin, p. 112.

CHAPTER III

THE SUTPENS AND THE BUENDIAS: TWIN DESTINIES

In William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! and Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude the lapserian theme culminates in an entropic vision which projects the cultural order as reverting to chaos. The dynastic dream collapses and regeneration is impossible. These novels bring together in a concentrated light the ironic treatment of the myths of the heroic past and the brave new future. Because of some horrible guilt or fate, the world has lapsed into a condition of fragmentation, disjunction, and disharmony. Man is seen as ultimately impotent to effect any change or impose his will upon a world fated by a capricious and even malicious power. All of the mainstays which served to stabilize the world are invalidated, and man is rushing headlong into oblivion.

One Hundred Years of Solitude and Absalom, Absalom! are stories of the rise and decline of once-powerful and prosperous families. The Buendías of Macondo and the Sutpens of Jefferson have incurred a fate which dooms the lines to extinction. But these are not the particular stories of isolated, individual families; they are the chronicles of a

people, a country, an epoch. The Buendía family is Macondo; Macondo is a paradigm for Caribbean Colombia during a certain period. Likewise, the Sutpen family is representative of a time and a place--the American South before and immediately after the Civil War. The fate that befalls these families befalls their countries. Faulkner and García Márquez thus universalize the particular. Oberhelman goes so far as to state that the greatest impact Faulkner had on Latin American novelists was his ability to draw universal truths from the treatment of regional subject matter.¹

Kulin corroborates this belief, drawing a contrast between Balzac's "human comedy" which reached for universal truths through the most universal atmosphere possible, and writers like Faulkner and García Márquez who

also had the ambition for their work to be universally valid and . . . proposed to penetrate with the same determination into the problems of the fight between man and his destiny. Nevertheless, [these writers] did not look for a scene which would be of the same dimensions as the fight. There is no harmony between the purpose and the chosen environment. [They] entrusted their universal message to a very restricted and provincial circle.²

She goes on to say that this closed environment and the contrast between it and the message create "an extraordinary tension."³ Man never resigns his quest to achieve his ambitions even in the face of such "extraordinarily limited possibilities."⁴ This is the fate man must fight against, and this is the metaphysical irony of the modernist writers.

When Quentin is urged by his classmates at Harvard to

tell them about the South and why and how people live there, he tells them the Sutpen saga. Sutpen thus is intended to be typical of the predominant Southern qualities. The narrator says that Sutpen's disaster could have equally been that of any Southern family, and he was chosen by "the illogical machinations of a fatality" with about as much design as "a small boy chooses one ant hill to pour boiling water into in preference to any other, not even himself knowing why."⁵ In the disjunctive irony that is so characteristic of the modernists, man is the victim of the whims of an illogical, often malicious, and even absurd fate. Quentin realizes that it is the common fate of the South and that it will "turn and destroy us all someday, whether our name happens to be Sutpen or Coldfield or not" (12).

The central metaphysical irony in both novels is man's vain attempts to avoid a fate which some dark and indifferent power has ordained for him or, as Muecke points out, finite man is trying to reduce to his control the infinite world. His efforts are necessarily doomed to fail. Put in a more etiological context, man is guilty of the greatest of all the cardinal sins: pride. Vain little man struts and swaggers, boasts and flails his arms about, but the Player, the Joker, the Creditor, "Fate, destiny, retribution, irony--the stage manager, call him what you will--was already striking the set" (72-73). As in the case of the Sartorises, the Pawns are being replaced by new playing pieces.

A similar sense of man's temporality permeates García Márquez's works. The reader learns in the very early pages of One Hundred Years of Solitude that the Buendía family suffers under a curse brought on by the willfulness and pride of its founder, José Arcadio Buendía, after ignoring the injunction against incest and marrying his cousin Úrsula. Actually, the family fate was sealed even long before that, when their ancestors first moved inland to evade Sir Francis Drake's attacks along the coast. Because of that move, two family lines began to interbreed "through the most intricate labyrinths of blood" and finally produced the "mythological animal that was to bring the line to an end."⁶ The tone is prophetic. The willfulness of the family members manifested itself in lasciviousness, ambition, and, worst of all, pride--the end result of which is solitude.

The lapserian myth as elaborated in García Márquez's and Faulkner's novels has many parallels with the biblical fall, the lapse into disharmony, discord, and a divided consciousness. Like Adam, these characters make the fatal mistake of aspiring to god-like knowledge and power. In their inordinate pride, they reject the human limitations imposed upon mankind, and by so doing, they also forfeit the paradise and grace they once enjoyed. The quest for power and knowledge, which in modernist literature is a quest for wholeness and harmony, entails a loss of innocence and ignorance and, ironically, a fall from grace into guilt.

García Márquez and Faulkner employ several variants of the lapserian myth: the Exodus myth focuses on leaving, going out of, escaping, or, a common term in modernist literature, crossing; the Quest myth is a going toward, seeking, discovering; the Founding myth focuses on the establishment of lines, dynasties, reigns, millenniums; the Transgression myth treats the ideas of original sin, incurred fate, expulsion, and retribution.

Before the Buendía and the Sutpen dynasties can be established, the founders of the lines must undertake a long and arduous journey which severs ties with the old world and the original family and signifies a new beginning. The move may be a metaphor for the transition from sin to purgation, from guilt to innocence, or it may symbolize a transition from ignorance to knowledge, and the concomitant, from innocence to guilt. The acquisition of this knowledge is not gratuitous; speaking of "the gain in knowledge that can accompany a fall," Robert Con Davis points out that "the price of self-knowledge has come to be unrelieved conflict in self and society."⁷ In modernist literature there has developed a conflict between the inner and the outer self and between the needs of the individual and the needs of society which has shattered the unity and left man feeling alienated and adrift. The ironic consciousness perceives this duality or multiplicity as inherent in the universe. The Buendías' and Sutpens' "crossing," then, can be seen as the quest for

unity, the anironic vision to the modernists' ironic fragmentation.

Thus, García Márquez and Faulkner are operating inside a rich mythic tradition that includes Lucifer falling from Heaven, Adam and Eve leaving the Garden of Eden, the Tribes of Israel wandering in the desert in search of the Promised Land and a new beginning. Their fiction draws upon a wealth of symbolic meaning with associations with innocence, original sin, curses, foredooms and destruction.

The Buendias' exodus out of Riohacha and across the mountain is an attempt to free the family from the burden of guilt which it incurs when, in a fit of rage at offended pride, José Arcadio Buendía murders a young acquaintance who has impugned his virility. It is a long and difficult crossing during which the small group of young men and their families wander over the mountain: "They did not lay out any definite itinerary. They simply tried to go in a direction opposite to the road to Riohacha so that they would not leave any trace or meet any people they knew" (31). For two years they live on monkey meat and snake stew and have "the look of ship-wrecked people with no escape" (31). Finally they arrive at their promised land:

One morning, after almost two years of crossing, they became the first mortals to see the western slopes of the mountain range. From the cloudy summit they saw the immense aquatic expanse of the great swamp as it spread out toward the other side of the world. One night, after several months of lost wandering through the swamps, far away now from the last Indians they had met on their way,

they camped on the banks of a stoney river whose waters were like a torrent of frozen glass. (31)

After seeing a vision of a city in a dream, José Arcadio Buendía orders his men "to cut down the trees to make a clearing beside the river, at the coolest spot on the bank, and there they [found] the village" (32). The similarities with the Tribes of Israel wandering in the desert in search of the Promised Land suggest a deliverance and a propitious beginning.

Faulkner parallels the Sutpen crossing not with the Exodus but with the Fall, and, accordingly, it is told in foreboding tones which suggest a doom and an ominous beginning. The Sutpen clan "slid back down out of the mountain," out of a condition of ignorance and bliss, into a world of knowledge and sin. The images suggest a kind of birth in which the mother mountain ejects her child out of the protective womb and into an alien and hostile world. Or, as Sutpen himself later bitterly reflects, it is as if they have been "brutally evacuated into a world without hope or purpose for them" (235). The repeated downward direction of the movement echoes man's fall from innocence: "So he had hardly heard of such a world until he fell into it," (222, emphasis added) and again, "That's how it was. They fell into it, the whole family . . . tumbled head over heels back" (222) and, they "slid back down out of the mountain . . . backward against the very current of the stream" (223). The echoes of Paradise Lost and Genesis add a sense

of irrevocable doom to the passage. The whole trip hangs suspended in time and space like a dream of airy substance. There is no awareness of where, when, or how; Sutpen does not know "if it was weeks or months or a year they traveled . . ." (224). The boy is still in a state of ignorance and innocence:

He didn't remember whether it was that winter and then spring and then summer that overtook in slow succession the seasons as they descended, or whether it was the descent itself that did it, and they not progressing parallel in time but descending perpendicularly through temperature and climate (224)

The biblical and Miltonic echoes continue in "they did not seem to progress at all but just to hang suspended while the earth itself altered" (224-225) and

. . .it was now spring and now summer and they still were moving on toward a place they had never seen and had no conception of, let alone wanted to go to, and from a place, a little lost spot on the side of a hill back to which probably not one of them could have led the way. . . . (225)

Having no real destination, or at least not being aware of one, the family moves on as if on a treadmill, until "at last they were no longer traveling, moving, going somewhere. . . . He didn't know where they were" (226). He has been traveling toward his inevitable doom, toward the circumstances that will suddenly crystallize into a megalomaniacal obsession.

While the Buendías' journey results in a temporary escape from sin into innocence (José Arcadio Buendía is attempting to elude the ghost of the man he has slain),

the Sutpens' journey leads them from a state of innocence to a condition of sin. Closely related to the theme of the Crossing is the Garden of Eden myth. Both authors describe a utopian condition which is eventually lost by man's fall into knowledge.

When Colonel Compson observes that "Sutpen's trouble was innocence" (220), he is referring to the residual naiveté from his childhood, the experiences of which do not prepare him for the realities of life in a fallen world. On the mountain side the Sutpen passel lives in a kind of primitive socialism, bestial but harmonious. The sin of the pride of ownership* has not penetrated that communal society where everybody holds the mountain in common, no one accumulates more than he needs, and the concept of personal worth based on wealth or inheritance has not contaminated man's dealings with his fellow men. Covetousness, greed, and envy are as foreign to the mountain folk as are the elaborate architecture and sophisticated ways of the Southern plantation owners. In his communal home, young Sutpen

had never even heard of, never imagined, a place, a land divided neatly up and actually owned by men who did nothing but ride over it on fine horses or sit in fine clothes on the galleries of big houses while other people worked for them. . . . Because where he lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody and so the man who would go to the trouble

* Faulkner found man's attempt to own the land arrogant and ironic; he asserted that in reality the land owned the man.

and work to fence off a piece of it and say 'This is mine' was crazy; and as for objects, nobody had any more of them than you did because everybody had just what he was strong enough or energetic enough to take and keep, and only that crazy man would go to the trouble to take or even want more than he could eat or swap. . . . (221)

But more appalling still is the society in which "a certain few men . . . had the power of life and death and barter and sale over others" (221) because of a happenstance of birth or possession or skin color. This is the world he "fell" into; this is the South's Original Sin. This is the fall which in modernist literature fragments both the social order and the unity of the individual.

The Buendias also enjoy, for a time, a pure state of innocence. The village they found is utopian, egalitarian, and Edenic also:

José Arcadio Buendía, who was the most enterprising man ever to be seen in the village, had set up the placement of the houses in such a way that from all of them one could reach the river and draw water with the same effort, and he had lined up the streets with such good sense that no house got more sun than another during the hot time of day. Within a few years Macondo was a village that was more orderly and hard-working than any known until then by its three hundred inhabitants. It was a truly happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died. (18)

Speaking of the harmony and homogeneity of such primitive societies in Faulkner's literature, Cleanth Brooks, in "The Waste Land: Southern Exposure," observes that the inhabitants of these communities "are perfectly self-sufficient, count no man's property, are certain of their standards of honor and conduct, and live in a thoroughly stable

world. They and their world may be doomed to become obsolete, but they do not represent any portion of a sick society."⁸

But tradition has it that such states of pure innocence do not thrive long where man is inherently sinful and is dominated by pride and ambition, and where the world is inherently absurd or chaotic. Never content with his earthly lot, always restless and seeking to extend his power, man reaches out for the apple (or signs the contract in blood) which promises him immortality but which ironically brings him death.

In both cases the innocence of these primitive utopias is shattered by contamination from without. Contact with the Tidewater society makes Sutpen realize the great social gaps between one man and another and awakens in him the ambition to become a part of that society which has spurned him because of his ignorance and lowly origin. The only way to avenge himself for the insult he has suffered is to become one of the oppressors himself and commit even worse offenses against other.

After his wife's death, the senior Sutpen moves with his brood back down the mountain and into the Tidewater society where they are looked upon as poor white trash. It is at this time that the young Thomas Sutpen suffers the trauma which gives birth to his life-long obsession. Here he first painfully realizes his social inferiority. An un-

suspected incident at the great white plantation house allows him to see, like a bolt of lightning, the image he projects to others. His embarrassment, humiliation, and shame are transformed into anger and a monomaniacal determination. At that moment he realizes his own unbearable innocence and ignorance: "He remembered when he found it out [that a caste system based on wealth and inheritance determined one's inherent worth] because that was the same second when he discovered his innocence" (226). The only way to instigate his great plan of revenge is to lose that innocence, that ignorance; hence, he sets out on a quest for knowledge and power, a quest which takes him to the West Indies and back. Upon his return, he is a transformed man, ready to take his place in the fallen world, having completely lost his soul in the service of the greatest of the cardinal sins: pride.

Similarly, the longing for a place in the modern outside world, the "urge to discover the wonders of the world" (18) initiates the fall for Macondo. Not content with the simple happiness and goodness of his life, José Arcadio Buendía passionately seeks the knowledge that only the corrupted and contaminating world of modern civilization can offer. He too experiences a traumatic awakening, a confrontation with his innocence and ignorance when the wonders brought in by the gypsies make him realize that "We're going to rot our lives away here without receiving the benefits of

science" (21). He too becomes obsessed by a dream which transforms him:

He underwent a new crisis of bad humor. He did not go back to eating regularly, and he would spend the day walking through the house. "Incredible things are happening in the world," he said to Úrsula. "Right there across the river there are all kinds of magical instruments while we keep on living like donkeys." Those who had known him since the foundation of Macondo were startled at how much he had changed under Melquíades' influence. (17)

José Arcadio Buendía wants to extract gold from the earth with the magnets, gain military superiority through the solar power of the magnifying glass, photograph god with the daguerreotype, discover the philosopher's stone of the alchemist which would turn base metal into gold. A forewarning is given of the dangers of going "beyond the limits of human knowledge" (45) when Melquíades' tribe is "wiped off the face of the earth" (45) for that prideful and ambitious transgression.

While the main impetus for Sutpen's quest is the pride of ownership and the recognition of personal worth that goes with it, Jose Arcadio Buendia's quest is for the pride that results from knowledge and the power which accompanies that. The irony in both cases is that man cannot win against a universe that is infinite and a power that is irrational. José Arcadio Buendía also undertakes a quest to rid himself of his original innocence. With a loyal group of followers, he forms an expedition to discover a route to the modern outside world. His ill-conceived quest ends in failure and a collapse of morale as he "let himself be overcome by con-

sternation" (41). However, Macondo is not saved from its lapse into modernity--the very route he was seeking is ironically discovered inadvertently sometime later by his wife Ursula, and Macondo is irreparably contaminated by the fever of progress.

"Macondo had changed" (44), for the road that connected the village with the wonders of the outside world also ironically brought to Macondo the impositions of the conservative government, the devastations of the Civil War, the oppressions of the church, the disasters of the banana fever, followed by the deluge, the disintegration of the town, and the final holocaust. The Edenic little village where everyone shared equally in the sun

became transformed into an encampment of wooden houses with zinc roofs inhabited by foreigners who arrived on the train from halfway around the world. . . . The section [built by the Gringos] was surrounded by a metal fence topped with a band of electrified chicken wire which during the cool summer mornings would be black with roasted swallows. (214)

This is a dramatic contrast to the prelapsarian village which enjoyed peace and harmony in nature's abundance and which was awakened every morning by the singing of birds. The fates have already begun to desert Macondo. This fall fragments life into discordant pieces and gives rise to the "unrelieved conflict" which the modernist writers sought so incessantly to bring under their control.

As Colonel Compson observes, Sutpen's obsession is the end result of this basic innocence which leaves him unpre-

pared for the reality of life in the fallen world of Tidewater Virginia. He has no shield of experience and knowledge to protect his psyche from the horrible injustices which he sees around him and finally experiences himself. In a very similar manner, innocence is Aureliano's problem also.

Always a quiet, solitary young man, Aureliano is one of the last in his village to become aware of the impending civil war between the Liberals and the Conservatives. His father-in-law has to explain to him the difference between the two factions and considers him so harmless that he openly stuffs the ballot box in Aureliano's presence. Reminiscent of the young Sutpen in his innate innocence, Aureliano "could not understand how people arrived at the extreme of waging war over things that could not be touched with the hand" (97). His life-long friends do not include him in their revolutionary plans "because of his solitary and elusive character" (100). Aureliano does "not even understand the meaning of the subterfuge" (99), is horrified by the plot, and is dismissed by the terrorist Dr. Noguera as "a sentimental person with no future, with a passive character, and a definite solitary vocation" (101). It is witnessing the brutal atrocities of the occupying army that finally galvanizes "Aurelito," transforming him into the formidable Colonel Aureliano Buendía, the champion of the Liberal cause. It takes nearly twenty years and thirty-two lost battles for Colonel Aureliano Buendía to realize finally the true nature of the Civil War.

His basic innocence and idealism follow him throughout the war and, ironically, are the cause of much killing and suffering.

Cleanth Brooks pinpoints Sutpen's innocence, which is also Aureliano's--"an 'innocence' with which most of us today ought to be acquainted. It is par excellence the innocence of modern man"⁹--as the belief in rationality in a basically irrational world. Sutpen believes that if he follows a certain recipe for success, the end result can be predicted, and he is convinced that he has made simply a "tactical mistake" in mixing the ingredients. Similarly, Aureliano is convinced of the worthiness of his cause and logically, therefore, the triumph of his campaign. Brooks says of such people, "their innocence amounts finally to a trust in rationality--an overweening confidence that plans works out, that life is simpler than it is."¹⁰ The lesson of the modernists is that life is full of double contradictory realities and that results cannot be predicted in an irrational world.

Both Aureliano Buendía and Thomas Sutpen form their obsessive designs as the direct result of the basic incongruity between their idealism and reality. As Wilde and Muecke point out, the modernists are unable to reconcile themselves to the disjunction and unwilling to accept what they perceive to be gross injustices; Aureliano's and Sutpen's whole purpose for being becomes dedicated to rectifying

the inequalities and defying the powers that have ordained them. The basis for formulating their design is not just their awareness of the injustices--a sense common to many men--but their indomitable pride which gives them the conviction that they have it in their power to effect a change in the world around them. They develop messianic complexes and are ruled completely by hubris. They fall victim to the metaphysical irony: finite man is convinced that he can challenge "the powers that be" and vanquish them.

Neither Colonel Aureliano Buendía nor Thomas Sutpen loses his essential naivete'. It continues to fuel their determination and finally contributes to the ultimate frustration of their designs. Colonel Compson observes that even as a man Sutpen has an innocence and a "pristine aptitude for platform drama and childlike heroic simplicity" (246); and again the Colonel observes that "the swaggering of all his gestures and . . . the forensic verbiage in which he stated calmly, with the frank innocence which we call 'of a child' . . . the most simple and the most outrageous things" (246) are the result of an innate ingenuousness which, though not absolving him of guilt, at least militates against the severity of it. As Sutpen wracks his brain searching for the "minor tactical mistake" (269) which threatens to destroy his great design, Colonel Compson hints that it has nothing to do with justice or injustice, guilt or innocence--but rather it is the unavoidable consequence of being human and, therefore, the

victim of a Cosmic irony: "Didn't the very affinity and instinct for misfortune of a man . . . tell you better than that?" (265) Sutpen's "abysmal and purblind innocence" (265) leaves him ignorant of the essential nature of life and of mankind, especially the irrational female sex. The "tactical mistake" Sutpen commits is an example of hubristic irony: he fails to realize that he has inflicted on others the same mortal insult to human dignity which he had suffered as a child. First, a refusal by others to recognize his humanity sends Sutpen on a life-long road of revenge which results in his failure to recognize the humanity of others, who in their turn rise up to destroy him. Miss Rosa calls this ironic justice "retribution and fatality" (269).

Not only is pride the sin that finally topples the Sutpen dynasty, it is the nemesis that brings down the Old South. As we have seen in Chapter II, Faulkner repeatedly satirizes the absurd demonstrations of hubris which characterize the Civil War leaders and the founding fathers. García Márquez is similarly acutely aware of the predominance of the "back-looking ghosts" which populate the towns and villages along the Caribbean coast of Colombia. With equally devastating irony he undermines the myth of the heroic Civil War leaders. But, also like Faulkner, his irony is rife with ambivalence and ambiguity.

Debunking the War Myths

In Absalom, Absalom! and One Hundred Years of Solitude the authors reexamine the great bodies of heroic myth which surround the epochs of their respective countries' civil wars under the galvanizing glare of the ironic consciousness. Gone is the gentle ironizing which characterized Virginia Du Pre's mythologizing of her nephew's "wild-oats" exploits. Gone too is the ambivalence of the derring-do escapades of Colonel John Sartoris. The extravagancies of pride and the appalling lack of military expertise are no longer filtered through the amusing observations of the eccentric Uncle Buck. The tone of the irony has changed from gentle chastisement to caustic indictment. The powers that determine man's fate have become hostile, retributive, or, even worse, at times indifferent.

This was not a glorious war fought for a noble cause. It was "the fever which had cured the disease" (12), a disease which the South had to be rid of for its own salvation, but which the "stubborn back-looking ghosts" (12) could not relinquish. Although the people did not realize it at the time, they were fighting not against the disease but against the fever--not for or against slavery, but against invasion of their sovereignty by the Northern power. The fever had left the country weak yet had freed it of the disease. This passage, which epitomizes the ambivalence inherent in the Civil War theme, is worth quoting in full because it illustrates how

Faulkner injects the ambivalence into his narration:

Quentin was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease, waking from the fever without even knowing that it had been the fever itself which they had fought against and not the sickness, looking with stubborn recalcitrance backward beyond the fever and into the disease with actual regret, weak from the fever yet free of the disease and not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence. (12)

This is a superb example of the absolute ironist's construction of an unresolvable paradox. In a tone of disapprobation the narrator begins to build a substructure based on misapprehension, guilt, failure of self-realization, mistaken values--all leading to an arraignment of the generation which fought to preserve a disease of which it had to be finally forcibly cured. In their ignorance, the sufferers of that crippling infirmity actually remember it with longing regret that it has passed. The entire passage, up to the last phrase, is an indictment of misplaced values, but at the very last moment, the narrator undercuts the whole substructure and balances the paradox by asserting, with no change of tone or break in form to signal the reader that a disjunction is imminent, that the freedom these sufferers won was the freedom of impotence. The parallel construction of the phrases "without even knowing that it had been the fever itself which they had fought against" and "not even aware that the freedom was that of impotence" creates an unanticipated disjunction in the narration that shakes the reader's complacency and fragments his perception. Freedom, a quality to be desired

and striven for, that is, a healthy body free from disease, is juxtaposed to "freedom of impotence," an unlikely combination of words which splices positive connotations with negative ones, thus shattering our expectations and creating multiple possible interpretations, no one of which is completely right.

Despite the above instance of a divided attitude toward the past, Absalom, Absalom! presents one of Faulkner's most unrelieved pictures of the devastations, deprivations, and sufferings of the Civil War. There exists a persistent feeling that God has forsaken the South, that man, through no fault he is aware of, is now alone in a hostile universe. At the end of the Civil War in the South the "men who had risked and lost everything, suffered beyond endurance . . . returned now to a ruined land, not the same men who had marched away but transformed . . ." (157). Their whole way of existence was destroyed; everything that had given stability to their lives had "vanished like straws in a gale" (207), had "dissolved in fire and smoke" (150). During the cold of winter "the starved and ragged remnant of [the Confederate Army] . . . retreated across Alabama and Georgia and into Carolina" (345). Gaunt, cold, completely demoralized, the defeated troops kept retreating:

It wont be much longer now and then there wont be anything left: we wont even have anything to do left, not even the privilege of walking backward slowly for a reason, for the sake of honor and what's left of pride. Not God; evidently we have done without Him for four years, only He just

didn't think to notify us; and not only not shoes and clothing but not even any need for them, and not only no land nor any way to make food, but no need for the food since we have learned to live without that too; and so if you dont have God and you dont need food and clothes and shelter, there isn't anything for honor and pride to climb on and hold to and flourish. And if you haven't got honor and pride, then nothing matters. (349)

Paradoxically, the very honor and pride under whose banner the South marched off to war were the principal causes of the defeat of the Confederate Army. The rebels fought for their honor and pride and they lost because of their honor and pride. The paradox of the modernist dilemma is the operative on which this irony functions. The South went to war to preserve a social, economic, and political system which, in the end, was the greatest contributor to its own downfall: the South carried within itself the seed of its own destruction. The system which allowed one man to subjugate another because of a happenstance of birth, which declared that some men were superior to others because of their material possessions or inheritance, also said that these few men could run the war. The narrator, reflecting on the retreating Southern troops, realizes that the battles were lost

not alone because of superior numbers and failing ammunition and stores, but because of generals who should not have been generals, who were generals not through training in contemporary methods or aptitude for learning them, but by the divine right to say 'Go there' conferred upon them by an absolute caste system. (345)

Young officers with predilections for "plumes and cloaks

lined with scarlet" lacked the military discipline and training necessary for leadership; they "captured warships with cavalry charges but no grain nor meat nor bullets." They were constantly undermining their successes with their own foolish bravado: "on one night and with a handful of men [they] would gallantly set fire to and destroy a million dollar garrison of enemy supplies and on the next night be discovered by a neighbor in bed with his wife and be shot to death" (346).

In another section, narrated this time by Quentin, even Wash Jones, the white trash who had once adulated Sutpen ("If God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like" [282]), finally came to realize, in a vague and brutish way, that is was "men of Sutpen's own kind" who were responsible for both the defeat of the South and the sin that made that defeat necessary:

[They were] men who had led the way, shown the other and lesser ones how to fight in battles, who might also possess signed papers from the generals saying that they were among the first and foremost of the brave--who had galloped also in the old days arrogant and proud on the fine horses about the fine plantations--symbol also of admiration and hope, instruments too of despair and grief. (289)

These were the men who "set the order and the rule of living" for the South. Slowly it began to become clear "how it was possible for the Yankees . . . to have whipped them--the gallant, the proud, the brave; the acknowledged and chosen best among them all to bear the courage and honor and pride" (290). In bitter irony, Wash Jones reflects that it would be "better if his kind and mine too had never drawn the breath of life on this earth. Better that all who re-

main of us be blasted from the face of it . . ." (290). In apocalyptic tones, Wash echoes the doom cast on man by an angry Jehovah, jealous of the vain pride of man and no longer tolerant of his abuses.

Wash, much like Hightower in Light in August, lived the war experience vicariously and had always had a perverted and obsessive sense of "galloping hoofs" which had become "only the more gallant and proud and thunderous" (287) during the war. For him Sutpen is "the apotheosis lonely, explicable, beyond all human fouling: He is bigger than all them Yankees that killed us and ourn . . ." (287). Obsessed by "proud galloping images" beneath "brandished saber and shot-torn flags," Wash is typical of the stubborn back-looking ghosts who mythologized and legendized the war beyond all reality and to the detriment of the present generation which feels paralyzed and impotent in comparison. But it is the realization of the emptiness of the past and the falsehood of past ideals that has disillusioned modern man and alienated him from life, leaving him no longer able to believe in any absolutes or standards.

Life has become "irremediably flawed," and the Player, Creditor, Play Director, as the narrator calls him, or God, as Bon and Henry call him, has forsaken man, cast him adrift, or plays malicious tricks on him. The irony inherent in the stove polish episode suggests man as the butt of some cosmic joke. When the hungry, ragged, shoeless "homogeneous scare-

crows" succeeded through sheer desperation in capturing "ten defenseless sutlers' wagons," their reaction was both ludicrous and pathetic:

. . . the scarecrows tumbled out box after beautiful box after beautiful box . . . and the scarecrows clawing at the boxes with stones and bayonets and even with bare hands and opening them at last and finding--what? Stove polish . . . to polish the stove before firing the house. How we laughed. Yes, we laughed, because I have learned this at least during these four years, that it really requires an empty stomach to laugh with, that only when you are hungry or frightened do you extract some ultimate essence out of laughing" (129-130)

Clearly, some "very dark forces of fate" (165) are at work in the country. Bon, in this letter to Judith, expresses the futility of trying to oppose an absurd world in which man's only escape from madness and desperation is detachment.

García Márquez's attitude toward Colombia's Civil Wars is remarkably close to Faulkner's depiction of the South's Civil War. It was not a glorious time; the heroes were not always motivated by noble causes; there was no rational, logical result: Colombia too suffered a sickness and a fever; however, the one did not cure the other and the accommodations the country made for the sake of peace were absurd and ironical.

The Civil War Hero Colonel Aureliano Buendía fell victim to the same ironic dilemma as Sutpen when he determined to abolish the inequities and offenses of the Federal government, and finally "ended up as bad as they are" (154), committing even greater injustices. Like Sutpen, he was

ironically repeating all the atrocities against which he formed his obsession to begin with:

'at this rate,' [his once-friendly enemy told him before facing the firing squad,] 'you'll not only be the most despotic and bloody dictator in our history, but you'll shoot my dear friend Úrsula [your mother] in an attempt to pacify your conscience'. (154)

The progress of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's career paralleled that of Colonel John Sartoris's in The Unvanquished in several significant aspects. After years of ruthless ruling, of imposing his own laws on the land, becoming inured to killing, all seemingly made necessary and possible by the turmoil of the times, his end result was callousness, insensitivity to the sufferings of others, compromised ideals, an inability to feel tenderness and compassion, a tremendous burden of guilt, and the impenetrable solitude that accompanies such unbridled power. Colonel Sartoris's "violent and ruthless dictatorialness and will to dominate" (170) alienated him from the common human affections. Similarly, the war experience also left Colonel Buendía beyond caring, beyond human affections. During the worst days of the campaign, he stood perpetually at the center of a circle which no one, not even his mother, dared trespass: "the mythical warrior . . . placed a distance of two feet between himself and the rest of humanity" (165). Also like Sartoris, at the end "he made one last effort to search in his heart for the place where his affection had rotted away and he could not find it" (167).

García Márquez's definitive study of the desensitizing and alienating effects of war and power is The Fall of the Patriarch. The primary purpose of the entire work is to demonstrate the depravity of the character of the individual who stops at nothing to satisfy his hunger for absolute authority. Unlike the Patriarch, however, Colonel Buendía realized, although too late for the salvation of his soul, the sham and pretense of his endeavors. John Sartoris and Aureliano Buendía decided to do some "moral house cleaning" (Unvanquished, p. 175) which ended up costing the first his life and the second his humanity. The ruthless demigods finally came to realize how vitiated and debased their original ideals had become, how anachronistic their methods were.

Colonel Buendía started his "moral house cleaning" by coming to the realization that in the end he had been fighting only for selfish, egomaniacal reasons: "As far as I'm concerned, I've come to realize only just now that I'm fighting because of pride" (133). Years later, his mother Úrsula arrived at the same conclusion: "She sensed that he had fought so many wars not out of idealism as everyone had thought, nor had he renounced a certain victory because of fatigue . . . but that he had won and lost for the same reason, pure and sinful pride" (233).

In his messianic obsession, Colonel Aureliano Buendía became convinced, like Colonel Sartoris, that the dream he had for his country justified whatever means necessary to

achieve it. When the realization finally came that "all we're fighting for is power" (162), and that all the original ideals of equality and justice had been forsaken amid the chicanery of the militarists and politicians, Colonel Buendía, also like Colonel Sartoris, stepped down and resigned the reigns of authority to a new generation. Ironically, the side that began by defending the church ended up killing priests and burning chapels, and the side that began by opposing the church rebuilt the steeples and gave prayer books as gifts (157, 131). In the end, Colonel Aureliano Buendía fought harder for an honorable defeat than he had ever fought for victory. His true moment of glory came when he fought "for his own liberation and not for abstract ideals" (164). The final, inconceivable irony came when, near the end, "the central command fell apart and the revolution degenerated into a bloody rivalry of leaders" (170) and Colonel Buendia "finally relied on enemy forces to make [his own officers] submit" (164).

The irony has come full circle. While Faulkner ends Colonel Sartoris's life in a typical act of violence and thus spares the reader the witnessing of Sartoris's humiliation as a toppled giant, no such compunction is shown in the cases of Colonel Buendía and Colonel Sutpen. The readers share scrupulously in the denigration and spiritual death of the once-famous Colonel Buendía as he isolates himself from the world in his little goldsmith shop. We are not even left

with the illusory hope that the times are improving. Colonel Buendía becomes a withered old man with occasional empty and pathetic attempts to rekindle a "mortal conflagration that would wipe out all vestiges of a regime of corruption and scandal backed by the foreign invader" (229). The ultimate indignity is poignantly revealed in Colonel Gerinaldo Márquez's reply to Colonel Buendía's vain hallucinations: "'Oh, Aureliano,' he sighed, 'I already knew that you were old, but now I realize that you're a lot older than you look!'" (229).

The death scenes of Colonel Aureliano Buendía and Colonel Thomas Sutpen make the final statements about the glory that surrounds the Civil War heroes. Colonel Buendía, after seeing "the face of his miserable solitude," draws his last breath while pissing under the chestnut tree in the back yard:

He pulled his head in between his shoulders like a baby chick and remained motionless with his forehead against the trunk of the chestnut tree. The family did not find him until the following day at eleven o'clock in the morning when Santa Sofía de la Piedad went to throw out the garbage in back and her attention was attracted by the descending vultures. (250)

In a scene of similar indignity and irony, Colonel Sutpen, after being hacked to death by his white-trash friend Wash Jones, whom he had mortally insulted, is being taken to the church he had refused to enter after his marriage, by Judith, "in his homemade coffin, in his regimentals and saber and embroidered gauntlets, until the young mules bolted and turned the wagon over and tumbled him saber plumes and all, into a

ditch, from which the daughter extricated him and fetched him back to the cedar grove and read the service herself. And no tears, no bereavement" for the fallen hero. (186)

García Márquez's and William Faulkner's warriors had "wallow[ed] like a hog in the dungheap of glory" (One Hundred, p. 163) and ended their days "amid the exquisite shit of glory" (229), alienated, defeated, bitter. An era has passed and the myth of the august progenitors and founding fathers is debunked. From this point on the hero's place has been vacated. There are no leader figures, no models of masculinity and wisdom and authority which the new generations can emulate and eventually succeed. There is a total failure of succession and regeneration.

The Myth of the Brave New World:

A Failure of Generational Continuity

We have a few old mouth-to-mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters . . . we see dimly people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy tenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions, performing their acts of simple passion and simple violence, impervious to time and inexplicable-- (Absalom, p. 101)

Gabriel García Márquez and William Faulkner utilize irony to debunk the first tenet of the lapserian myth, the heroic past, which includes the founding fathers and the war heroes. The second tenet of the lapserian myth, the brave new future, is likewise shattered through the employment of an entropic vision which depicts a total failure of

regeneration, the collapse of the dynastic line, the disintegration of social institutions, and a reversion to chaos. As with Frye's sparagmos, "confusion and anarchy reign over the world,"¹¹ or as Yeats says, "The best lack all conviction, [and] the worst/Are full of passionate intensity."

Absalom, Absalom! and One Hundred Years of Solitude, while dealing with historical themes, are, in one sense, prophetic novels which trace the present weaknesses and the future collapses of societies. Their principal theme is the attrition and demise of the Sutpen dynasty and of the Buendía line because of the failure of generational continuity. This is a theme both writers have treated repeatedly in other works. We have already seen how the Compson and Sartoris families finally petered out. Big Mama's Funeral depicts the end of a famous ruler who died leaving no direct descendants and whose domain was splintered among relatives. No One Writes to the Colonel also treats the theme of the stagnation and expiration of a once-respected and important Civil War Colonel. In The Fall of the Patriarch García Márquez recounts the trajectory of the most despotic and absolute dictator ever known, who rose from obscure and base lineage to totalitarian power and then faded away, heirless, as the real authority dissipated and finally passed on to other realms.

The winding down of the race, the diluting of the life force, the sense that the later generations fall far short

of the shadow cast by their illustrious progenitors are part of the entropic vision in the novels of these authors. Riddled with ambiguity and ambivalence, the pictures of the founding fathers show them as

victims of a different circumstance, simpler and therefore, integer for integer, larger, more heroic and the figures therefore more heroic too, not dwarfed and involved but distinct, uncomplex who had the gift of loving once or dying once instead of being diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled, author and victim too of a thousand homicides and a thousand copulations and divorcements. (89)

Mr. Compson had repeated this same entropic philosophy to his son in The Sound and the Fury. The people of this generation are only "stuffed dolls" made up of the left-over parts of previous, "larger, more heroic" generations. Mr. Compson's comment that the dim, bug-fouled bulb is adequate light by which to view those predecessors suggests that their actions would not bear close scrutiny by today's standards of conduct. Inherent in this observation is an ambivalence that says yes, they may be judged ignoble by us today, but there is a basic injustice in measuring them by today's values. Judged by their time and place, they were giants the likes of which are impossible in today's society. An essential disjunction exists between their time and ours which invalidates any attempts we make to be judgmental about their actions.

The great design Sutpen establishes for himself has the goal of achieving social respectability. To do this he

has to accomplish two feats: first, he has to acquire riches and power; second, he has to create a progeny to inherit his property and perpetuate his name. That means a male heir. He methodically sets about realizing his plan, determined not to let any obstacle frustrate his design. He is driven by his messianic sense of delivering his people from bondage, the bondage of brutality, ignorance, poverty, powerlessness. If he should fail this moral responsibility for generational continuity,

he could never live with himself . . . never live with what all the men and women that had died to make him had left inside of him for him to pass on, with all the dead ones waiting and watching to see if he was going to do it right, fix things right so that he would be able to look in the face not only the old dead ones but all the living ones that would come after him when he would be one of the dead. (261)

In the name of the "boy-symbol" who had been turned away from the rich man's plantation door, he designs a plan by which the boy could "shut that door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead along the still undivulged light rays in which his descendents . . . waited to be born without even having to know that they had once been riven forever free from brutehood . . ." (261). He pledges that when a poor boy comes to his door, he will take him in, but ironically, when his own abandoned son stands on the threshold, he refuses even to hear the knock. Integral to Sutpen's design was a progeny of "pure" blood sons, that is, there must not be any taint of Negro mixture. He had no objection to French or Spanish blood, but Negro blood was

"the one very factor which would destroy the entire plan and design which I had been working toward" (274). It is not that the world would have known or have dared to object-- it was that this supreme racist could not compromise his own conviction of racial purity and superiority. Such a compromise would have been "a mockery and a betrayal of that little boy who approached that door fifty years ago and was turned away, for whose vindication the whole plan was conceived and carried forward" (174). Sutpen never realized the incongruity of his own actions.

Thomas Sutpen's story can be seen as a metaphor for the racism on which the old South was constructed. The sin of pride enables one race to convert another to chattel, or, as Rosa said of Clytie, to creatures of another species, "speaking no language which the other understood" (153). A final turn of the ironic screw is given when Bon, who has been rejected because of his spot of Negro blood, disclaims any real obligation to his wife-mistress and their child because, after all, they are part Negro: "Bon--the trump now, the voice gentle now: 'Have you forgot that this woman, this child, are niggers? You, Henry Sutpen of Sutpen's Hundred of Mississippi? You, talking of marriage, a wedding, here?'" (118). Thus the irony is compounded as Bon is ready to repeat his father's sin against him and his mother.

Sutpen's "tactical mistake" was his failure to understand the human heart and to attribute to others the same

ability to feel shame, humiliation, the need for recognition, the desire for vengeance and retribution, pride, and self-respect which he felt so keenly. The irony is heightened by the fact that Bon was driven to destroy Sutpen's design by the very same force which drove Sutpen to undertake it in the first place: the inherent need for generational continuity which is based on a search for origins and a need to perpetuate the self. The duty Sutpen feels to his progenitors to pass on what they had died passing on to him, to "fix things right" is echoed very closely in Charles Bon's yearning:

Because he knew exactly what he wanted; it was just the saying of it--the physical touch even though in secret, hidden--the living touch of that flesh warmed before he was born by the same blood which it had bequeathed him to warm his own flesh with, to be bequeathed by him in turn to run hot and loud in veins and limbs after that first flesh and then his own were dead. (319)

Charles Bon, looking at Henry, tries to imagine his father's face, "the man who shaped us both out of that blind and chancy darkness which we call the future" (317). Furthermore, Charles too is possessed by a drive for paternal recognition: he expresses an unrequited longing for his father, "out of the shadow of whose absence my spirit's posthumeity has never escaped" (317).

This need for generational continuity is a reaction to the fragmentation of the historical perspective and the sense the characters have of being adrift in a meaningless existence where all the old verities have been invalidated. Bon and

Sutpen are searching for the identity that has been denied them because of their break with the past. Unable to endure the resultant sense of estrangement, they seek assurance and identity in the knowledge that they are part of a process that reaches backwards to their origins and forward to their perpetuity. They strive to become linked-up, or "connected" with something greater and more permanent than themselves, which confirms their existence. But in an "inherently disconnected and fragmented" (Wilde, p. 10) world, their efforts to achieve meaning, stability, and identity are destined to fail; their attempts to achieve generational continuity are totally frustrated.

Henry, Sutpen's one son who could carry his plans to fruition, is forced by his father and by the code of his day, to commit an act which assures that he cannot be the heir to his father's dynasty. So powerful is Sutpen's obsession that he begins a third time to fulfill his design, and past age sixty he fathers another child. But Sutpen's white line is doomed to extinction, and so this last child is a daughter.

Although the mixture of black blood finally frustrated Thomas Sutpen's design, it was doomed to fail from another cause: incest. One of the reasons the later generations fail to revitalize themselves is the narcissistic love of the families which sometimes manifests itself in incestuous attractions, as we have already seen in the case of

Quentin and Caddy, Narcissa and Horace, Bayard and John, to name a few. The Henry-Charles-Judith triangle is one of Faulkner's most complex and thorough treatments of this theme.

Bon's determination to marry his half-sister Judith is born of a strange mixture of emotions--this marriage is the instrument by which he can accomplish his own revenge and vindicate his mother by destroying his father's design; but, it is also the means by which he can possess his half-brother Henry through a surrogate with whom Henry closely identifies.

A frequent theme in Faulkner's literature is the reversal of sex roles, or, even more salient, the perverted usurpation by the female of certain traditionally male characteristics, especially sexual aggressiveness, as in the cases of Temple Drake, Joanna Burden, and Candace Compson. Frequently this hideous masculinization of the female is accompanied by a feminization of the male, but not always. As children Henry and Judith shocked the expectations of those around them by an apparant switching of sex roles: Judith showed the brutal tendencies of her father and Henry displayed the Coldfield sensitivity and morality. The whole town was scandalized when Sutpen's carriage "turned that road . . . to the church into a race track" as they arrived at the church "all in a thunder and a fury of wildeyed horses and of galloping and of dust" (23). But their outrage turned

to horror when they came to realize "that it had been Judith, a girl of six, who had instigated and authorized that negro to make the team run away. Not Henry, mind; not the boy, which would have been outrageous enough; but Judith, the girl" (25). When the phaeton was substituted for the carriage, a tame stableboy replaced the wild negro as driver, and an old mare was hitched up instead of the wild horses, Judith "began to scream, screaming and kicking while they carried her back into the house and put her to bed" (25). Furthermore, Judith could "outrun and outclimb, and ride and fight both with and beside her brother" (67). The brother-sister contrast is developed even further in the episode in which Sutpen fights savagely for sport with his wild negro slaves, naked to the waist, for the delight of the townsmen who gathered in the stable. At first the observers thought the screaming was from a horse, or a woman, and then they realized "'My god, it's a child' . . . [as] Henry plunged out from among the negroes who had been holding him screaming and vomiting" (29). As his mother knelt in the dirt, Henry "clung to her, crying" (30) while her "baby girl" Judith, unbeknown to even her father, watched from her secret hiding place in the loft with "cold and attentive interest" (120).

Judith was the true Sutpen offspring "with the ruthless Sutpen code of taking what it wanted provided it were strong enough, of the two children as Henry was the Coldfield

with the Coldfield cluttering of morality and rules of right and wrong" (120). She would never have let a moral question of right or wrong stand between her and what she wanted. Indeed, the true heir to Sutpen's legacy should have been Judith, but in a partilineal society the female offspring can not accomplish the principal goal of perpetuating the family name. Sutpen's dream is not just for grandchildren, but it is for "fine grandsons and great-grandsons springing as far as eye could reach" (271).

By the time Judith and Henry reached adulthood, the affinity which had always existed between them had grown and intensified: "the two of them, brother and sister, curiously alike as if the difference in sex had merely sharpened the common blood to a terrific, an almost unbearable, similarity . . ." (172). Clearly, between them "there had been a relationship closer than the traditional loyalty of brother and sister even" (79). They were a "single personality with two bodies" (91-92). And so it was that when Henry met and came under the spell of Bon--was completely captivated by the older one's charm and personality to the point that he tried with "complete and abnegant devotion" (107) to ape his mannerisms, dress, speech, habits--he sought to possess vicariously his sister through Bon and Bon through his sister by a strange process of metamorphosis:

In fact, perhaps this is the pure and perfect incest: the brother realizing that the sister's virginity must be destroyed in order to have

existed at all, taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become, metamorphose into, the lover, the husband; by whom he would be despoiled, choose for despoiler, if he could become, metamorphose into the sister, the mistress, the bride. (96)

Henry undertook to seduce Judith for Bon. He read Judith's letter to Bon "without jealousy, with that complete abnegant transference, metamorphosis into the body which was to become his sister's lover" (105). He finds some kind of perverted relief in the idea of Bon serving as his surrogate with Judith:

'I used to think that I would hate the man that I would have to look at every day and whose every move and action and speech would say to me, I have seen and touched parts of your sister's body that you will never see and touch: and now I know that I shall hate him and that's why I want that man to be you' (328)

And again, he "seduced her to his own vicarious image which walked and breathed with Bon's body" (107). Because of the "insurmountable barrier which the similarity of gender hopelessly intervened" (95), Henry's love for Bon could be realized only through a metamorphosis with Judith.

Similarly, to Bon "who could not have wanted Judith without Henry" (119), Judith is a surrogate for the youth:

It was because Bon not only loved Judith after his fashion but he loved Henry too and I believe in a deeper sense than merely after his fashion. Perhaps in his fatalism he loved Henry the better of the two, seeing perhaps in the sister merely the shadow, the woman vessel with which to consummate the love whose actual object was the youth--. (107-108)

Incest and narcissism are signs of the decadence and decay, the debilitating introversion, and the self-pride

which are antithetical to regeneration. Related to the theme of incest and perverted masculinization of the female is the feminization of the male, a further frustration to regeneration. Although Henry never matched Judith's strength, determination, self-composure, and singleness of purpose, the role reversals were arrested during adolescence and society forced the two Sutpen children back into more traditional roles. However, the theme of the feminization of the male, symbolizing decay and debility, a disjunction in sexual role transference and, therefore, in the potential for regeneration, is continued in the characters of Bon and his son Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon.

Bon, the indolent, jaded sophisticate whose mannerisms Henry aped, lounged around his apartment in flowered, silken, "outlandish and almost feminine garments of his sybaritic privacy" (95). In his "slightly Frenchified cloak and hat" (95) and with his "foppish posturing" (128) Bon was "finick[y] almost like a woman" (114). The various narrators raise serious doubts concerning the true object of Bon's affection, Judith or Henry. Either way, Bon falls far short of the ideal carrier and transmitter of the Sutpen genes. As a matter of fact, Bon's son by his octaroon mistress, Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, is even further feminized and, therefore, further removed from the Sutpen heritage. Etienne, a "thin delicate child with a smooth ivory sexless face" (193), had lived until his mother's death or disappear-

ance in a "silken prison" where no sunlight and fresh air penetrated. In his "expensive esoteric Fauntleroy clothing" (194) he was small for his age, quiet and docile, with "light bones and womanish hands" (200). The "padded silken vacuum cell," (199) the "scented maze of shuttered silk," (196) had not prepared him for the realities of post-Civil War Mississippi and the class and racial distinctions he would suffer there. In a "furious protest, [an] indictment of heaven's ordering" reminiscent of Joe Christmas, young Bayard Sartoris, and Quentin Compson, Etienne completely rejects the reality which placed him in both classes and, therefore, in neither class. The truly alienated individual, he finds no home for himself in this life, no meaning to existence, and ends his days in a relentless suicidal search of defiance. The offspring he produces by his "coal black and ape-like" (205) insensate wife is Jim Bond, a slack-mouthed idiot who howls in the wildness. This last Sutpen descendent is a far cry from the "fine grandsons and great-grandsons springing as far as eye could reach" (271) which Sutpen longed for.

The first and the final symbol of Sutpen's rise to respectability is the manor house. It was on the steps of the white, columned plantation mansion that the young Thomas Sutpen received the trauma which set him on his quest for power, wealth, and respectability. Consequently, the first step in his great design was to acquire for himself the big-

gest, richest, most lavishly furnished house in the country, the outward symbol of his pride and vanity. It took him several years to "drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing" (8) with his wild negroes from the West Indies and his captive French architect. The "baronial splendor" was surrounded by "formal gardens and promenades, its slave quarters and stables and smokehouses" (39). And finally it was furnished with several large, oxen-drawn wagonfuls of crystal chandeliers, mahogany, tapestries, candelabra, imported window panes, Wedgewood, rugs,--the best New Orleans had to offer. At the height of his power, Sutpen galloped across his hundred square miles of land on his black stallion, surveying his domain: "[he] owned, lock stock and barrel, everything he could see from a given point, with every stick and blade and hoof and heel on it to remind him (if he ever forgot it) that he was the biggest thing in their sight and in his own too" (363).

When Sutpen returned from the war, his grand estate lay in waste: he had lost his land, his slaves, his son, and the house was in a state of decay, symbolic of the state of the family and of Sutpen's design. The ruined fields, broken fences, crumbling cabins and cotton house walls, weed-choked flower beds, "rotting portico and scaling walls," bare floors, barren halls, naked stairs portended "some desolation more profound than ruin" (136). Despite his furious, fevered, unflagging determination to restore his baronial splendor.

Sutpen's Hundred became reduced to Sutpen's One.

Forty-one years later when Quentin accompanied Miss Rosa out to the ruined shell of the house, "it loomed, bulked, square and enormous, with jagged half-toppled chimneys, its roofline sagging a little" (366). Inside, everything smelled of desolation and decay, the voice echoed through the empty rooms, the walls and ceiling were cracked and scaling. In a final conflagration scene, the "monstrous tinder-dry rotten shell" (375) was consumed in flames and smoke; "the entire staircase was on fire," and the house "exploded like powder among the flames as the whole lower hall vanished" (375). Finally, in "one last wild crimson reflection . . . the house collapsed and roared away" (376). All that were left of Sutpen's magnificent design were the ashes, the four gutted chimneys, and the howling from the half-witted, wild, saddle-colored heir, "Jim Bond, the scion, the last of his race" (376). Except in the "few old mouth-to-mouth tales" (101) of the Old South, Sutpen and his design are wiped off the face of the earth.

The entropic process which is converting the world to chaos has succeeded in wiping out the Sutpen line. The Cosmic Player has retired the game called Sutpen, along with the ones called Sartoris, Compson, Grierson. . . . In bitter ironic reversals, the efforts, designs, aspirations of all of the characters in Absalom, Absalom! are frustrated and man's fight to control his destiny again meets with defeat.

The once-famous Buendía line of Macondo meets a similar fate; it fails to regenerate itself and is eventually wiped off the face of the earth by apocalyptic winds which demolish the decaying house and the whole town. García Márquez, like Faulkner, does not ascribe in his literature to the myth of the brave new future. Through the mode of the ironic consciousness, García Márquez projects an entropic vision which sees the world as slowly winding down to oblivion and chaos. Man again is seen as the victim of some dark power whose wrath and doom he tries in vain to evade. It is an irrational, absurd universe where appearances and realities seldom correspond, expectations are not realized, intentions are frustrated and reversed. The "quest for permanence and stability in a world increasingly menaced by chaos,"¹² as McMurray observes, is the central ironic paradox which plagues all characters in the novel. With Colonel Aureliano Buendía, as with Thomas Sutpen, there remains a great "disproportion between . . . intentions and reality"¹³ so that the world is seen as irrational. Nothing goes according to plan and the protagonists can not figure out the "tactical mistake" in an absurd world with a double contradictory reality. The characters in this novel are also victims of a paradoxical irony: with their human limitations they are, nevertheless, compelled to try to make sense out of a senseless universe; rational man attempts to understand and control an irrational world. José Arcadio Buendía believed avidly in the absolute-

ness of science, in the perfectability of man, and in the logical progress of the universe. When he realized the absurdity of the human condition, he went mad. The labyrinth that José Arcadio Buendía dreams himself lost in is, as McMurray points out, "a metaphor of contemporary man's non-rational concept of the world, i.e., a world in which the limits of reason have illuminated the absurdity of the human condition."¹⁴

In García Márquez's literature the mad, innocent, or the mentally weak are often the very ones who reveal the deepest understanding and most wisdom. So the old priest's senility should in no way impugn the veracity of his judgment:

From that time on the parish priest began to show the signs of senility that would lead him to say years later that the devil had probably won his rebellion against God, and that he was the one who sat on the heavenly throne, without revealing his true identity in order to trap the unwary. (178)

One of the traps this whimsical and diabolical force sets for unwary man is to shatter time so that things are out of joint and the passage of time cannot be relied upon to orient one and give direction to life. José Arcadio Buendía is the first to notice that the time machine has broken down and man is stuck in a time warp where it is always Monday. (81). Many years later José Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Babilonia confirm their ancestor's discovery that "time also stumbled and had accidents and could therefore splinter and leave an eternalized fragment in a room" (322).

Úrsula also witnesses "the progressive breakdown of time" (230), which makes it impossible to plan and carry out projects: "'What's happening,' she sighed, 'is that the world is slowly coming to an end . . .'" (176). Ever since God started measuring out the days, weeks, months, and years using the same traps that the Turks used when measuring out yards of material (235), it was impossible to orient oneself with any certainty and to believe in an orderly, linear progression of time. Everyone is caught in a Möbius strip that leads him forward to the beginning. When José Arcadio Segundo undertakes to bring the sea to Macondo, Úrsula exclaims: "I know all of this by heart. . . . It's as if time had turned around and we were back at the beginning" (185). And when José Arcadio Segundo becomes involved in the subterfuge of the banana strike, Úrsula's suspicions are further confirmed: "It's as if the world were repeating itself" (276). Even José Arcadio Segundo himself realizes that the passage of time is bringing him closer to an event that happened in his childhood as his memories/premonitions of Melquíades became clearer "as if the passage of time were bringing him closer to it" (245). Pilar Ternera felt that "time was turning back to its earliest origins" (363). Finally, after repeated repetitions, Úrsula "shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing . . . but that it was turning in a circle" (310). All of these suspicions and observations are verified when we learn that the story, the manuscript written

by Melquíades, "had not put events in the order of man's conventional time, but had concentrated a century of daily episodes in such a way that they coexisted in one instant" (382). In Macondo, therefore, we are in a nonorientable world.

One Hundred Years of Solitude is structured on the Möbius strip principle. As the end of her life approached, "Little by little [Úrsula] was shrinking, turning into a fetus . . . and Santa Sofía de la Piedad . . . sat her on her lap to feed her a few spoonfuls of sugar water. She looked like a newborn old woman" (315). The town finally sank into the primitive, isolated, innocent village it was when founded; the gypsies returned with their "modern" marvels from the outside world (the same magnifying glass, magnetized ingots, and false teeth that the first gypsies had brought). And finally, completing the backward progress of time, Macondo itself is no more. Like the Sartorises, Compsons, Griersons, Sutpens, and their kind, the Buendías did not have a second opportunity on earth (383). The Buendías too are anachronisms and doomed to extinction. They, like Faulkner's characters, are estranged from their societies, as Kierkegaard says of the modern ironic consciousness (Wilde, p. 33). This alienation is both their sin and their punishment. Just as Faulkner's characters are somehow outside their communities, set apart by their ruthlessness and pride, by their selfishness, egomania, blind obsessions, narcissistic tendencies,

and incestuous impulses, which prevent regeneration, so the Buendías also are solitary individuals who turn suicidally inward and fail to establish revitalizing ties with the rest of society. Although they are passionate and willful, they demonstrate a fatal inability to love. McMurray, discussing the theme of One Hundred Years of Solitude, sees this as the direct result of man's fall from innocence:

Man's loss of innocence in a universe from which God has withdrawn has brought about his detachment from nature as well as the severance of his intimate relations with his fellow men. The result is the kind of cosmic homelessness reflected in the characters' solitude,^a a recurring motif and the novel's principal theme.¹⁵

García Márquez, in an interview with Rita Guibert, affirmed this preoccupation:

[Solitude] is the only subject I've written about The story of Colonel Aureliano Buendía . . . is really a progress toward solitude. Not only is every member of his family solitary. . . but there's also the anti-solidarity, even of people who sleep in the same bed . . . the whole disaster as well--comes from this lack of solidarity--the solitude which results when everyone is acting for himself alone.¹⁶

The Buendía family is also concerned with preserving the family line. Úrsula, the strongest force in the family, spent her whole life (somewhere around 120 to 127 years) "fighting against the laws of creation to maintain the line" (378). But her efforts are foredoomed to fail and we are told that "none of [Úrsula's] descendents had inherited her strength" (311). As a matter of fact, "It was as if the defects of the family and none of the virtues had been con-

centrated: in the offspring (180). Like Faulkner's characters, the younger generations are a definite falling off from the strengths of the earlier ones. There is a diluting of the life force, a weakening of the moral fiber, and a general inability to meet life head-on. Each new Buendía issue is brought into the family to be reared and educated. So strong is the sense of family and the desire for continuity of the line that Úrsula and Amaranta even want to rear Colonel Aureliano's seventeen illegitimate sons from his war days when he was used as a stud to propagate strong men for the land.

In the Buendía clan the right to family membership is not determined by purity of the blood line nor by legitimacy of birth,* but by affinity of character traits. Like so many of Faulkner's haunted characters (i. e., young Bayard, Narcissa, Joe Christmas, Addie Bundren, Joanna Burden, Thomas Sutpen, John Sartoris, Candace Compson, and numerous others) all true Buendías are necessarily solitary and alienated; they may also be idealistic, impulsive, enterprising, but they all, except perhaps Úrsula herself, seem to lack the ability to show love. Úrsula realizes finally that "the son for whom she would have given her life [Aureliano] was simply a man incapable of love" (233). He had not loved anyone in

*Fernanda's objection to the illegitimate Aureliano Babilonia is no exception because Fernanda herself is never a true Buendía.

the family, not even his wife. Úrsula also arrived at the conclusion that Amaranta had never allowed herself to love because of fear. The parchments tell us that Meme merely gave herself out of rebellion (382), and although Amaranta Úrsula believed that her son was destined to "begin the race again from the beginning and cleanse it of its pernicious vices of solitary callings, for he was the only one in a century who had been engendered with love" (378), she was wrong on both accounts: he was the one who brought the line to its fated end and he "had his beginning in the madness of fornication" (378). Similarly, the wild revelries of Aureliano Segundo could not prevent him from "dying of solitude in the turmoil of his debauches" (378). Each of the Buendías and those who come under the influence of the family--Rebeca, Santa Sofía de la Piedad, Fernanda--lead a solitary life devoid of love.

Typically, the slough of adversity or the prospect of an imminent death purges the characters so that they are able to realize a belated love. Arcadio, who for a time was the despotic ruler of Macondo and brought such shame to the family, boasted with bitterness, "To my great honor . . . I am not a Buendía" (111); but facing the firing squad "He thought about his people without sentimentality, with a strict closing of his accounts with life, beginning to understand how much he really loved the people he hated most" (118). When Aureliano Babilonia found José Arcadio's body floating in the pool,

"only then did he understand how much he had begun to love him" (346). Likewise, only upon Colonel Aureliano's death did Amaranta show that he "was the person she loved most in this world" (257). Nearing death, Úrsula realized her love and admiration for Rebeca, the one she had banished from the house but who "was the only one who had the unbridled courage that Úrsula had wanted for her line" (234). Chastened by the adversity of the five-year rains, Petra Cotes and Aureliano Segundo, famous for their sexual extravagancies that made the animals reproduce, finally arrived at true love in the misery of their poverty: "Both looked back then on the wild revelry, the gaudy wealth, and the unbridled fornication as an annoyance and they lamented that it had cost them so much of their lives to find the paradise of shared solitude. [They were] madly in love after so many years of sterile complicity" (313). In a similar manner, when the pregnancy and spent emotions forced Aureliano Babilonia and Amaranta Úrsula to temper their formerly unrestrained love making, they discovered "that the rest periods of love had unexplored possibilities, much richer than those of desire." Only when "daily needs beseiged them" were they able to create a "bond of solidarity" (175) and arrive at true love just before Amaranta Úrsula's death in childbirth.

Amaranta, similar to such frustrated Faulknerian characters as Narcissa, Judith, and the spinster in "Dry September," is one of the most pathetic examples of this emotional

blight. Her failure to love, whether because of cowardice or the desire for revenge, led her to reject repeatedly the offers of marriage and to end her days in bitter spinsterhood. At first determined to poison Rebeca rather than let her marry Pietro Crespi, Amaranta subjects Pietro to a long period of torture which eventually leads to his suicide when he turns to her after Rebeca jilts him for another. In deep remorse, Amaranta plunges her arm into the fire and wears a black bandage on the scars for the rest of her life. But she repeats the same inexplicable rejection of Colonel Gerineldo Márquez years later, although her eagerness for his visits was intolerable. Finally she refused to see him: "Shut up in her bedroom biting back her secret tears, Amaranta put her fingers in her ears so as not to hear the voice of the suitor . . . and in spite of the fact that she was dying to see him, she had the strength not to go out and meet him" (135-136). She had accused him of wanting to marry her because she was the closest he could get to the true object of his affection, her brother Colonel Aureliano Buendía, as was the case with Judith, Bon, and Henry.

In their attempts to debunk the myth of the brave new world and to illustrate the failure of regeneration, Faulkner and García Márquez deflate the corollary myths of romantic love, virtuous women, and marital bliss. The husband and wife relationship comes under arraignment repeatedly in the works of both authors. Such couples as Anse and Addie Bundren

in As I Lay Dying, Jason II and Caroline Compson in The Sound and the Fury, Flem and Eula Varner Snopes in The Hamlet, Bayard and Narcissa Sartoris in Sartoris, Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden (although not married) in Light in August, Colonel John and Drusilla Sartoris in The Unvanquished, and Thomas and Ellen Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! among Faulkner's fiction and Martin and Isabel, and Meme and the doctor (the Pup) in Leafstorm, Damasco and Ana in "There Are No Thieves in This Town" and most notably Aureliano Segundo and Fernanda Buendía in One Hundred Years of Solitude among García Márquez's characters, bear witness to the fact that the marital station is not blissful. These unions are fraught by mis-matching, misunderstandings, antagonism, resentment, alienation, abuse, personal aggrandizement, abandonment, insensitivity, and infidelity. Although one spouse may take a lover or may abandon the other, divorce is not an option open to them in their society. The couples often live together in loneliness and alienation accentuated by the very failure of their marriage to alleviate the misery. Marriage is not a union of loving spirits in a joint endeavor to minister to each other's needs, encourage each other with understanding and compatibility, and preserve the family line by nurturing the offspring. It is a trap from which there is no real escape and in which two people suffer alone, unable to succor each other, able only to intensify each other's pain. In the best of cases, an accommodation is made to toler-

ate the situation, but nowhere is there the romantic or ideal match. García Márquez and William Faulkner echo each other's belief that marriage as an institution fails to provide the haven of comfort and love which is promised by the myth.

In a manner similar to his parody of the Superman myth, García Márquez parodies the Cinderella fairy tale in his story of Aureliano Segundo's courtship of Fernanda del Carpio. She is the beautiful, unknown princess arriving at the ball/carnival. Aureliano Segundo is smitten at first sight, and when she finally disappears, her real identity unknown, he searches for her in true fashion of the knights of old on their quests, "without cease . . . without a single moment of respite" (197). Although ambitious parents try to foist off their daughters as the sought-after princess/beauty queen, true love triumphs, the lovers are united, and they live happily ever after--well, not quite. Similar to his abrupt reversal of the Superman myth, here García Márquez's parody of love and happiness convolutes into a nightmare of frustration, deceit, infidelity, and heartaches: "For Aureliano Segundo it was almost simultaneously the beginning and the end of happiness" (198). With ribald humor and caustic criticism of the Church, the author tells us that "Not counting Holy Week, Sundays, holy days of obligation, first Fridays, retreats, sacrifices, and cyclical impediments, her effective year [for sex] was reduced to forty-two days

that were spread out through a web of purple crosses" (198). After the elapse of the first two weeks of venereal abstinence, Aureliano Segundo is allowed into Fernanda's bedroom to find her completely enshrouded from chin to ankle in a white nightgown "with a large, round buttonhole, delicately trimmed, at the level of her lower stomach" (198). In an explosion of laughter, Aureliano Segundo shouts "That's the most obscene thing I've ever seen in my life" (199). When, after a month, he is unsuccessful in getting Fernanda to take off her gown, in total and irrevocable disillusionment he returns to his mistress, finding in his wife "only a deep feeling of desolation" (199).

Faulkner too presents the "deep feeling of desolation" inherent in the marital condition. Thomas Sutpen came to Jefferson "to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves" (42). Ellen Coldfield, daughter of a Methodist steward of impeccable honesty but very modest means, was chosen (or bought or swapped for) as the "adjunct to his design," the "stainless wife" who would help him achieve respectability. Their married life began with an ominous omen when the townspeople boycotted the wedding and threw garbage on them as they left the church. Ellen "succeeded at last in evacuating not only the puritan heritage but reality itself . . . [she] escaped at last into a world of pure illusion in which, safe from any harm, she moved, lived, from attitude to attitude against

her background of chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate" (68). However, her "meaningless uproar of vanity" (73) was only an attempt to deal with the loneliness she felt in that cold house, in that frigid marriage, alienated from the town and from her former friends. Finally, she withdrew completely into her illusion and died in "bewildered and uncomprehending amazement" that all her bright dreams of marital happiness could have vanished like smoke. Ellen's fate is typical of many of Faulkner's wedded women, Caroline Compson and Addie Bundren in particular. The message is always the same: in this period of alienation, no one is more alienated than husband and wife.

When the marriage state is vitiated, what is left is carnal lust and base desire. Repeatedly García Márquez makes the observation that man, ironically, is at no time more alone than after the failure of the hoped-for communion in the sex act; he describes the men's "bewildered anxiety to flee and at the same time stay forever in that exasperated silence and that fearful solitude" (35). Sex is reduced to its purely procreational function, stripped of all interaction between personalities, in the practice of bringing women to Colonel Aureliano Buendía's tent at night so that he could sire heroic sons. In the dark no words were exchanged; neither person saw the other, then or ever again. In the cases where the authors focus on love making, copulation is presented as

wild, savage, animalistic, painful, and debasing. There is no tenderness, no spiritual sharing, no "loving." Often these authors present the woman as aggressive, dominating, insatiable, and masculine. In societies that have not heard of women's liberation and the sexual revolution, these traits are abominations. Perverted role reversals are a further indication of the degeneracy of the times. As obstacles to regeneration, they are a part of García Márquez's and Faulkner's entropic vision.

García Márquez speaks frequently of the sexual excesses of his couples. José Arcadio, the protomale, with "startlingly regulated cyclonic power lifted [Rebeca] up by the waist and despoiled her of her intimacy with three slashes of its claws and quartered her like a little bird." Rebeca "thanked God for having been born before she lost herself in the inconceivable pleasure of that unbearable pain" as the hammock "absorbed the explosion of blood like a blotter" (94-95). During their "scandalous honeymoon" the neighborhood was shocked "by the cries that woke the whole district as many as eight times in a single night and three times during siesta" (96).

Aureliano Segundo and Petra Cotes' "unbridled fornication" (313) caused incredible fertility among all the animals: the lovers "would look each other in the eyes and without saying anything they would cover their plates and go into the bedroom dying of hunger and of love" (238). Even on

forbidden days, they "frolicked" in the bed every night until dawn. Deaf to all reasoning, Aureliano Segundo's only thoughts were how "to die with [Petra Cotes], on top of her and underneath her, during a night of feverish license" (182).

Other characters also took similar "feverish license" in their sexual activities. Nigromanta taught Aureliano Babilonia "first how to do it like earthworms, then like snails, and finally like crabs" (355). Amaranta Úrsula and her husband Gaston had "made a pact of unbridled love" which allowed them to give in "to the reciprocal drive in the least adequate of places and whenever the spirit moved them" (350), whether in an airplane, in a field of violets, or among broken chemical bottles in a pool of muriatic acid (355), driving other to distraction with their "unhinged bellies" and her "stoney laughter, her howls of a happy cat, and her songs of gratitude, agonizing in love at all hours and in the most unlikely parts of the house" (355).

Faulkner's extravagant and cryptic, often misinterpreted bitch is the predatory Temple Drake from Sanctuary. Temple's sexual aberrations are disgusting to the author, nauseating to his critics, and outrageous and insulting to his female readers.* After being raped of her virginity with a corn cob, having a stud turned in to her for exhibition sex,

* See for example Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, New York: Criterion Books, 1960, pp. 311-313.

and being held prisoner in a house of prostitution, she becomes "wild as a young mare" (311). The author then describes the effects of what seems to be an aphrodisiac drug but is actually only gin. When Red came toward her,

She began to say Ah-ah-ah-ah in an expiring voice, her body arching slowly backward as though faced by an exquisite torture. When he touched her she sprang like a bow, hurling herself upon him, her mouth gaped and ugly like that of a dying fish as she writhed her loins against him.

He dragged his face free by main strength. With her hips grinding against him, her mouth gaping in straining protrusion, bloodless, she began to speak. "Let's hurry. Anywhere . . . Come on. What're you waiting for?" She strained her mouth toward him dragging his head down, making a whimpering moan. (287-288)

In a fallen world sex is grotesque and women have become nymphomaniacal.

In their depictions of the seduction and corruption of Joanna Burden and Amaranta Úrsula, the two authors are surprisingly close. When Joe Christmas attacked Joanna, to his surprise "There was no feminine vacillation, no coyness of obvious desire and intention to succumb at last. It was as if he struggled physically with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone" (221). To his shock, Joe realized "'My God . . . it was like I was the woman and she was the man.' But that was not right, either. Because she had resisted to the very last" (222).

In a very similar rape scene the last Aureliano, stalking the last Amaranta, "picked her up by the waist with

both hands . . . and dropped her on her back on the bed. With a brutal tug he pulled off her bathrobe before she had time to resist" (365). Here too a brutal battle ensues, whose outcome is foregone:

Amaranta Úrsula defended herself sincerely with the astuteness of a wise woman, weaseling her slippery, flexible, and fragrant weasel's body as she tried to knee him in the kidneys and scorpion his face with her nails. . . . It was a fierce fight, a battle to the death, but it seemed to be without violence. (365)

As Joanna seemed to be almost helping Joe disrobe her "with small changes of position of limbs when the ultimate need for help arose" (223), so Amaranta Ursula finally came to "defending herself with false bites and deweaseling her body little by little until they both were conscious of being adversaries and accomplices at the same time" (365).

As in the case of Temple Drake, once the initial rape was accomplished, the women gave themselves completely over to sexual orgies, wild revelries, and nymphomaniacal excesses, outdoing the men in their delirium, perversions, and debaucheries. At every occasion, Aureliano and Amaranta made love "with gagged ardor" and finally

succumbed to the delirium of lovers who were making up for lost time. It was a mad passion, unhinging . . . which kept them in a state of perpetual excitement. Amaranta Úrsula's shrieks, her songs of agony would break out the same at two in the afternoon on the dining-room table as at two in the morning in the pantry. (372)

Although Aureliano was a "ferocious" lover, Amaranta "ruled in that paradise of disaster with her mad genius and her lyrical voracity," demonstrating their "extremes of virtu-

osity" (373). Oblivious of everything but each other, their whole fatal existence centered around sensual pleasures:

They lost their sense of reality, the notion of time, the rhythm of daily habits. They closed the doors and windows again so as not to waste time getting undressed . . . and they would roll around naked in the mud of the courtyard, and one afternoon they almost drowned as they made love in the cistern. . . they destroyed the furniture in the parlor, in their madness they tore to shreds the hammock . . . and they disemboweled the mattresses and emptied them on the floor as they suffocated in storms of cotton. . . . One night they daubed themselves from head to toe with peach jam and licked each other like dogs and made love on the floor of the porch, and they were awakened by a torrent of carnivorous ants who were ready to eat them alive. (372-373)

Although Christmas, like Aureliano Babilonia, had been the initial aggressor, Joanna, like Amaranta Úrsula, soon surpassed her astonished and bewildered mentor in voracity and aggression in her similar attempt to make up for lost time:

She revealed an unexpected and infallible instinct for intrigue For a whole week she forced him to climb into a window to come to her. He would do so and sometimes he would have to seek her about the dark house until he found her, hidden, in closets, in empty rooms, waiting, panting, her eyes in the dark glowing like the eyes of cats. Now and then she appointed trysts beneath certain shrubs about the grounds, where he would find her naked, or with her clothing half torn to ribbons upon her, in the wild throes of nymphomania. (245)

The sexual excesses and perversions of the female characters are indicative of a sick society and of a disjunction in nature. But more fatal still to the process of procreation and regeneration than the dissolution of marriages, the degeneracy of the female, and unbridled fornication are

the incestuous inclinations which seem to plague the members of the damned families. Although the first Amaranta rejected Pietro Crespi and Colonel Márquez with firmness and finality, she allowed herself to indulge "in an inviolable complicity" (139) with her young nephew Aureliano José. Accustomed to bathing and sleeping together from the boy's early childhood, they first began to explore each other's nakedness in the bath. As the years passed and Aureliano Jose neared manhood, he

could not get to sleep at night until he heard the twelve-o'clock waltz on the parlor clock, and the mature maiden whose skin was beginning to grow sad did not have a moment's rest until she felt slip in under her mosquito netting that sleepwalker whom she had raised, not thinking that he would be a palliative for her solitude. Later they not only slept together, naked, exchanging exhausting caresses, but they would also chase each other into the corners of the house and shut themselves up in the bedrooms at any hour of the day in a permanent state of unrelieved excitement. (139)

In a moment of lucidity Amaranta realized the madness of what they were doing "and she cut it off with one stroke" (139). Aureliano ran off to war with his father, only to return a full man and determined to marry his aunt Amaranta after hearing a tale of a man who married his aunt. Once again the aunt and nephew toyed with their incestuous desires: as he again slipped in under the netting of her bed, "she could not repress her cold sweat and the chattering of her teeth when she realized that he was completely naked Starting with that night the dull, inconsequential battles began again and would go on until dawn" (144).

He was deaf to her warnings that she had done everything for him but nurse him as a child and that "any children will be born with the tail of a pig" (148). But after he went to the town brothel, she was finally able to reject him definitely.

Years later, the family curse of incestuous attractions again surfaces as in "the most desperate act of [Amaranta's] old age when she would bathe the small José Arcadio [her great-great-nephew] three years before he was sent to the seminary and caress him not as a grandmother would have done with a grandchild, but as a woman would have done with a man, as it was said that the French matrons did" (258). Like Aureliano José on the battle fields, José Arcadio would be pursued by thoughts of Amaranta throughout his life and at his death. Memories of "the caresses of Amaranta in the bath and the pleasure of being powdered between the legs with a silk puff would release him from the terror" of his nightmares (340).

Many of José Arcadio's nightmares were the result of his fear of women. Impotence, misogyny, and homosexuality are additional indications of the debilitated life force and the perversions that contribute to the eventual demise of family lines in both García Márquez's and Faulkner's fiction. One of the most ironic episodes in One Hundred Years of Solitude is the plan to prepare José Arcadio the younger for a pontifical future. The family that had produced the arch-liberal (and therefore anti-clerical) Colonel

Aureliano Buendía had now produced a future priest and possibly a pope. Úrsula dedicates her old age to his preparation for the church:

No one would be better able than she to shape the virtuous man who would restore the prestige of the family, a man who would never have heard talk of war, fighting cocks, bad woman, or wild undertakings, four calamities that, according to what Úrsula thought, had determined the downfall of their line. "This one will be a priest," she promised solemnly. And if God gives me life he'll be Pope someday." (181)

But when José Arcadio returned many years later, not from the seminary as all had supposed, but from "the misery and sordidness" of his garret (339), hoping to inherit the "fabulous" family fortune, he returned the most decadent member the family ever produced, wearing "worn, exotic clothing [first a taffeta suit, then tight pants like a dance instructor's, silk embroidered shirt, tassled house slippers, dragon robe] false perfumes, and cheap jewelry" (338). He created a "decadent paradise" of velvet curtains, canopied bed, wines and liqueurs, endless baths in the perfumed, tiled pool and wild revelries with the boys he picked up on the streets,* some of whom shaved him, gave him massages with hot towels, cut and polished his nails, perfumed him, soaped him from head to toe in the pool, dried, powdered, and dressed him and eventually drowned and robbed him. In her effort to shape the "virtuous man who would restore the pres-

* Although Gregory Rabassa chose to translate "niños" as "children," it also means "boys;" evidence makes it highly probable that there were only males in the group.

tige of the family," Úrsula ironically created a perverted, useless creature who was "prepared to be frightened at anything he met in life" (340).

Incest and homosexuality are the extreme versions of the narcissistic and inward turning tendencies of members of the doomed families in Faulkner's and García Márquez's fiction. They are two of the primary causes of the failure of regeneration. McMurray says that the Buendías' "tendency to turn inward on themselves rather than outward toward others," which explains their estrangement from the community, "is further illustrated by the recurring threat of incest that haunts each generation."¹⁷ José Arcadio Buendía and Úrsula's incestuous marriage was directly responsible for the death of Prudencio Aguilar and hence the curse on the family and the flight to the new land. She had been warned that their issue would be born with a pig's tail. The incestuous seed is passed on to the offspring. When José Arcadio is initiated into sex by Pilar Ternera, the face he imagines in the dark is Ursula's, his mother's. Although Rebeca turned out to be only the foster sister of her husband José Arcadio, she may indeed have been a distant cousin of his, and so their marriage too is cursed. When Arcadio demands sex from Pilar, not realizing she is his mother, the wise prostitute provides a substitute for his bed and his passion. Although she produced two Buendía children, she has no Buendía blood and is not cursed by the fatal narcissism.

After a century of observing the repeated incestuous adventures of the various generations of Buendías, Pilar knew "that the history of the family was a machine with unavoidable repetitions, a turning wheel that would have gone on spinning* into eternity were it not for the progressive and irremediable wearing of the axle" (364).

The final wearing down of that axle occurs with the incestuous mating of Aureliano Babilonia and his aunt Amaranta Úrsula. Although they are not sure of their exact kinship, they are fairly certain it exists and fear it might be as close as half-brother and sister. Unaware of the pig's tail curse, they are the ones who finally "engendered the mythological animal that was to bring the line to an end" (383). Added to the taboo of incest in this case is the sin of adultery since Amaranta Úrsula brought back with her from her years of schooling in Brussels a husband. García Márquez, in an interview published in Playboy Magazine,¹⁸ misjudges the character of Amaranta Úrsula, calling her a reincarnation of Úrsula, without her complexes and prejudices: "emancipated now, with the experience of the world, with modern ideas."¹⁹ He attributes her failure to the atmosphere of the conservative triumph. True, she brings back with her from Europe a sense of style and dress, but her sexual liberation had its precedents in Macondo. More important, however, is the fact

*"Spilling" in the English translation is a typographical error.

her failure and her sin had little to do with the restrictive and suppressive atmosphere of conservatism in Macondo: it was the same family sin passed down from generation to generation--the irresistible turning inward, the narcissism, the inability or refusal to break free from the family, and from the house in which she grew up, and from Macondo. She was determined to live and die in Macondo, even if it cost her a husband, and she "admitted as a design of fate the impossibility of living without Aureliano" (374). And so, as Pilar had foreseen, the family was again the victim of the "unavoidable repetitions" which were slowly but inevitably wearing away the axle. When the ants eat alive their baby with the fated pig's tail, the doom is fulfilled, and the Buendía line comes to its predicted end.

The house in One Hundred Years of Solitude, like those in Faulkner's novels, also serves as a barometer of the family's physical, spiritual, and financial well-being. The original house, when Macondo was still a tropical paradise unpolluted by the outside world, was a simple hut with a palm roof, probably very much like the house the Sutpens lived in on the mountain side. As contact was made with progress and the family prospered financially, Ursula undertook an enlargement of the house. The expansion was motivated by the same fatal clustering drive which finally damned the line--the turning inward of the family, the narcissistic desire to be sufficient unto itself: Úrsula wanted adequate

space so that the family could live together even after members married and had their own children. She too had a dynastic drive. Like Sutpen, she dragged "from the bowels of the earth . . . not only the largest house in the town, but the most hospitable and cool house that had ever existed in the region" (60). The magnificent monument to pride boasted formal parlor, a huge dining room to feed twelve, nine bedrooms, courtyard, flower-bedecked porch, rose garden, double kitchen, huge granary, bath houses, large stable, barns, and an aviary. Much like Sutpen had done, "Úrsula fixed the position of light and heat and distributed space without the least sense of its limitations" (60). The house was furnished with costly Viennese furniture, Bohemian crystal, a table service from the Indies Company, tablecloths from Holland, "and a rich variety of lamps and candlesticks, hangings and drapes"---and the famous pianola. (64) A great dance inaugurated the house.

As the fate of the family fluctuated, so the house was opened up, closed down, rejuvenated, neglected, papered with money inside and out. At the height of the banana fever, it was full of foreigners from all over the world; at the depth of Fernanda's desolate reign, it was closed and locked to all outsiders and even to some family members. Just as Sutpen's house seemed to take a sentience from him, so the fate of the Buendía house vascillated with Úrsula, and when she died, "the house plunged into a crisis of senility"

(331). The walls became covered with moss, weeds "broke through the cement of the porch, breaking it like glass," flowers grew in the cracks, spiders built webs everywhere, lizards invaded the bedrooms, and the red ants undermined the foundation, destroyed the flowers, and "penetrated into the heart of the house" (331). Not the broom, insecticides, nor the lye could halt them. First Santa Sofía de la Piedad, then José Arcadio, and finally Amaranta Úrsula were defeated in their efforts to stave off the destruction. For a brief time it appeared that Amaranta Ursula had restored the "atmosphere of youth and festivity that had existed during the days of the pianola" (347) as she undertook a major restoration of the house and "took charge of a crew of carpenters, locksmiths, and masons, who filled in the cracks in the floor, put doors and windows back on their hinges, repaired the furniture, and white-washed the walls inside and out" (347). However, when she finally succumbed to the family curse with Aureliano Babilonia, "in the bewilderment of passion" she abandoned all efforts to stay the destruction as the ants devastated the garden, sated "their prehistoric hunger with the beams of the house," and flowed "like torrents of living lava" (372) over the house. Repeating the same Buendía curse of solitude, Amaranta Úrsula and Aureliano Babilonia closed up the house again against outsiders so that they would be undisturbed in their sexual debaucheries in their "paradise of disaster" (373), and they severed all

threads that joined them with the world. The jungle broke through into the abandoned rooms. They marked off their small area with trenches of quicklime against "the tenacious assault of destruction" (377). Reminiscent of the degradation of the once-mighty Sutpen who was reduced to running a small country store and drinking from a jug with his white-trash friend Wash Jones, Amaranta Úrsula tried to establish a hand-made costume jewelry business and finally she and Aureliano Babilonia ended their days "living like cannibals" (277).

As the curse neared completion, the cyclonic winds "tore the doors and windows off their hinges, pulled off the roof of the east wing, and uprooted the foundations" (383) and Macondo became a "fearful whirlwind of dust and rubble being spun about by the wrath of the biblical hurricane" (383). The house, which was the symbol of the family's ascent and descent, perished as the Buendía line was irradiated from human memory.

One Hundred Years of Solitude ends with the Jehovah-like decree that people who withdraw from human contact, who reject their ties with the world, who hold themselves aloof from humanity, have committed the unpardonable sin. This is the same sin which condemned Faulkner's aristocratic, dynastic families. It is the sin of pride which says that one man is superior to his different or less fortunate brother and that he, therefore, is not bound by the same moral

laws that govern the rest of mankind. It is the quint-essential metaphysical irony: finite man has claimed for himself infinite powers that belong only to the gods. In retribution, these gods subject him to the final human indignity--oblivion.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER III

¹Harley D. Oberhelman, The Presence of Faulkner in the Writings of García Márquez (Lubbock: Texas Tech Graduate Studies, 1980), p. 16.

²Katalin Kulin, Creación Mitica en la Obra de García Márquez (Budapest: Editorial de la Academia de Ciencias de Hungría, 1980), p. 64. Quotations translated by the author.

³Kulin, p. 64.

⁴Kulin, p. 70.

⁵William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Random House, 1936), p. 102. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁶Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude, translated by Gregory Rabassa (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 382-383. All further references to this work appear in the text.

⁷Robert Con Davis, "Critical Introduction: The Family in Literature," Arizona Quarterly, 36, No. 1 (1980), p. 8.

⁸Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: the Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 112.

⁹Brooks, p. 297.

¹⁰Brooks, p. 108.

¹¹Frye, p. 192.

¹²George R. McMurray, Gabriel García Márquez (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), p. 77.

¹³McMurray, p. 81.

¹⁴McMurray, p. 83-84.

¹⁵McMurray, p. 105.

¹⁶Rita Guibert, Seven Voices, translated by Frances Partridge (New York: Alfred a Knopf, 1973), p. 314.

¹⁷McMurray, p. 69.

¹⁸"Playboy Interview: Gabriel García Márquez," Playboy Magazine, February, 1983.

¹⁹"Playboy Interview," p. 76.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Civil War in the American South and the Civil Wars and foreign exploitation in Colombia created a chasm which separated the "then" from the "now" in the fiction of William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. A cataclysmic disjunction in the temporal continuity cleaved the post-Civil War period from the past and set it adrift, oarless and rudderless in an unorientable present. Although the present has its roots directly in the past, it is a past which was appreciably different from today. Social, economic, and moral upheaval marked a radical change in the eras. While García Márquez and Faulkner are not writing strictly historical novels, history is more than a backdrop for their fiction; it is the ubiquitous environment in which their characters act out their tales. It impinges upon their every act and is intricately interwoven with the development of plot.

Distanced by time from the actual cataclysm, García Márquez and Faulkner are able to view those events before, during, and after the Civil Wars with some objectivity. This detached overview has allowed them to develop an "ironic consciousness" through which they re-evaluate the commonly

held myths surrounding that epoch.

D. C. Muecke and Alan Wilde assert that the most characteristic quality of twentieth century literature is this ironic consciousness which, while not all-inclusive, is all-encompassing when it is being used by those writers who have arrived at it. Biographers have pinpointed the events and periods in the lives of these two novelists which mark the emergence of the full-blown ironic consciousness. For both writers, it was the point at which they apprehended the disjunction in history, and therefore the fragmentation of the historical perspective and the resultant meaningless universe. For both writers the disjunction occurred when they returned to the places where they had grown up after intervals of absence. It was a verification of the familiar dictum that one cannot really go home again. This is a common sentiment which Raymond Williams has meticulously documented in The Country and the City. They began to see those people, those places, and the familiar lore they had grown up with and had carried with them on their sojourns with different eyes. Howe recognizes this phenomenon in Faulkner: "The material is seen from the position which in times of social decay is most cuseful to a writer: that simultaneous involvement with and estrangement from the homeland which makes possible both a tragic and an ironic response."¹ Coincidentally, a close affinity exists between the historical, social, and economic circumstances of Faulkner's Mississippi and García Márquez's

coastal Colombia. Many critics, including Luis Harss, Armando Duran, Katalin Kulin, Vargas Llosa, and García Márquez himself, have noted those similarities. Garcia Marquez and Faulkner, in an attempt to slay the demons of that past which haunted them, as Vargas Llosa termed it in García Márquez: Historia de un Deicidio (The Story of a God-Slayer), recast that lore through the lense of the ironic consciousness.

The transitional generation, born too late for one world and too soon for the next, suffered the most disorienting trauma as a result of this temporal fragmentation. García Márquez and Faulkner portray these in-between characters as fated, tragic, doomed. They are forever looking backward toward a lost opulence, toward heroic days of galloping warriors, toward a unified and coherent world that is gone forever. In order to free the present from the moral and emotional paralysis it is under because of its backward looking compulsion, it is necessary to slay symbolically that past, to disenchant it, to strip it of its aura of heroism and glamor, to demythologize it. However, the irony they employ for this purpose is fraught with ambivalence the basis of which is a love/hate treatment of the subject matter. Although the "heroes" of those days were brave, accomplished daring feats, were idealistic, conquered the wilderness, were self-made men of giant stature, there was also the inevitable mixture of egoism, megalomania, brutality, obses-

sive drives, and plain foolish bravado. In ironic paradoxes the authors ridicule, satirize, parody, and re-evaluate the war heroes and the founding fathers, all with the purpose of letting the Now be now, of slaying the dragon of mythology which has a strangle hold on the present.

The unresolvable paradox of absolute irony of this dilemma is that by slaying that past, the descendents also slay themselves. The freedom they earn is the freedom to be impotent: they are a doomed generation. They may sever themselves from the bonds of illusion, tradition, idealism, but they end up hollow men, alienated, the playthings of the fates, submissive to their dooms, ineffectual, withdrawn. They are soulless individuals who feel estranged from all society, past and present. In the novels discussed, the authors never fully resolve this paradox which signals the absolute ironist.

The sometimes mediate and sometimes disjunctive irony employed in debunking the myth of the heroic past is marked by ambivalence, ambiguity, and a juvenalian satire, but the purely disjunctive irony used to debunk the myth of a brave new future is characterized by gloom, fatality, and a tragic sense. In shattering the lapserian myths of past and future, the authors project an entropic vision which sees the world as fragmented, as winding down, as extenuating its life force, as eventually reverting to chaos. Typically, the family lines fail to regenerate themselves and therefore come to an end,

their houses are destroyed, and their memory fades into legend or is completely obliterated.

The lesson of the modernists, that life is full of double contradictory realities, multiple interpretations, and that order and sense are impossible in an irrational world, is pristinely born out by Absalom, Absalom! In this novel, there is no simple "truth:" Muecke says that irony in the twentieth century is designed "to leave open the question of what the literal meaning might signify: there is a perpetual deferment of significance" (31). Everything is relative to place, time, and point of view. Incongruities are inherent in existence, and man's defeat in his fight against this basic reality is fated. The problems of interpretation created by the multiple narrators of the Sutpen story, each with his own particular body of "facts," interpretations, points of view, additions, subtractions, distortions, and surmises, amount to a subversion of meaning. Some events are passed down through as many as six or seven story tellers, each distanced from the events by various intervals of time.* And finally, even the unnamed narrator,** an ambiguous, indistinct story teller and commentator who at times

* In some cases the information passes from Sutpen, who is remembering his much earlier life, to Colonel Compson, who passes it on to Mr. Compson, who tells Quentin, who relates it to Shreve, who re-tells it to Quentin. In addition to this, the narrator comments on the information.

** Cleanth Brooks, in "What We Know about Thomas Sutpen

seems to speak for the author, approaching omniscience, and at other times is as assumptive as any of the character-narrators, conditions his reports with "perhaps," "maybe," "probably," "must have"--qualifying Quentin's and Shreve's "playing" with the assertion that their surmises are probably as true as any of the "facts" reported by others. Susan Resneck Parr believes that by this stratagem Faulkner is saying "that truth may be unrelated to fact, with the most genuine and compelling truth ultimately being the truth of the perceiver's preconception."⁴ She quotes Shreve's statement "You cannot know yet whether what you see is what you are looking at or what you are believing" (Absalom, p. 314) and the narrator's comment that paradox and inconsistency are not necessarily anathema to the truth, as further distinctions between fact and truth. She believes that Faulkner is thus asserting the primacy of personal perception over mere fact. However, it seems clearer that Faulkner is belaboring the point that "fact" and "truth" do not exist as absolutes, but that each person has his own part of the truth. Since the unknown narrator is not always omniscient, his "probably" and "perhaps" are no more than surmises, only slightly more

and His Children,"² an otherwise impressive cataloging of the authorities for events, completely overlooks the presence of this narrator, often attributing his contributions to character narrators in the novel. The addition of this narrator changes Brooks' interpretation of some essential events. Although Susan Resneck Parr³ recognizes this narrator, she does not discuss what information he "confirms," his degree of omniscience, nor the extent to which his confirmation is reliable.

reliable than the conjectures of all the other characters.

This privileging of perception over fact leads us back to the absolute irony encountered in Gail Hightower's rejection of "fact" for "imaginagion." Indeed, many of Faulkner's characters have no difficulty in accepting and affirming whatever it pleases them to believe--or whatever they are able to reject--even though that may conflict with what they themselves know is the truth. The recognition in this novel of a paradoxical truth in the nature of things is a foreshadowing of the absolute irony which reaches full elaboration in Absalom, Absalom! That two versions, both right and both wrong, both cancelling out and validating each other, can exist side by side in an unresolved tension attests to the mature development of the ironic consciousness in these works. While the "either...or" paradox in Light in August is never resolved, the acceptance of it, almost the celebration of it, in Absalom, Absalom! signals the approach of postmodernism where the fragmentation becomes quandary and the recognition becomes acquiescence in a "not only...but also" assent.

Even though Faulkner, as the author of Absalom, Absalom!, seems to have arrived at a recognition of the incongruities and the incomprehensible nature of life, and perhaps as the intrusive narrator he approaches the postmodernists' acceptance of these facts, and acquiesces to the contingency and quandary, the characters themselves are possessed by a frenzy to make sense of it all, to reduce it to comprehension, to

gain control by finding the pattern which underlies the whole. Shreve, Quentin, Mr. Compson, and Rosa Coldfield, as well as Thomas Sutpen himself, are victims of the modernist dilemma--they are compelled to try to understand a world that defies comprehension. The failure of this impossible quest has dire results, especially in Quentin's case.

Wilde tells us that the primary distinction between modernist literature and postmodernist literature is that the latter, "with its more radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency, and even absurdity, abandons the quest for paradise altogether--the world in all its disorder is simply (or not so simply) accepted" (10). Man has arrived at some degree of peace and accommodation with life. Furthermore, "ambiguity and paradox give way to quandary, to a low-keyed engagement with a world of perplexities and uncertainties" and a settling for "'the smaller pleasures of life'" (10). By virtue of his magic realism, which Ronald Christ has defined as "a simple, realistic style disclosing fantastic subjects"⁵ thus making the ordinary seem extraordinary and the extraordinary seem ordinary, García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude has been classified among postmodernist literature. Like Úrsula who "began to make mistakes, trying to see with her eyes the things that intuition allowed her to see with greater clarity" (235), the reader must not attempt the mundane and reductive task of ascertaining the truth. Everything is true, and nothing is true; García Márquez has

cautioned his literalist readers that life cannot be reduced to the price of tomatoes. On the other hand, we are reminded at the end that the book we have been reading is a manuscript which will self-destruct at the end of the novel--life itself is a fabrication, a dream.

John Barth, in "The Literature of Replenishment," believes "a worthy program for postmodern fiction . . . is the synthesis or transcension of these antitheses" between the premodernists and the modernists, between realism and ir-realism.⁶ He offers One Hundred Years of Solitude as the most salient example of such literature, noting the "synthesis of straight-forwardness and artifice, realism and magic and myth, political passion and nonpolitical artistry, characterization and caricature, humor and terror."⁷ The battle cry of "all power to the imagination" has effectively blurred and even obliterated the lines between fact and fantasy. However, whether this blending and mediating device alone is enough to qualify the novel as postmodern is not immediately clear. García Márquez has commented that all things are permitted to the writer, as long as he makes them believable. "Believable" here is the key word. Within the framework of the novel, these fantastic occurrences are credible. The "magic realism" in the novel is magic only to the reader--to the characters it is everyday reality. The shower of flowers is accepted by the characters with the same matter-of-factness as the birth of a child. The almost five years' deluge, the

ascension of Remedios the Beauty, the remarkable fertility of the animals, the yellow butterflies that follow Mauricio Babilonia, while perhaps causing some consternation, are within the realm of natural possibilities in the world of Macondo. The characters are completely credulous--the alazon (that is, the victim of the irony) is the reader. García Márquez has repeatedly asserted that every incident in his story is rooted in reality. He affirmed in an interview with Armando Durán that daily life in Latin America is truly fantastic: "The only thing I know without any doubt is that reality is not limited to the price of tomatoes. Daily life, especially in Latin America, undertakes the task of proving this."⁸

D. P. Gallagher, in Modern Latin American Literature, seconds the observation that "Colombian history is nearly as fantastic as anything that occurs in Cien años de soledad."⁹ He asserts that "One's distinctions between fantasy and reality . . . depend a great deal on one's cultural assumptions. And in an isolated community, such distinctions are likely to be perceived from a particularly ex-centric perspective, should one wish, arbitrarily perhaps, to take modern Western civilization as a centre of reference."¹⁰ To read the story requires a certain amount of suspension of disbelief, and once that is accomplished, we find ourselves in a never-never land of flying carpets reincarnations, ghosts, levitation, and many other supernatural occurrences, a land, that is, where the fantastic is an indistinguishable part of the

reality. What we do not find, however, are characters who have abandoned the quest for wholeness and the lost paradise, who have learned to tolerate the anxiety, who have come to terms with the contingency and quandary. We have people who are driven and obsessed, who are frustrated at their inability to resolve the dilemma of inner and outer worlds, who exert heroic efforts to recuperate a lost harmony, who are finally defeated, frustrated, and, above all, estranged. The wild sex orgies, gluttonous feasts, and debaucheries can hardly be called quotidian pleasures and a low-keyed engagement with life. And all of these characters pay dearly for the self-indulgence of their appetites.

Much like Faulkner, García Márquez seems to have recognized and accepted the uncertainty, the chaos, the relativism, even the randomness and quandary--that is, these authors seem to have "suspended" their search for neat little packages of logic, wholeness, and harmony--but their characters never abandon their search for the anironic vision. The writers know its attainment is impossible, but the characters are compelled to search for it nevertheless, even to their own destruction. This is essentially the modernist dilemma. Sutpen, Bon, Henry, Colonel Aureliano, José Arcadio Buendía, Amaranta, José Arcadio Segundo, Fernanda never acquiesce to the quandary, never celebrate the chaos, never settle for the smaller pleasures of life which the postmodernist characters finally achieve. Far from "tolerating the anxiety,"

they are trapped by the obsessive drive, eventually leading to their own madness and destruction, to find the rational, logical, "tactical error" which prevented them from achieving the harmony and coherence of the anironic vision.

There are, however, two characters who are possible exceptions to this general observation: Úrsula in One Hundred Years of Solitude and Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury. These two characters do come to terms with the quandary, with the irrationality and the contingency, the on-coming chaos. They achieve an engagement with life and derive pleasures from the ordinary, day to day living. When everything goes awry in the Compson household, the family degenerates, and all withdraw into their alienation, Dilsey picks up the pieces, bakes the birthday cake, sets the time straight, accepts the humanity of Bengy, and carries on. Likewise, Úrsula keeps her sanity and perspective in a world gone crazy and reverting to chaos. She accepts the calamities when they come, and perseveres.

Cleanth Brooks says that Dilsey has been able to remain "close to a concrete world of values so that she is less perverted by abstraction and more honest . . . in recognizing what is essential and basic."¹¹ He goes on to say that she has not fallen victim to the false pride, false idealism, but has maintained a "more seasoned discipline in human relationships."¹² Úrsula, the only character in One Hundred Years of Solitude not cursed by solitude because she has a

power like Dilsey's which allows her to love, has also achieved this low-keyed engagement with life and derives simple pleasures from rearing the children, repairing the house, keeping the family together. Both of these characters acquiesce to the quandary but declare that life is still worth living and striving for, because it is all we have. Their affirmation of life offers the tentative and provisional "anironic enclaves of value in the face of--but not in place of--a meaningless universe" (Wilde, p. 148). In these two instances, Willaim Faulkner's and Gabriel García Márquez's irony becomes generative. The final entropic picture, however, is of man destroying himself through his obsessive defiance of his fate, the typical modernist view.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER IV

¹Irving Howe, William Faulkner (New York: Random House, 1951), pp.37-38.

²Cleanth Brooks, pp.429-436.

³Susan Resneck Parr, "The Fourteenth Image of the Blackbird: Another Look at Truth in Absalom, Absalom!," Arizona Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Summer 1979), pp. 154-164.

⁴Susan Resneck Parr, p. 163.

⁵Ronald Christ, ed., Supplement on Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, Center for Inter-American Relations, 1970 Review, p. 150. Originally published in Commonweal, March 6, 1970.

⁶John Barth, "Literature of Replenishment: Post-modernist Fiction," Atlantic Monthly, Jan., 1980, p. 70.

⁷John Barth, p. 71.

⁸Armando Durán, "Conversations With Gabriel García Márquez," Supplement on Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, Center for Inter-American Relations, 1970 Review, p. 115.

⁹D. P. Gallagher, Modern Latin American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 149.

¹⁰D. P. Gallagher, p. 148.

¹¹Cleanth Brooks, p. 344.

¹²Cleanth Brooks, p. 344.

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