RECONSIDERATION OF MORAL ORDER AND DISORDER IN FAULKNER'S WORKS

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I

In the thesis for the degree of Master of Arts, I have attempted to discuss a part of William Faulkner's works in terms of moral order and disorder. I would like to discuss here again order and disorder in Faulkner's works from a moral point of view. In the present essay the more detailed comparison between *Soldiers' Pay* (1926) and *Sartoris* (1929) will be attempted, since their comparison makes more intimate the nature of the two antinomic factors i.e. moral order and disorder.

The valuation of *Soldiers' Pay* has generally been so low as to have regarded it as one of the most immature works, and there is no denying that it is immature. As we know from his biography and what he himself tells us, *Soldiers' Pay* was published under kind assistance and encouragement by Sherwood Anderson who had been staying in New Orleans, when Faulkner visited him there. He talked at one time about how he began *Soldiers' Pay* and the attitude of his writing it makes the immaturity of his first novel quite natural. The following is his words.

> During these New Orleans days and weeks, I gradually became aware that here was a man who would be in seclusion all forenoon—writing. Then in the afternoon, he would appear and we would walk about the city, talking. Then in the evening we would meet again, with a bottle now, and now he would really talk; the world in minuscule would be there in whatever shadowy courtyard where glass and bottle clinked and the palms hissed like dry sand in whatever moving air. Then tomorrow forenoon he would be secluded again—working; Whereupon I said to myself, 'If this is what it takes to be a novelist, then that's the life for me.' So I began a novel *Soldiers' Pay*.[1]

What Faulkner says here is somewhat an exaggeration, but, judging from what he told us in the *Paris Review* interview, most of these words will convey his thoughts then. The attitude which is observable here is Faulkner's jealousy. He is very much jealous of Anderson's life. The life of an artist appears to Faulkner to be quite an easy one. Notice that here are no such words as "hard-working", "struggling", "making efforts" and that "writing" makes a sharp contrast to "talking". "Writing and talking" appears to Faulkner to be all of Anderson's life then. Therefore the product from such an attitude will naturally be an immature one. There is little reflection of the author's deep involvements or his inner

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[1] James B. Merriwether, ed., *William Faulkner, Essays, Speeches and Public Letters* (Random House, 1966) pp. 9–10.

conflicts.

Albeit there is immaturity of much degree in this work, it is of some importance when we attempt to make its thematic study in comparison with *Sartoris*. These two novels have one factor in common; soldiers' (or a soldier's) return. The latter half of the twentieth century has seen not a few publications of the so-called "lost generation novels" i.e. the novels treating of the "lost generation." What is characteristic of the "lost generation novels" is that they deal with the problems of the soldiers in or after the War, that is, returning or returned soldiers. Those soldiers' concerns are described in some way or other in contrast with those who receive them. It is no exception in the case of *Soldiers' Pay*. In *Sartoris*, however, it is different, for it has some factors other than "soldiers' (a soldier's) return."

The story of *Soldiers' Pay* is, as suggested above, about a soldiers' return and their reception at their home town. Here is Dohald Mahon, one of the returning sodiers in the book, and he is a leading hero. He is in a train, as a demobilized soldier, on his way back from the front, seriously wounded in the War. From some pieces of conversation in the train, we can feel a kind of abyss unbridgeable between the participants and the non-participants in the war. One of the ladies in the train says, commenting Donald and others, "I'm certainly glad my boy wasn't old enough to be a soldier."[2] This may be her unintentional utterance, but, behind her words there larks the non-participants' want to keep their normalcy and drive the soldiers out of it. For this lady, her present state in which her boy isn't old enough to be a soldier is the state of normalcy, and she tries to keep it against its invasion. Such attitude as this makes discrepancy and discontinuity of communication between the participants and the non-participants in the war. When Donald returned home at last, he was welcomed with seeming sympathy and tenderness, but between him and those surrounding him lies a deep chasm. Even Cecily Saunders, being his fiancée, has given up his love for her new friend, George Farr, and his father's words after the death of Donald typifies what the non-participants in the war will think about demobilized soldiers. He says to Joe Gilligan, another demobilized soldier, "Well, Joe, things are back to normal again. People come and go, but Emmy and I seem to be like the biblical rocks."[3] This abysmal discontinuity between Donald and his receivers covers the whole of *Soldiers' Pay*.

In appearance, however, the Saunders family treat Donald with kindness. Cecily Saunders, one of them, who has been in probable affairs with George Farr, is embarrassed at the sight of Donald. Her way of life then is *carpe diem*, and, as Mrs. Vickery suggests, Cecily "exists only in and for the present moment."[4] She does not live in the past. In the *Paris Review* interview, Faulkner said, "There is no such thing as *was*—only *is*. If *was* existed, there would be no grief or sorrow." This is what he talked about the Yoknapatawpha Saga, and will not apply to such an immature work as *Soldiers' Pay*. Yet the reading of *Soldiers' Pay* proves the truth of this saying, for most characters in it live only in and for the present. Even Donald's existence is cut off from the past. Only his scar in the face shows his past. Then the question is how Donald can respond to the attitudes with which he is received in, or banned out of, the community of the non-participants in the war. Here is a reservation; he is a seriously wounded hero. Even when Donald will rage at the coldness in other people,

[2] *Soldiers' Pay* (Signet Book) p. 15.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 219.

[4] Olga W. Vickery, *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation* (Louisiana State University Press, 1959) p. 5.

his wound prevents his active response, instead he is being passively waiting for the time of his end. This is a crucial difference from the hero in *Sartoris*. Young Bayard Sartoris, hero of *Sartoris*, is also a demobilized soldier, but he is no wounded hero. Therefore if he wills, he can respond very actively towards his surroundings. The hero of *Soldiers' Pay* being a wounded hero will be Faulkner's arbitrary device, not from his particular intention, but this chanced device makes the novel interesting.

If this novel consisted of such characters as Cecily and Donald, its understanding and interpretation would be quite simple. But, what prevents its simple understanding is the presence of Margaret Powers. She is a widow who, unlike those ladies whom Donald met in the train and most of the Saunders family, is very sympathetic with him. She seems to be an arbitrator between Donald and his receivers. If the author's description of her role as an arbitrator could be better done, the work would enjoy more highly estimation. But her weak characterization causes the work to be unequal to it. She at last gets married to Donald who is on the brink of death. There is no explaining clearly what is the motive of her marriage. One critic suggests (in effect) that it is the expiation of her first marriage and it is a meaningless, inhuman relationship, but the meaninglessness of her marriage is not so convincing to the reader. In her description, the author's concern with her is not to be felt so profoundly, instead there is somewhat comic detachment of the author. His concern seems to be more with the atmosphere in which the actions take place than with the characters themselves, and the deepest concern seems to be the phase of moral disorder in a town at a postwar time. There is indeed a lack of unity in *Soldiers' Pay* as Waggoner indicates, and the absence of unity which is to be found in any of his great artistic achievements is only natural, since this novel was written with such an easy attitude as is observable in his words.

The ambiguous presence of Margaret Powers in *Soldiers' Pay* indeed makes it difficult for us to value the author's real concerns and such an ambiguity, though of a different kind, is observable in *Sartoris*, too. In this novel, the hero, Young Bayard Sartoris is set antithetically with the Sartorises and what is significant is the presence of Colonel John Sartoris (Faulkner's greatgrandfather, William Cuthbert Falkner is said to be his model). And as most critics suggest and Faulkner himself says,[5] with this work he discovered that his own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about. This "little postage stamp of native soil" is to be called afterwards as "Yoknapatawpha County". Thus different from Donald Mahon, Young Bayard Sartoris has behind him and the Sartoris family this "Yoknapatawpha County" and various problems in the County.

Sartoris also has a demobilized soldier as its hero like *Soldiers' Pay*. There is a mixture or amalgamation of the two factors i.e. a demobilized soldier and Young Bayard Sartoris vs. the Sartorises and Yoknapatawpha County. In such a case the work tends to be a conglomeration. In *Soldiers' Pay* Faulkner does not seem to be concerned with the Saunders family but in *Sartoris* he is much about the Sartorises. The problem here is the difference in the quality of value between the relationships of Young Bayard with the Sartoris family and that of Donald Mahon with the Saunders family. In the mind of Young Bayard, there is something common with what Donald Mahon has, and Irving Howe justly suggests,

> Bayard's inability to achieve a sustaining relationship with the tradition of his family and native region forms a central theme of the book.[6]

[5] Malcolm Cowley, ed., *Writers at Work* (The Viking Press, 1959) p. 135.
[6] Irving Howe, *William Faukner: A Critical Study* (Vintage Book) p. 31.

Taking it into account that Bayard is a returned soldier, his inability to achieve a sustaining relationship with the tradition of his family and native region is to be ascribed to the hero's direct experience of war and its fresh memory. We can find many of such instances in the so-called "lost generation novels". But, a more important problem *hoc loco* is his relationships with the legend in the Sartoris family. In short, that legend is the past honor of the Sartoris clan as a Southern aristocratic family. The ghost-like yet dominant presence of Colonel John Sartoris is the crown of the family's honor. Young Bayard must face this legend and this legendary figure. His struggle with the legend seems to be the conflict between legend and reality. Then legend becomes one of the most important factors in later Faulkner, and in *Sartoris* it appears as the past transformed. The past, for the author, is of particular significance; it is to him not merely the past in time sequence, but also the past in space i.e. that past which covers Yoknapatawpha County, and more generally, the South. The people in the South will be more or less dependent upon their direct or indirect memories of the past. Its typical instances are Mrs. Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) with her pride and tradition, and the Sartoris family who are living with the memory of the past in their mind. The first World War has often been said to have brought about gaps between the present and the past generations. Those young generation who were engaged in the war felt keenly that such things as old order, honor and dignity were nothing at all. In the scene in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) where the hero's regiment suffers general retreat at Caporetto, he reflects that he feels embarrassed at such words as glory, honor and sacrifice and that they were obscene for him beside concrete words such as the names of villages or roads. Most of the younger generation that have had experience of the war have in common what the hero of *A Farewell to Arms* has felt at the retreat from Caporetto.

Returning home, however, those war heroes found their town still holding to the old things, and most of them feel embarrassed or depressed, as Harold Krebs in "Soldier's Home" does. As they could not be in the community of their town, they formed their own, shutting themselves up in the walled towers of their deafness. The only source of possible hope for this hero is Narcissa Benbow. She somewhat contrasts wish Emmy in *Soldiers' Pay*, who cherishes her one memory that she was once loved by Donald. But, in terms of characterization, that of Narcissa's is better than Emmy's. Narcissa tries to be aware of the present state of things, living as she does among those who reverence the past memories in their minds. She is apparently able to share sympathy with him, but he will not share it with her. She is after all "shut out of the region he (i.e. young Bayard) inhabits by her unreflective faith in life".[7] The passivity in Narcissa disturbs her active responses to the hero. In spite of her wish that he will be at her side, he is not. Young Bayard makes several frantic deeds, in one of which he brings about death of his grandfather (Colonel Bayard Sartoris). His frantic deeds will come partly from the Sartoris legend. The past of the Sartoris family is a mere myth for him. What matters most for him is actuality and, as Mrs. Vickery suggests,

> The crash of the legend and the actual experience of war is responsible, in part at least, for Bayard's frustration.[8]

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[7] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *William Faulkner: From Jefferson to the World* (University of Kentucky Press, 1959) p. 22.

[8] Olga W. Vickery, *op., cit.*, pp. 17–18.

The elements in *Sartoris* which have been discussed are to be regarded as those of moral disorder, but there are also those things which can be deemed the elements of moral order. They are the presence of Miss Jenny and the description of 'the McCallum episode'. In gross, female characters often play an important role in Faulkner's novels. Like Dilsey whom most critics tend to look upon as a woman of virtue, Miss Jenny is a woman of virtue. As Mrs. Vickery defends her role,

> Of all the characters, only Miss Jenny appears able to make an effective compromise between past and present and between illusion and reality.[9]

In this passage 'illusion' can be substituted for 'legend' and the author's concern is very much with her who will be a mediator between Young Bayard and those around him.

'The McCallum episode' reminds us of one scene in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) where Jake Barnes and his party enjoy fishing in a mountain stream on the way to Fiesta at Pamplona. This book consists of many negative scenes where there are elements of moral disorder in them. Among many negative scenes, this fishing scene is striking to the reader and the author himself is very fond of a fishing scene, since a fishing scene is for him a "clean, well-lighted place". This fishing scene looks like an anodyne, for this scene is soon followed by the violent scenes at Pamplona. 'The McCallum episode' is similar in some respects to 'the fishing scene', for after the story at the McCallums', he drives himself towards his death by testing an airplane. After his grandfather's accidental death for which the hero is responsible, he hides himself in the McCallum family. The short stay at the McCallums' is precious for Young Bayard who cannot content with the Sartoris family. He forgets dark actuality in hunting for a while. His sense of forgetting dark actuality is so far from his sense of actuality that it appears to be independent of the whole story. What Hyatt Waggoner suggests in the following sums up the meaning of this episode.

> The McCallum episode draws much of its power from the extended and elaborate symbols of light, warmth, and order in contrast with darkness, cold, and disorder.[10]

II

After the publication of *Sartoris* in 1929, Faulkner produced *The Sound and the Fury* in the same year, and this work has been regarded as the best of Faulkner's works. What makes this novel an artistic success is the complete concentration and fixation of the author's eyes. In *Sartoris* the problems of moral order and disorder was discussed, with the author's point of view divided, while in *The Sound and the Fury* his eyes are fixed upon the problems in Yoknapatawpha County. But, as is observable in what the characters conceive, they do not always see in the same way, but they are divided in their viewpoint. The variety of their views is a great problem when we study this novel.

The most remarkable thing in this novel is disorder of time or the breaking of the time sequences. This novel consists of four sections, Benjy's, Quentin's, Jason's and what we

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 25.

[10] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

may call "an omniscient author's", but the arrangement of these four sections is not chronological. The breaking of order in the arrangement of the sections is relative with the chaotic elements in each section. The consciousness of time is inevitable to us moderns. Regardless of our consciousness of it or no, time passes with constant step. Its constancy sometimes maddens human beings. Time in itself passes with regular order, but its orderliness causes confusions or disorder in us. Because of its orderly lapse, we often feel as if we bore a burden, and feel like trying to rid ourselves of such burden. The burden of time upon human beings is symbolically described as those upon the characters in *The Sound and the Fury*, and the best of the descriptions is done with Quentin in his section.

Quentin is the most obssesed character in the novel, and, his obsession is with what her sister Caddy has done with men, or men with Caddy. In other words, his obsession is with the past memory and it appears as the burden of time. Therefore the theme of time in Quentin's section should be discussed in terms of the past. Quentin tries to get himself under the burden of time by breaking the watch which his father had given him as 'the mausoleum of all hope and desire.' The cover of time is thus broken by his act, and yet time itself is not killed but it still passes on, and Quentin, who tries to evade time, even finds himself listening to it, before he knew why.

> The quarter hour sounded. I stopped and listened to it until the chime ceased.[11]

The quality of Quentin's obsession will be discussed later in terms of the relationships with other characters, and so I would like to go on now to another obsessed hero, Benjamin (Benjy, as he is often called) Compson. Benjy is an idiot, and the author considers an idiot to be an innocent mind. But it raises a question whether there ever is a normality in an idiot's mind, and if there is any, how it will be related with other sections. Being a idiot, he is deprived of sound judgement, and his relations are entirely based upon sensuous impulses. What is characteristic of Benjy's section is that he is an alienated character, and he asks for communication with others through only sensory impulses. The causes of his alienation from others are two fences. One is that which divides the Compson house and the golf field which was once the Compsons' property, and the other is the fence which is between the road and the big house. At the very beginning of the novel, Benjy stands near the fence, watching the golfers playing, when he suddenly hears "caddie!" and remembers his sister Caddy. Hearing that voice, he calls to his mind the past memory in which that of Caddy centers, who once loved him very much. If he could get out of the fence, he would go to the direction wherefrom the voice was heard, crying "Caddy!". But the barrier lying before him disturbs it. And the scene where he sees school girls from school shows more clearly what relationships he had with her.

> I could hear them talking. I went out the door and I couldn't hear them, and I went down to the gate, where the girls passed with their booksachels. They looked at me, walking fast, with their heads turned. I tried to say, but they went on, and I went along the fence, trying to say, and they were running and I came to the corner of the fence and I couldn't go any further, and I held to the fence looking after them and trying to say.[12]

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[11] *The Sound and the Fury* (The Modern Library) p. 100.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

This incident happened one afternoon, and he has another but similar experience again.

> They came on. I opened the gate and they stopped turning. I was trying to say and she screamed and I was trying to say and she screamed and I was trying to say and trying and the bright shapes began to stop and I tried to get up. I tried to get it off of my face, but the bright shapes were going again. They were going up the hill to where it fell away and I tried to cry. But when I breathed in, I couldn't breathe out again to cry, and I tried to keep from falling off the hill and I fell off the hill in to the bright, whirling shapes.[13]

In both of the quoted passages, there is Benjy's "trying". However hard he may try to attain something, he is denied success in attaining it. He tried to say, but tried to say what? What he wanted to say would be "Caddy!", and, in trying to say, he wanted to get communication between himself and Caddy, or to regain the old relationships with her. In the first incident, the schoolgirls he saw were only schoolgirls and he tried to say something to them, but they were horrified into running away. In the second encounter, however, they turned to be the bright shapes which he had seen in Caddy's existence. This time Benjy tried to get those bright shapes that are doubled with Caddy, not only tried to say. "I fell off the hill in to the bright, whirling shapes," tells us that he attacked upon the schoolgirls, but Benjy did not identify those bright shapes with the schoolgirls. He "fell off the hill in to the bright, whirling shapes" only to get Caddy. His deeds cause chaos and disorder around him, but he tries to get order for himself. The presence of Caddy was moral order to Benjy and even in the chaos of which he was the creator, he tries to get back his moral order through the memory of Caddy's love or her past existence. Caddy is expected by other Compson people, above all, by Quentin, to be honor of the family, but she is too passive a character to be up to it. To Benjy, however, her inability to be honor of the family is far beyond his considerations. Her presence is all to him. We find the frequent use of "she smelled like trees" and when he feels like this, there is peace for him and he neither bellows nor moans. When her presence goes out of his sight, his bellowing begins. "She smelled like trees" is not independent of Benjy's mind, but it is intimately related with other expressions such as "bright grass and tress", "bright cold", and "bright, smooth shapes". These "bright something" expressions will be antithetically located against the chaotic or disorderly actions made by Benjy, and the author seems to find or try to find order in the distortion of order. It is significantly suggested in the last of Benjy's section.

> Caddy held me and I could hear us all, and the darkness, and something I could smell. And then I could see the window, where the trees were buzzing. Then the dark began to go in smooth, bright shapes, like it always does, even when Caddy says that I have been asleep.[14]

His section ends with a passage which has "smooth, bright shapes", but, unfortunately enough, he cannot get them at present. They are only remnants in his memory of his childhood when Caddy was with him.

In common with Benjy, Quentin is obsessed by the memory of the past, but the past, which is an obsession to Quentin, is vitally different from what Benjy embraces for it.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Because of his idiocy, Benjy's memory is simple and straightforward, consisting merely of sensory impressions. In opposition to his, Quentin's memory is complexity itself. This difference naturally causes the discrepancy between Quentin's and Benjy's conceptions. The most problematic things in Quentin's section are 'time' and 'memory of the past', and they are indivisible. Indeed 'time' is an important factor in Quentin's section, but it is not time as such. When we think of time, the first to come to our mind will be such as 'regularity' or 'orderliness'. But, in Quentin's section, time element is used as the factor which causes a kind of moral disorder. Time flows regardless of the vicissitudes of our life with order and regularity, yet its orderliness often causes disorder in human life. We human beings have our own wills and we act according to them, but, the orderliness of time often restricts our designs. The orderly time, because of its orderliness, confines us to the limited acts and wedge us into them. We try to rid ourselves of such burden of time, but we cannot easily manage it. From this inability arises a kind of madness or rage of those people who are exceedingly obsessed by time. Quentin is one of them and he is pressed with the burden of time throughout his brief life. How he is conscious of time is observable in the following passages.

> When father gave it to me, he said, Quentin, I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire.[15]

> I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath to conquer it.[16]

It is very paradoxical to give it (watch) to him not that he may remember time, but that he might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all his breath trying to conquer it, and it is a true paradox to us moderns that would conquer time, although we have it always with us. It is now a common knowledge that the conquest of time has been the task for mankind, and that it has been discussed by many philosophers. Quentin wants to conquer time, but its difficulty troubles him.

It is true that Quentin is obsessed by time, but, time, for him, is related with the memory of the past. It is also Faulkner's conception of the past. Though he says there is no such thing as *was*, he has a very profound concern with *was* i.e. the past. His memory of 'lost innocence' or 'lost South' may have reflected itself upon Quentin's mind. In this regard, the relationships between Quentin and Caddy are to be deemed those between actuality and lost innocence of the South. William Van O'Connor says with reference to honeysuckle,

> Honeysuckle, for Quentin, represents the South and it represents Caddy's sex. Her honor and the traditional preoccupation with personal honor merge. Quentin's desire for incest with Caddy suggests social disorder, a family that is narcissistic.[17]

Here the South is in juxtaposition with Caddy's sex, but, at least in my estimation, they are the same from a moral point of view. For, in Quentin's or the author's mind, both the South and Caddy's sex have common grounds of corruption or deterioration. Caddy's sex is

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 95.

[17] William Van O'Connor, *The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner* (University of Minnesota Press, 1954) p. 39.

corrupted through her extraordinarily loose affairs with men and Caddy herself should be, for Quentin, a groundstone which would support the decaying Compson family, and so she could be the focus of order. In Quentin's figure who tries desperately to defend Caddy from degradation, the author seems to seek to find something which will be a qualified sustainer of the degrading South, moreover, of the modern world full of anxieties. The hinge which will bind him to order is honeysuckle, and from such a point of view, Mrs. Vickery's opinion is quite suggestive.

> The heavy, choking fragrance of honeysuckle dramatizes the conflict between his order and the blind forces of nature which constantly threaten to defy it.[18]

It is not to be looked over simply that Quentin's memory of Caddy, which seems to be brought about by honeysuckle, is related with his desire of incestuous love for her. If we think of his desire simply, it will be the result of Quentin's wish to take the place of Caddy's violators. It will be caused by his desire to protect her virginity, which, at the same time, is the honor of the Compson family, but when we take it into consideration that incest is a persion of sex, his incest obsession is not so simple. Incest is a form of violence ; violence of love. Faulkner has described various forms of violence in his works, and they often appear as a fruitless love. From this point of view, how is love in *The Sound and the Fury* to be interpreted ? A clue to it is Van O'Connor's suggestion that this novel is about the loss of innocence, and the author's explanation of how this novel was worked out gives a substance to his suggestion.

> It began with a mental picture. I didn't realize at the time it was symbolical. The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree, where she could see through a window where her grandmother's funeral was taking place and report what was happening to her brothers on the ground below.[19]

"The muddy seat of a little girl's drawers" may symbolize the loss of innocence, and a germ of its loss is to be found in the scene where Compson children are playing near a stream. In appearance, the figures of the children playing there are those of innocence, but, in what they say there we can find to a certain extent the differences of their characters which are to appear clearly afterwards where they are no longer small children. In this respect, they are not innocent in the true sense of the word, for there is not much innocent communication of a genuine kind between them. This loss of innocence remains up to their adolescence and over to their maturity. The loss of innocence takes a form of Caddy's lost virginity for Quentin, and he wants to get back such a kind of innocence through being obsessed by his incestuous love for Caddy.

Embracing Caddy's image, Quentin wanders, accompanied by a shadow. As it has often been suggested by several critics, 'shadow' is a key word in Quentin's section. It is symbolic of his obsessions as well as of his shadowy existence. The title of the novel shows fully the meaning of a 'shadow'. It comes from *Macbeth* V, v and a 'shadow' will be from "life is but a walking shadow, a poor player/That struts and frets upon the stage...". This is a part of Macbeth's monologue at the report of Lady Macbeth's suicidal death. At the very beginning of his monologue, there is "Out, out, brief candle", and, as this "Out, out, brief candle"

[18] Olga W. Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[19] Malcolm Cowley, *Writers at work*, p. 141.

suggests, a 'shadow' will symbolize brevity of human life. In the context of this novel, however, it is not merely the symbol of a brief life of human beings, but also a shadow-like existence of the Compsons, and, in a particular relationship with Quentin's section, 'a walking shadow' is the very existence of Quentin himself. The shadow, from another point of view, indicates the fate of the Compson family, a hollow family standing barely in the decaying South. It is a mirror which reflects the South in decaying process. In other words, the shadow is symbolic of the lost innocence in the Old South and the chaotic actuality in the New South. Quentin is keenly conscious of both time and shadow. These two things do not meet together, but they have one thing in common in his case. Both are the factors of invasion into his mind. That is, both time and shadow try to invade his mind the more, the harder he tries to get rid of them. The intrusion of time into Quentin's mind is to be seen in the following passage.

> He said time is dead as long as it is being clicked off by little wheels; only when the clock stops does time come to life.[20]

And that of shadow, in the following.

> Sometimes I could put myself to sleep saying that over and over until after the honeysuckle get all mixed up in it the whole thing came to symbolize night and unrest I seemed to be lying neither asleep nor awake looking down a long corridor of grey half light where all stable things had become shadowy paradoxical all I had done shadows all I had fell suffered taking visible form antic perverse mocking without relevance inherent themselves with the denial of the significance they should have affirmed thinking I was I was not who was not was not who.[21]

Wandering through the town, Quentin finds himself followed by a strange girl. This scene is the most enigmatic one in Quentin's reaction. She does not answer any question asked of her, and her eyes are secretive, contemplative, and she is friendly. It will be not entirely arbitrary that this strage girl enters in Quentin's section. Her entrance seems to have some symbolical meaning. To think of its meaning naturally draws us to the fact that there always dwells Caddy's image in Quentin's mind. Therefore the simplest but probably the rightest understanding of the appearance of this girl is the reflection of his excessive memories of Caddy, for after this scene his memories and obsessions of Caddy wax more and more, as we find in the following quotations.

> Her knees her face looking at the sky the smell of honeysuckle upon her face and throat[22]

> I dont know too many there was something terrible in me terrible in me Father I have committed Have you ever done that We didnt do that did we do that[23]

Upset in his mind, Quentin is being haunted by an illusion of incest. The chaotic state of his mind gains in degree, as the story comes to the end of this section.

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[20] *The Sound and the Fury*, p. 104.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 188.
[22] *Ibid.*, p. 166.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

> and i you dont believe i am serious and he i think you are too serious to give me any cause for alarm you you wouldnt have felt driven to the expedient of telling me you have committed incest otherwise and i i wasnt lying i wasnt lying and he you wanted to sublimate a piece of natural human folly into a horror and then exorcise it with truth and i it was to isolate her out of the loud world so that it would be as though it had never been.[24]

This passage shows us the struggle between conformity and anti-conformity, or between common sense and anti-common sense. Quentin is against such common simpleness which his father has about incest. To commit incest with Caddy or to have committed it rather, is a very serious problem to Quentin, but his father decides simply that it is a 'natural human folly'. But, Quentin will not accept such a simple interpretation of his father's. Quentin realizes that he could not protect Caddy's sex and his realization of his inability drives him to suicide. Mrs. Vickery gives us a suggestive view of Quentin's characters.

> Quentin can neither accept nor reconcile himself to that change or to the possibility that a further change may make even his despair a thing of the past, and so he chooses as a means of escaping the situations.[25]

And the cause of his ineffectuality and ultimate destruction of himself is the result of the fact that

> his system antecedes his experience and eventually is held in defiance of experience.[26]

Quentin has his own system in his mind and he tries to procrastinate every experience into that system, but every experience cannot be put into the same system. This gap between his ideal and actuality causes him to be 'held in defiance of experience'. His system is very psychological and experience is actual, and he loses his way of life in the paradoxical relations between psychological system and actual experience.

Jason's section presents us with quite a different world from that in Benjy's or Quentin's section. Like the main characters in the previous two sections, Jason is an obsessed mind, too. His obsession is money. His obsession by money is quite relevant with his characterization, for he is described as a man of great rationality. He is indeed rational, in assuming a money-is-all attitude. In his attitude, however, there is a kind of viciousness, and he is often a very villanous person. Both Walter Slatoff and Mrs. Vickery admit Jason as a character, while Waggoner regards him rather as a villain than as a character. Waggoner says,

> Since he is so unsympathetic a character, so near an approach to what it was once customary to call a villain.[27]

Indeed Jason is sometimes villanous, but he will deserve sympathy to some extent, since he is now the only Compson to support the family, with Quentin and Caddy gone. But isn't

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 195.
[25] Olga W. Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[27] Hyatt H. Waggoner, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

it a tragic irony that Jason is a villain full of self-pity, who should be now the center of order in the family? Isn't this another phase of moral decay or moral disorder?

Quentin II is paralleled with a villanous Jason. Quentin II is Caddy's bastard child, and she named her Quentin in memory of her deceased brother Quentin. She is, as suggested by Slatoff, to be viewed as

> a deteriorated version of Caddy and thus a measure of the two cultures, but she, too, seems driven by inner compulsion rather than by a cultural situation.[28]

Quentin is full of characteristics similar to what Caddy has, but those of the former are darker and worse than of the latter. Quentin II is different from Caddy in the fact that Caddy is expected by Quentin to be honor of the family, although she cannot meet his expectation. The evil nature in Quentin II is relevant with Mrs. Compson's "Benjy is a punishment upon me". Both Benjy's idiocy and Quentin II's evilness are punishment upon Mrs. Compson, and they are punishment upon the Compsons. Somebody must take away this punishment, but no one in the Compsons has qualifications to do the task. Even Jason Compson, who is 'the first sane Compson'[29], is not equal to this task because of his pecuniary rationality.

As is observable in the following, Quentin II knows that she is bad, but she declares,

> "I dont care," she says, "I'm bad and I'm going to hell, and I dont care. I'd rather be in hell than anywhere you are."[30]

No man is more wicked than he who knows he is bad but is indifferent to it. Her indifference may be caused by her presence as a loveless child, but this is a bitter criticism by the author of the actualities in the South as it is. This proves itself more clearly if we take it into account that Quentin II is Caddy's child and that Caddy was "doomed and knew it, accepted the doom without either seeking or fleeing it."[31] And Caddy herself is loved by Quentin with, "some concept of Compson honor".[32]

Jason's section begins with "Once a bitch always a bitch" and at the close of his section we find "Like I say once a bitch always a bitch". It is very significant that both the first and the last of Jason's section have the same utterance. It strikes the key note to his section. In the three sections, Benjy's, Quentin's, and Jason's, Faulkner described the phenomena of chaos or moral disorder through the point of view of each character, but he did not think that it was enough. He thought that there should be a certain all-knower, or an omniscient character. Then he continued his pen to the fourth section. This section is often called Dilsey's section, but unlike the previous sections, she is not a point of view character, but someone whose name does not appear narrates. In the narration, however, Dilsey plays an important part and this may be why the last section is called Dilsey's section. Dilsey is an important but a puzzling character in *The Sound and the Fury*. For convenience' sake, I would like to quote some critics. Mrs. Vickery regards Dilsey as "the embodiment of the truth of the heart which is synonymous with morality", and Waggoner says, more passionately,

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[28] Walter J. Slatoff, *Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner* (Cornell University Press, 1960) p. 154.

[29] Cf. Appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*, p. x.

[30] *The Sound and the Fury*, p. 204.

[31] Cf. Appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*, p. x.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. ix.

that she is patient, loyal, loving, strong, and that she preserves the best values of the past and retards the family's race towards destruction. Opposed to these, Slatoff's view is against taking her so favorably.

> The strong emphasis on Dilsey's fortitude, decency, and Christian humility and on her comprehensive view of time, as numerous critics have pointed out, provides a context for the unhappy events, a perspective from which to view them and a way to feel about them. On the other hand, this episode does not so much offer a synthesis or interpretation as a general vantage point and degree of moral affirmation. It does not help us to understand better, to illuminate, the character and motives of Quentin and Caddy.[33]

I would like to agree entirely with Slatoff, for Dilsey, as the author says,

> had been a big woman once but now her skelton rose, draped loosely in unpadded skin that tightened again upon a paunch almost dropsical, as though muscle and tissue had been courage or fortitude which the days or the years had consumed until only the indomitable skelton was left rising like a ruin, or landmark above the somnolent and impervious guts.

Indeed Dilsey is an important figure in the last section, but, notice the contrast of herself in the present with herself in the past and the tense which the author uses in the quotation above. He uses past perfect tense, which signifies that she is not what she used to be. The elements of virtue in Dilsey are her fortitude and patience. With these qualities in herself, she has kept the Compsons, the burden of curse being upon her. The book ends with Benjy bellowing and bellowing, and Jason in a furious rage, full of sound and fury, signifying something. The significance will be that the order may not come to the Compsons.

III

In *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner tried to describe various phenomena of moral disorder and elements of regaining or keeping moral order through the pictures of the Compson' family. At the same time, he got some of the characters to try to find their own moral order with which to support them. Jason, for instance, should maintain the Compson honor, and Quentin tries in vain to find his own moral order in protecting Caddy's sex and virginity. Even Benjy seeks to find his moral order in his "smooth, bright shapes". In *As I Lay Dying* (1930), the author draws a picture of decay viewed from another angle. He chooses in this novel the journey of a poor-white family as his principal subject. The poor-white family in this work is the Bundrens, and their journey is a kind of funeral journey, for they go to Jefferson to bury the body of Addie (their mother) there. The introduction of journey in the novel is a Faulkner's successful device, for, by the use of journey the author observes various phases and so it brings forth the widening of the view over Yoknapatawpha County. But, more important thing is to make out various situations by getting the characters to move and to describe a variety of their responses to the situations under which they are to be

[33] Walter J. Slatoff, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

located. To quote Warren Beck, the Bundrens are 'men in motion'.

Although they are men in motion, the motion in each character, apart from actual motion of their journey, is not the same. Here we can find again discontinuity of communication which I have already discussed. In their journey the Bundrens seem to be in quest for something, and, that something may be the order to unite the Bundrens, but their unity seems unable to be attained, as we can find the evidence in the final scene. There Anse Bundren, shortly after Addie's burial, appears with "a kind of duck-shaped woman all dressed up, with them kind of hard-looking popeyes",[34] and Cash ends his narrative with

> "It's Cash and Jewel and Vardaman and Dewey Dell," pa says, kind of hangdog and proud, too, with his teeth and all, even he wouldn't look at us. "Meet Mrs. Bundren" he says.[35]

What is suggested in the quotation is very meaningful, for here is a hint that second Mrs. Bundren's relation is only with Anse and not with the children and the deceased Addie is now completely out of Anse's mind. Moreover, this final scene suggests to us that the unity of the Bundrens is yet to be achieved. The characters in *As I Lay Dying* are, to parody words in *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) and the end of *The Sound and the Fury*, each in his or her own tower of self interest. Darl, for instance, is obsessed by motherlessness and finally confined to a lunatic asylum, and Dewey Dell is involved in her own matter of concern. The characters are like those in *The Sound and the Fury*. Darl is in some measure like Quentin, Jewel is like Jason, Vardaman is like Benjy, and Dewey Dell is somewhat like Caddy. But what makes them different is that they are more grotesque. Their grotesqueness may be the result of the author's intention where he will describe phenomena of decay more sufficiently than in *The Sound and the Fury*.

In *As I Lay Dying* the author uses a new method. It is the introduction of what we may call 'objective observer'. Objectivity itself is to be found in the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*, but the narrative there is not one of the characters but a kind of omniscient author. In the next work, however, the author makes some of the characters observe the Bundrens objectively. And what makes them different from the narrator in the last section of *The Sound and the Fury* is that they are no omniscient observers. They see the Bundrens from biased points of view. Cora Tull, Armstid, for example, are some of such objective observers, and even the Bundren children are to be regarded as so, when each of them plays his role of a narrator. But, they are not only narrators of the story about the Bundrens, but also critics of them as well. The following is one of its instances.

> Her face is wasted away so that the bones draw just under the skin in white lines. Her eyes are like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets of iron candle-sticks. But the eternal and the everlasting salvation and grace is not upon her.[36]

This is Cora's description of Addie who is dying. She does not merely describe her features, but even observes the fate of the Bundrens. Since she is a pseudo-Christian, even her observation of the fate of the Bundrens does not deserve notice. Only that she is not merely a

[34] *As I Lay Dying* (The Modern Library), p. 532.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 532.
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

narrator is noteworthy. Tull's observation of Anse is more than a mere description.

> He looks follies in the eye now, dignified, his face tragic and composed.[37]
>
> Anse stands inside the door, dignified, composed.[38]

These observations are obviously an overestimation, but such overestimation of Anse's featuring makes the words of Tull peculiarly striking to the readers they help making the grotesqueness of his characterization more conspicuous. At any rate, the dignified and composed Anse strikes a sharp contrast to his figure at the close of the book where he appears with second Mrs. Bundren, a duck-shaped woman. There is no dignity, or composedness but all grotesqueness in himself who stands in company with the woman. Therefore Tull's observation may be valued as the author's ironical view of Anse. I have suggested that the objective observers in this novel are also the critics of the Bundrens, and it should be considered that in their criticism there is to some extent explanation of how discontinuity of communication in the Bundrens will appear during journey for Jefferson.

Addie is the very person that is most responsible for the journey, and she should be the center of the characters. However, of all the characters she narrates least times, for she narrates only once. Since Addie is the focus of other narrators, the author's view will be that the better description of Addie may be attained through the eyes of other characters. Although Addie plays the narrating part only once, what she talks there is of so much significance. She says,

> I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time. And when I would have to look at them day after day, each with his or her secret and selfish thought, and blood and strange to mine, and think that this seemed to be the only way I could get ready to stay dead, I would hate my father for having ever planted me.[39]

The selfish thought and the strangeness of blood to her is the way Addie thinks about her pupils, but, at the same time, this is the way she feels about Anse and her children. Indeed the story of the Bundrens is to be looked upon the story about how they are selfish in their thoughts, and how their blood is strange to each other in spite of their apparent kinship.

What deserves notice in the quoted passage above is a very paradoxical view of 'life'. In "reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time," we find juxtaposition of 'life' and 'death'. But this is no mere juxtaposition. This is an explanation to the condition under which she has been and she is now, for she is actually dying in life, and her life has been a lifeless existence. To stay dead for a long time does not mean an instant, momentary death, but it means that one's life without reality is nothing but or little more than death. "To stay dead for a long time" is not only an explanation to the situation of Addie in the novel, but also that to the Bundrens. For, though they are actually alive, they are 'dead', since their life is without reality.

What we find in the Addie's narrative is a sense of isolation in herself. It is caused by her own nature of being unable to be active towards others. She expects them to 'feel' for her. In her school teacher days, Addie got irritated because she was unable to share sympathy

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 399.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 400.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 401.

with her pupils and she expected them to commit faults. For then she could communicate herself with them by lashing them. It was attained not through love but through hatred. Her sense of isolation occupies her throughout her life, which Cora explains thus.

> She lived a lonely with her pride, trying to make folks believe different, hiding the fact that they just suffered her...[40]

Cora's words suggest that Addie's sense of isolation is caused by external elements, but by her own pride. Her pride will be different from Mrs. Compson's, for her pride is closely related with the legend of the Compsons. But what is common with them is that they are within their compounds, clinging to their own pride as their sanctuary.

The thing of much importance in Addie's narrative is the contrast of 'words' and 'deeds'.

> (a) That was when I learned that words are no good that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at.[41]
>
> (b) Then I believed that I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a world like within a paper screen and struck me into the back through it[42]
>
> (c) ...hearing the dark voicelessness in which the words are the deeds, and the other words that are not deeds, that are just gaps in people's lacks, coming down like the cries of the geese out of the wild darkness in the old terrible nights, fumbling at the deeds like orphans to whom are pointed out in a crowd too faces and told, that is your father, your mother.[43]

These three passages show how deeply Addie is concerned with 'words' and 'deeds'. Quotation (a) shows the meaning of 'words'. They signify 'no good' for Addie. In her case, the words are those which she has actually heard from her father and her husband, but in a larger sense, words may be regarded as a symbol of appearance or ideal, existence without reality. "Hidden within a work" in quotation (b) means falseness of words. The falseness hides 'deeds' i.e. reality behind it like within a paper screen and it cheats us into apparent reality. The removal of such a screen is to be done by marriage of words and deeds, and the time when it should be achieved finds its explanation in quotation (c). It is in dark voicelessness that words can be deeds. In other words, it is when words will cease to exist that deeds can be achieved. In voicelessness, the words spoken in noisiness merge into deeds. To apply this to the story, it is the moment of her burial that the deeds are achieved, that she can return to the earth of Jefferson which is her flesh and blood. What Addie had wanted to get was the deeds, and Anse was 'the words' for her. Cora says that Addie was lonely with pride, but she was herself responsible for her own loneliness, for she did not go for 'deeds' of her own accord, but wait for others' deeds for her. Addie wanted to break out of loneliness, but, instead of breaking out of it for herself, she expected Anse to enter actively into her interests. In spite of her expectation, however, all that Anse showed for her was 'words'. Neither of them could share sympathy. Of the quality of Addie's narrative

[40] *Ibid.*, p. 353.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 463.
[42] *Ibid.*, p. 464.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 466.

Mrs. Vickery suggests in terms of their relationships.

> Awareness of the difference between empty and significant ritual, framed in terms of the word and the act, dominates Addie's dying thoughts....Addie and Anse themselves represent the two polar opposites of action and words which must be meshed if their relationship is to be meaningful. The words by itself leads to a paralysis of the ability to feel and act; the act by itself results in excessive and uncontrolled responses to various stimuli both internal and external.[44]

She strikes the right note in her opinion of the question in issue.

In a sense, Addie is a critic of the other Bundrens, but her status as a character is not definite. She is, as Slatoff suggests, "in many ways a very hazy and fitful sort of illustration". She is still central of the characters for whom the journey proceeds. I have discussed partially the relationships of Addie and Anse, but, to make the meaning of her sense of isolation clearer, her relationships with her children should be discussed in due details. In terms of the 'deeds' for Addie, the most important relationship is that of her with Cash. Cash is the eldest of her children and he has a special task of making Addie's casket. The part he plays in the novel is, in spite of his grotesqueness as a character, to sustain moral order. The grotesqueries of the Bundrens are somewhat similar to those in the novels of Erskine Caldwell. For example, Anse has a kind of likeness to Jeeter or Ty Ty Walden. Unlike Caldwell who describes a variety of grotesqueries, Faulkner does not emphasize such grotesqueries only, but he is deeply concerned with what lies behind them. The grotesqueness in them is the cause of the various unbalanced deeds, and of the Bundrens Cash is the least grotesque character. Many critics tend to regard him as a positive character. Irving Howe says,

> he alone among the brothers is neither delusional nor obsessed; and he is one of the few Faulkner characters who are not merely revealed also grow as a consequence of their experience.[45]

But Slatoff makes some reservations.

> His careful workmanship, his courageous behavior crossing the river, his stoical acceptance of his broken leg, his comparatively compassionate attitude toward Darl, and his philosophising toward the end of the book all suggest that we view him not only as the sanest and most decent member of the family but as a kind of moral as ethical center, in somewhat the same fashion as we regard Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury*. On the other hand, there is a rigidity and absurdity about much of his thought and behavior that make it very difficult to see him as such a center.[46]

Indeed Cash is worthy of being looked upon as a positive character, in that he is most conscious of the deeds which Addie expects them to fulfil. Such precious elements as endurance, courage, and honor are most conspicuously culminated in the deeds of Cash. In these respects, he would be a moral and an ethical center, but for the ambiguities in his characterization.

As we know from reading this novel, the journey stands with much importance. The

[44] Olga W. Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
[45] Irving Howe, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–188.
[46] Walter J. Slatoff, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

meaning of journey in the novel, according to what Richard Chase suggests, "the quest which involves the search for identity". Chase finds search for identity in it, and in most cases journey is accompanied by 'quest' or 'search'. The journey of the Bundrens, is very limited and local, but what the author tries to find in their journey should be understood in general context. In this respect, their journey is not a dull, monotonous but a fairly positive journey and Cash plays the important part in it. His position as a character is not passive. It is noteworthy that this novel ends with Cash's narrative, for we can find in him Faulkner's commitment to such an extent that we can normally regard him as the ethical center, with certain reservations, to sustain moral order. Cash is involved in the journey, but, towards the end of it, he goes more and more out of the position of a character until at the end he sees Anse who "wouldn't look at them". We see here Cash not as a doer but as a seer. The deed of burying Addie is to be eventually done, but are the "deeds" for Addie achieved? The author does not give any answer either through Cash's or through other characters' eyes.

Although Cash is the central agent of the deeds, he is not the center of narratives. So far as frequency of narrative is concerned, Darl's is most frequent. In his narrative, he refers to his relations with the other characters excepting the parents, and the most important reference is done to Cash, by which he will throw a side light upon Cash's characters.

> In the lantern-light, his face is *calm*, musing ; slowly he strokes his hands on his raincoat thighs in a gesture deliberate, final and *composed*.[47]
>
> He sits erect, poised, looking quietly and steadily and quickly this way and that, his face *calm*, a little pale, alert. Cash's face is also gravely *composed*.[48]
>
> His face is *calm*, downsloped, calculant, concerned[49]
>
> (italics are mine)

The calmness, composedness in these quoted passages which Darl finds in Cash are also observable in Dewey Dell's narrative.

> Cash's head turned slowly as we approach, his pale, empty, sad, composed and questioning face...[50]

These are examples enough to understand that composedness is most characteristic of Cash's nature, and when we think about the fact that other characters such as Anse and Jewel lack this quality, the composedness which other characters find in Cash makes him worthy as a central character. Darl as a seer is, as Waggoner suggests, "detached, able to record objectively, very different from Jewel, Cash and Vardaman," and "a Tiresias who foresuffers all", but the author's commitment to him is not much, leaving us with some ambiguity. This ambiguity, different from that in Cash, seems to be a derivative from the fact that Darl encompasses all possible modes of response and awareness, but cannot make any integration out of them. In Darl's last narrative, he tells about himself. He uses 'Darl' and 'I' with due parallel. When he says Darl, he sees his other self or Darl (real self) speaks to Darl

[47] *As I Lay Dying*, p. 395.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 439.
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 444.
[50] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

(his other self). He cries "Yesyesyesyesyesyes". This is the answer to "Is that why you are laughing?", but more than that, this is an ironical answer to his search to find his identity. This may be the answer to the journey, too. The result of the journey is apparantly 'yes', for the deed of Addie's burial was done and Anse got second Mrs. Bundren, and yet it seems 'no' for the author. This will be the probable reason why this novel ends with such an enfeebled figure of Anse introducing a duck-shaped woman. In other words, the author's decription in *As I Lay Dying* is not of the world of order, but of the world of disorder or decay. He goes on his journey to search for moral order onto the next works.

IV

What Faulkner sought to find in *As I Lay Dying* was a solution for the problems of identity of human existence through the descriptions of moral disorder and order of the Bundrens. There the problems of identity of human existence take the form of a sense of isolation in Addie. But, as is observable in the last scene of the book, the author seems unable to have solved the problems. Addie is, to quote Richard Chase, the isolated self and Faulkner takes such an isolated self again in *Light in August* (1932). The essential qualities of this novel appear in the following.

> There could hardly be a more characteristically American novel than *Light in August*—with its realism; its loose structure; its few characters who though vividly presented are never quite convincingly related to each other, its tendency to become a romance by taking a legendary quality and by alternating violent melodramatic actions with comic interludes and scenes of pastoral idyl; its concern with the isolated self; its awareness of contradictions, racial or other; its symbolism of light and dark.[51]

This quotation has some suggestive issues in discussing *Light in August*, and the issue of "the isolated self" is the most crucial one. This novel obviously has three different circles; Lena Grove's, Joe Christmas' and Gail Hightower's. These circles are not entirely independent but partly interdependent. The question is, of these three circles which stands at the center. At first Lena attracts us, for the book begins with the appearance of Lena on the stage, but soon the story turns to Joe Christmas. As the story proceeds, it becomes clear that the author's concern is, to a considerable degree, with the life of Joe Christmas. The part which Lena Grove plays in the novel is a kind of subplot, the quality of which is to be discussed later.

Many pieces of description are given to Joe Christmas, and the most remarkable of them is what Byron Bunch tells about him.

> He did not look like a professional hobo, in his professional rags, but there was something definitely rootless about him, as though no town nor city was his, no walls, no square of earth his home. And that he carried his knowledge with him always as though it were a banner, with a quality ruthless, lonely, and almost proud.[52]

[51] Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Anchor Book) p. 218.
[52] *Light in August* (The Modern Library) p. 27.

The problems of isolation are often discussed concerning Joe Christmas. Edwin T. Bowden, for example, says in his *The Dungeon of the Heart*,

> all characters are lost people, isolated from life and from the world, terrible in their lonely lives as well as in their deaths. Only Byron Bunch and Lena Grove are capable of falling in love, of being at peace with themselves and with the world and they provide a welcome interlude of normality and loss of loneliness.[53]

Bowden's book, though minor, says truth about *Light in August*. The problem of isolation is indeed one of the basic themes of this novel, and I would like to discuss this problem in Joe's case with respect to his characterization.

His rootlessness is shown in the fact that he is neither a negro nor a white. The mixture of blood prevents him from participating in either side. His incapability of participation is caused not by external forces or obstructions but by the fact that

> he is caught between the desire for isolation and an instinctive sense of participation, and the dilemma can be resolved only after a bitter struggle within himself and only by firmly committing himself to one side or other.[54]

He is caught in a dilemma of choice between participation and isolation and what makes Joe Christmas more of an isolato than of an ordinary figure is that he has no family. This is a tragedy. The Compsons and the Bundrens are socially isolated, but they have their own family. Not having his family, he is denied communication, and his life is to be looked upon as the quest which involves search for communication of himself with others. For such purpose, however, his incapability to find his identity either with negroes or with whites makes a barrier. Being a foundling, he is always in a suspended state, which is the cause of his tragedy. Although he is adopted in a certain religious family, it is no real family for Joe Christmas. In spite of adoption in the family, he is still a family-less man.

Besides Joe Christmas, many characters in the novel are isolated, among whom Gail Hightower presents a striking contrast to Joe Christmas. The difference between Gail Hightower and Joe Christmas consists in the fact, to quote Bowden again, he "enjoys his state of isolation and carefully cultivates it". He confines himself in 'hight tower' and he keeps it as his sanctuary. He is a preacher, but what he preaches is not God but the memory of his grandfather who was often victorious and at last killed, in the Civil War. In his preaching the past memory, we can observe a kind of conventional pattern of a person who clings to the past or the legend, like most of the Sartorises in *Sartoris* or Mrs. Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*. Gail Hightower who is within the legend and Joe Christmas who is out of it naturally form two groups. Gail Hightower lives in the community where the inhabitants are more or less the holders of the legend and so he enjoys isolation in such community. But, Faulkner does not allow him enjoyment of isolation until the end, but gets him to be out of it to set up a favorable evidence for Joe Christmas who is being chased as criminal at large, and to be present at Lena's childbirth. He moves from isolation to participation, but his participation does not last long. Joe's being with Gail Hightower is only momentary. He gets in touch with such men and women as Doc Hines, Mr. and Mrs. McEachern, Bobbie, Miss Burden, etc. In the relationships with Joe, they are in a diametrical opposition to

[53] Edwin T. Bowden, *The Dungeon of the Heart* (MacMillan Paperbacks) p. 126.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Lena Grove.

William Van O'Connor suggests that Calvinist spirit is the central problem in *Light in August* and, though not the central, it is an important problem, for rigidity in Doc Hines or in McEachern is that which originates in Calvinist spirit. But, too much emphasis on Calvinist spirit, or more generally, religious elements in the novel may lose the point. What matters more in the discussion of this work is that such characters as Doc Hines, McEachern and Miss Burden have their own code, and they try to tame Joe Christmas into their advantage. Doc Hines' severity towards Joe partly results from the fact that he is a part negro, but it partly arises from his desire to hold him down under his force. McEachern's forcible teaching of catechism to Joe is also an example of such taming. McEachern's rigidity or coldness is symbolically described in the following passage.

> Hair and beard both had a hard, vigorous quality, unsilvered, as though the pigmentation were impervious to the forty or more years which the face revealed. The eyes were lightcolored, cold. He wore a suit of hard, decent black. On his knee rested a black hat held in a blunt clean hand shut, even on the soft felt of the hat, into a fist. Across his vest ran a heavy silver watch chain.[55]

Joe rejects not only McEachern himself but also those elements of rigidity or coldness. In a larger sense, his rejection will be a protest against McEachern's efforts to confine Joe into the frame of moral discipline. Lena Grove and Byron Bunch are free from the frame of this kind, and it may safely be said that Joe's relationships with McEachern are wedges to him. It is true that Joe rejects rigidity from a male side, but, strange enough, he does not welcome warmth from a female side. For example, he rejects Mrs. McEachern being kind to him. She gives a dish to him to whom meal is forbidden as a punishment, but he does not receive her favor or sympathy. Later he refuses the requests of Joanna Burden. Thus he refuses warmths of women folks. The author explains,

> It was the woman ; that soft kindness which he believed himself doomed to be forever victim of and which he hated worse than he did the hard and and ruthless justice of men. 'She is trying to make me cry.' he thought...[56]

Joe regards kindnesses from a female side as doom to be a victim, but 'She is trying to make me cry' is another instance of shackle for him, which he bluntly refuses on the grounds that the adoption of such kindnesses means his defeat. If he is made to cry, it is his defeat; he is to be conquered by Mrs. McEachern. He cannot bear it and such a thought of his drives him to the rejection. Mrs. McEachern's kindnesses are disinterested, but Joe cannot accept them. Then in the case of relationship between him and Miss Burden, it is natural that he should refuse the requests from her, for she wants to take advantage of his negro blood. She is a lover of Negroes and becomes the talk of the town. Around her there "still lingers something dark and outlandish and threatful." Joe corrupts her, but he does not want to conquer her. His intercourses with Bobbie or Miss Burden, sexually or no, are the acts by a free man or at least a man who wishes to be free from fetters. But Joe feels himself "like a man being sucked down into a bottomless morass", and often he must leave her, until at last he commits her murder.

[55] *Light in August*, p. 124.
[56] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

His rejection of both rigidity (coldness, darkness) and kindness (warmth, light) symbolically shows his dilemma of choice between isolation and participation. Joe seeks to find freedom, not in the ideal but in the true sense of the word. In other words, he wants to form a world of his own, but he fails in the trial. When he wanted freedom from Mr. and Mrs. McEachern into an affair with Bobbie Allen he was disturbed by him. Whereupon he struck him on the head with a chair. The relation with Miss Burden which was to be a man-to-woman relation was used as a tool for her advantage. He tried to escape from becoming her tool, until at last he murdered her. But his murder makes himself fettered the more. The journey of Joe Christmas is the process in which his wants to be a free man were collapsed one after another.

In contrast with these personal relations with people as external forces, Lena Grove is indeed a person free from fetters. There are very noteworthy descriptions at her entrance in the novel. Her eyes at the wagon is "all-embracing, swift, innocent and profound"[57] and she looks up at a man pleasantly and quietly. Her face is "candid, friendly and alert"[58] and,

> her face is calm as stone, but not hard. Its doggedness has a soft quality, and an inwardlighted quality of tranquil and calm unreason and detachment.[59]

Such words as 'innocent', 'candid' and 'tranquil' are the key words in her descriptions. Her calmness is like that of Nancy Mannigoe. (Cf. "Her face is calm, unchanged." *Requiem for a Nun* Signet, p. 328) The way the author uses these words for her description is not arbitrary. The comparison of this way with that which he does for Joe Christmas will prove it. The remarkable thing in his descriptions is the use of such dark expressions as 'expressionless', 'walked stiffly past her rigid-faced', 'pride', 'despair' and 'vanity'. Although his face was 'quite calm, calm, peaceful', his calmness is cold-calmness, while Lena's is with friendliness. Joe's calmness is that of enduring oppressions upon him by external forces.

In the beginning of the novel when Lena enters as a character, there is a wagon moving,

> slowly, steadily, as if here within the sunny loveliness of the enormous land it were outside of, beyond all time and all-haste.[60]

The movement of the wagon sums up Lena's movements in the novel, and in "wagon has not stopped; time has not stopped",[61] we can find the image of time in Lena's movement. The essential qualities of this 'time' is different from those of 'time' in Joe's movement. He thinks about time on his way, running away from his pursuitors. His thoughts then finds explanation like this.

> When he thinks about time, it seems to him now for thirty years he has lived inside an ordinary parade of named and numbered days like fence pickets, and that one night he went to sleep and when he waked up he was outside of them. For a time after he fled on that Friday night he tried to keep up with the days, after the old habit.[62]

[57] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 10.
[59] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[62] *Ibid.*, pp. 289-290.

Joe being now an utterly rootless man, time and days are the only things to be his moral order. He must find his refuge in 'time' which often oppresses him, but 'time', the spaces of light and dark, had long since lost orderliness. Time, for Joe Christmas, is not eternal time or time of orderliness, but a kind of external force upon him, and yet he must depend upon is as a refuge.

In comparison with descriptions given to Joe Christmas, the significance of Lena's circular movement is self-evident. It is an antithesis to Joe's connection with time, and it signifies Lena's timelessness. It also means that Lena is free from external forces to which Joe is fettered. Early in the discussion of *Light in August* in the present essay, I have pointed out that Lena's story is to be read as a subplot. I would like to discuss here the part which the subplot plays in the novel. For one thing, it shows a light side of this novel, with which Joe's dark nature is contrasted. A danger may occur if we simply classify the characters into "light" and "dark" because of the complexities the book has, but Lena Grove may undoubtedly be regarded as a light and Joe Christmas as a dark character. The problem concerning subplot in Lena's circles is "knowing oneself". Faulkner himself says about Joe's fate in the class conference at Virginia University.

> He didn't know what he was, and so he was nothing. He deliberately evicted himself from the human race because he didn't know which he was. That was his tragedy, that to me was tragic central idea of the story—that he didn't know what he was and there was no way possible in life for him to find out, which to me is the most tragic condition a man could find himself in—not to know what he is and to know that he will never know.[63]

It will not be right to believe wholly what an author talks about his work, because he often seems to do justice to his work in it. But this explanation by the author is fairly true of the novel. Joe's rootlessness is the result of his not knowing his identity, while Lena is rooted because she knows herself well. The fact that in the descriptions given to her there are some images of eternal earth is evidence enough of her rootedness.

The contrast of Joe and Lena seems to be more than a mere contrast. The position Lena takes in the novel is that of a positive character, or of a character who seems to be equal to sustain moral order. The elements of order are often juxtaposed with those of disorder and, in this respect, to use Lena as a positive character in opposition to Joe Christmas follows this pattern. But even we read through from *Sartoris* to *As I Lay Dying*, we find that the elements of order observable in the qualities of some characters do not always follow the same track. In *Sartoris* they are to be seen in Miss Jenny, but she is after all a holder of the legend, who talks admiringly about victorious Jeb Stuart. The only positive attitude she can assume is to be more sympathetic than others with Young Bayard Sartoris. Dilsey is more positive than Miss Jenny, but she has some weaknesses as we have seen in the description of her features, and she barely endures the burden upon the Compsons with admirable patience. Cash is closest to Addie's requests for the 'deeds', but he is not more positive as a character than Dilsey as a character with respect to fortitude and endurance. Lena is above Miss Jenny, Dilsey and Cash.

This novel has three stories and the important thing is that they have certain reciprocity.

[63] F. L. Gwynn & J. L. Blotner, ed., *Faulkner in the University* (Univ. of Virginia Press, 1959) p. 72.

This is ascribable to the reciprocity in the characters.

> He is born into a myth created for him by others and is at once subject and object, observer and observed, creator and created. Thus Joe Christmas as well as the Reverend Hightower and Joanna Burden are both self-crucified by others, both villain and victim.[64]

This suggestion by Mrs. Vickery clarifies that the characters have a certain kind of duality. She finds it in Joe, Hightower, and Miss Burden, but Lena Grove may also be included. In her circle, the most important relation is that of Lena and Byron Bunch. His life is changed by Lena. Before he saw Lena, he had been leading a regular life, which is symbolized by his big silver watch, but he became a man without time from the moment when he saw her. In this regard, Lena is a villain (not in the bad sense of the word). Lena, too, is changed by Byron Bunch, for she changes object of her love from Lucas Birches to Byron Bunch, until after childbirth she goes with him to Tennessee. Joe's reciprocity is more evident. It starts already from the moment when he overheard dietitian and interne and his relations with various people are action-reaction relations. Of them Hightower shows the least reactions; he does not easily break through his own tower of safety. It is when he tries to defend Joe chased by Percy Grimm, and when he is present at Lena's childbirth that he attains the strongest reaction. Then he gets "Now", and to use Faulkner's term, "Was" became "Is".

> The wheels turn on. It spins now, fading, without progress, as though turned by that final flood which rushed out of him, leaving his body empty and lighter than a forgotten leaf and even more trivial than flotsam lying spent and still upon the window ledge which has no solidity beneath hands that have no weight; so that it can be now Now.[65]

But when "Now" or "Is" is achieved, he is at the utmost limit of his life. This makes itself a serious tragic irony. What is significant in the duality of the characters is that no unity can be produced from the reciprocity of villain-victim, or action-reaction relationship. They are indeed changed by actions from others, but we are left with a certain ambiguity. This ambiguity is different from what we find in Dilsey. Hightower feels Now only at the moment of his death, and Joe gets freedom only after his death and castration. Excepting Lena's, their achivements are done at the very end of their life, so that even if they do attain Now or freedom, they will not be substantial for them. The only exception is Lena Grove. She is limitless. She seems to begin her new life with Byron Bunch. But she well continue similar pattern of journey. Richard Chase finds linear movement in Joe Christmas and circular movement in Lena Grove. The linear movement is cut on the way, but the circular movement is eternal and everlasting. Since the circularity of her movement makes her follow the same circle, she cannot be regarded as the perfect sustainer of moral order. But she is still one of the central characters, and it is undeniable that she strikes the strongest note in a series of leading actors and actresses in Faulkner's novels from *Soldiers' Pay* to *Lighht in August*.

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[64] Olga W. Vickery, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
[65] *Light in August*, p. 431.

V

The present essay started from the discussion of *Sartoris* in comparison with *Soldiers' Pay*, and the comparison between these two works was made on the grounds that they had "soldiers' return" in common, and the differences in its qualities waxed importance. In the discussion it has been suggested that there is observable a kind of discrepancy of the feelings between the prewar and the postwar generations, and such discrepancy will appear in the later works in different forms. This discrepancy of the feelings is, in some measure, related to the problems of human isolation. *Sartoris* being a rudimentary work where the author's concern is not yet concentrated upon one central thing, these problems of human isolation are not so clearly described. They are to appear conspicuously in such major works as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Light in August* and other Yoknapatawpha Saga. In *Sartoris* Young Bayard Sartoris is troubled with the choice between legend and actuality. The choice of legend would have led him actually to the participation in the Sartoris family. It means to negative his isolation, but, in actuality, he rejected the legend. He could not choose actuality, either. He is a man like Joe Christmas who is kept in suspense, and can enjoy neither isolation nor participation. In the next highly abstruse novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, many of the characters appear with some abnormality or other. Their abnormality will be indicative of the lack of moral order. Its typical illustrations are to be found, for example, in Benjy's idiotic innocence, Quentin's obsession by time or shadow, or Jason's pertinacious hoarding of money. But this novel does not consist entirely of men of abnormality. There is a certain sustainer of moral order. It is Dilsey, but the description of her figure needs some reservations as we have already seen. Her devoted faithfulness to the Compsons indeed deserves "sustainer of order", and her positive status is worth while to be an ethical center, but her skelton of a figure weakens it. She is, after all, a woman who barely endures the burden upon the Compsons and it should be in a relative sense that she is a sustainer of moral order. The Compson children who are the leading characters in the novel passively wait for the coming of order, instead of seeking it actively for themselves. In such attitudes of the characters, the problems of isolation are latent. The problems of isolation become more evident in *As I Lay Dying* or *Light In August* as well as in other works. In *As I Lay Dying* the problems of isolation comes to the very front. The central character of this novel is Addie Bundren and her narrative appears only once. So what is told in her narrative attracts our notice. In a word, it is about isolation and participation which, in her narrative, are replaced by "words" and "deeds". She cannot find "deeds" in what she gets from others. She wants to get them by the aid of others, instead of seeking to find them for herself. Who will give them for her is the story of this novel. Darl apparently gives answer, by saying "yes", but the end of the novel will deny his "yes".

Light in August is a highly advanced work in respect of the intertwining of moral order and disorder. Joe Christmas and Lena Grove are remarkably contrasted and the central problem in this novel is also that of isolation and participation. It is a problem chiefly for Joe Christmas and participation for him is not attainable while he is alive. It is only when he dies that he gets it. This tragic irony follows Addie's case, for whom the "deeds" she wants cannot be achieved in her life. What is remarkable in this novel is that the author describes the dark side of human life not so emphatically but with a certain hope for its

negative, by introducing such characters as Lena Grove and Byron Bunch. The introduction of such a remarkably light character may anticipate the direction of authorial developments in later works.

In his works written in the second half of the nineteen-thirties up to *The Reivers* (1962), the noticeable fact is that the author's concerns seem to have turned from the particular to the general. Its culmination is the concept of "wilderness". The problem of "wilderness" appears most clearly in *Go Down, Moses* (1942), especially in "The Bear". This is a kind of an initiation story of the hero's into "wilderness" and its meaning. Through his initiation into the life in the wilderness, Faulkner seems to have summed up in the theme of "wilderness" what he has attemped to say in the works previous to *Go Down, Moses*. In a sense, *Go Down, Moses* connects the previous works with the works after *Go Down, Moses* including what is called the "Snopes trilogy", but the detailed discussions of this work will be attempted in another essay.