

Faulkner and War

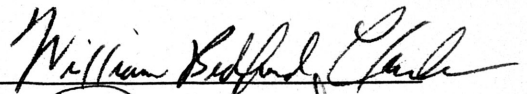
Enduring and Prevailing Against the Ideologies of Fear

Dean Wang

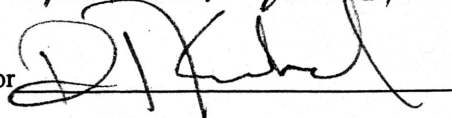
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*To my parents, Fred Fa-Chung and Cecilia Jy-Yinin Wang,
who created me to be free*

and

*Dr. William Bedford Clark, friend and mentor,
who allowed me the freedom to create;*

and also an old friend:

Stacy Lieder, who, like Lena Grove, came "a fur piece" in proofreading this thesis.

A Note on the Text

William Faulkner was a conscious stylist. Many of his texts contain nonstandard usage of dialect, punctuation, and grammar. Noel Polk, who is currently updating the Faulkner canon to more accurately reflect the author's final intentions, writes:

Faulkner was in some ways an extremely consistent writer. He never included apostrophes in the words "dont," "wont," "aint," "cant," or "oclock," and very seldom used an apostrophe to indicate a dropped letter at the beginning or end of a spoken dialect word, such as "bout" or "runnin." He never used a period after the titles "Mr," "Mrs," or "Dr". The original editors generally accepted these practices..., but the compositors often made mistakes and many apostrophes slipped in. A more serious problem was the editors' treatment of punctuation. The editors of *Pylon*, for example, made all of Faulkner's dashes into ellipses. They also frequently inserted commas into monologues where Faulkner was deliberately attempting to give the effect of spoken language. They occasionally broke up long sentences, and combined short sentences. Faulkner's compound words were also often changed—for example "oftenbrushed" and "flatvoiced" might become "often brushed" and "flat voiced"—and some words he left separate were joined—"before hand" might become "beforehand," "down stream" become "downstream."

Faulkner's attitude toward such intervention is neither consistent nor entirely clear, though one might say, to put it oversimply, that he seems to have appreciated it when editors did something he liked and resented it when they did something he did not like. Almost from the beginning of his career, Faulkner was a supremely confident craftsman; he was at the same time also aware of the complexity of the demands his work would make not merely on reader but also on publisher and editor and proofreader.¹

The quotations which appear in the text of this thesis attempt to remain as faithful to the works cited as humanly possible.

Introduction

War was an everpresent phenomenon in the life of William Faulkner. Having lived through and having witnessed the catastrophic events of both this century's World Wars, and enveloped by the constant shadow and palpable ghosts of the Civil War from the previous century, it was almost inevitable that the phenomenon of war, and especially its consequences, would occupy a place in both the public and private writings of William Faulkner, the novelist, and Bill Faulkner, the man. For a consummate craftsman who constantly stressed the "writer's Trinity" of observation, experience, and imagination, the traditions of Southern legend he learned growing up, his service in the Royal Air Force during the First World War, and his attempts to serve in the Second would invariably have been absorbed, processed, and then given expression in his art. In addition, as an elder statesman of American letters, and also a concerned private citizen who felt that he could lift his voice above the cacophony of the masses, Faulkner increasingly expressed his views on war in a more direct manner publicly, without art as an intermediate. A clear progression is evident in his reaction to war, an evolution present also in his literature; a movement from what one critic characterizes as a change from "outrage to affirmation."² Furthermore, within this maturation lies a natural clarification of ideas, as Faulkner not only sought to come to terms with his outrage, but also to define those terms. The chief idea, the "enabling assumption," if you will, of both Faulkner's work and his beliefs, is that of the freedom of the individual. For Faulkner, the evil of ideology, whether political, social, or religious, with its insistence on obedient adherence to a codified system of behaviour and thought, is its denial of that freedom, of the individual complexity which peoples the world, of the mysterious and incalculable essence of humanity. For if humanity, not as a number or code or entry on a ledger sheet, were so easily divined, quantified, and assigned, the eternal quest for the "meaning of life,"

the riddle which is Man, would have already ended. But it has not; the questions still remain, and art and literature are still exploring the "human heart in conflict with itself." In his treatment of the subject of war, Faulkner saw that a conflict of such magnitude, requiring the world stage as its battleground, arises from the clashing of opposing ideologies, ideologies which in order to preserve themselves mobilize forces in their favor by subsuming the identity of the individual through fear, reducing distinct men and women to a seething, utterly obedient, and unquestioning mass.

Undoubtedly, young William Falkner's (his family spelled the last name without a "u"; he changed the spelling later in life) first associations with war, filled with stirring images of glory and passion, were gleaned from family lore and the stories told by his "old undefeated spinster aunts" of whom he was so fond of speaking.³ Growing up in Oxford, Mississippi, "in that Deep South milieu, in a small town where the mystique of The Lost Cause was nurtured by the United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy, where the nearby battlefield of Shiloh and the local cemeteries were mute memorials,"⁴ and where at the town's center, looming over the courthouse square, "the Confederate soldier gazed with empty eyes beneath his marble hand in wind and weather,"⁵ the boy must have been virtually schooled in such lofty ideals as courage, honour, valour, chivalry, and romance. Towering above all of these monuments to an undying past stood the spectre of his great-grandfather, Colonel William Clark Falkner, for whom he was named. The Old Colonel's legend encompassed all the virtues of the romanticized Old South: he was a self-made, largely self-educated lawyer, politician, entrepreneur, and writer. Most importantly, however, he was a soldier and a fighter who never hesitated to seek recompense for a perceived slight or breach of honour. Through the course of his civilian life, he killed several men during arguments and brawls over topics ranging from politics and jury trials to a house rental.⁶ He returned from service in the Mexican War "missing the first joint of three fingers and a good deal of blood from the foot struck by another musket ball."⁷ Some of his most colourful moments occurred during his exploits in the Civil War:

When Mississippi seceded he lost out in the election of the four militia brigadier generals and had to settle for a captaincy in a company he had helped raise, the Magnolia Rifles. When they were merged with other units to form the 2nd Mississippi Infantry Regiment, he was elected colonel. Whipping his raw recruits into shape, he was promoted to brigadier general but declined the command two days later because it would separate him from his regiment. Ironically, he would spend the rest of his military career politicking to regain the stars he had renounced. But he made a gallant regimental commander. At the battle of the First Manassas, not far from Stonewall Jackson, he helped to repulse Union General Irwin McDowell's final assault and win the day. He lost two horses from under him, and when he seized a third mount, General Beauregard saw him flash by. One correspondent wrote that the Louisianan shouted, "Go ahead, you hero with the black plume; *history shall never forget you!*"⁸

Yet his acts of heroism on the battlefield were considered ostentatious and reckless by his subordinates and they consequently voted him out of command, forcing him to raise from scratch a group of Mississippi Partisan Rangers to lead against the enemy.⁹ Controversy continued to follow Colonel Falkner after the war as he, among other activities, invested time in building a railroad, continued his law practice, harassed Negro voters, took a grand tour of Europe, and wrote his popular work, *The White Rose of Memphis*.¹⁰ Even the account of his death, at the hands of a political rival and former business partner, eight years before little William's birth, carried the drama and acute sense of tragedy associated with his times:

That afternoon in Ripley he strolled down toward the square. No longer would he carry a pistol, and he had made a new will. Talking with a friend, he stopped near Dick Thurmond's office. Later, some would declare Falkner looked in through the window and made a move toward his pocket. A bystander would say that Falkner turned and suddenly Thurmond was at his side. But there was no dispute about what happened next. Thurmond was holding a .44 pistol at point-blank range. "Dick, what are you doing?" Falkner said. "Don't shoot!" Thurmond fired and Falkner dropped to the pavement, blood streaming from his mouth. He looked up and spoke before he lost consciousness. "Why did you do it, Dick?" he asked. Falkner lingered until the next night. He was buried with the most elaborate ceremony Tippah County had ever seen.

...In due course a monument was raised over Falkner's grave: a pediment six feet square and fourteen feet high, with an eight-foot statue rising above it. It had been carved of Italian

the Colonel's photographs and measurements. He had ordered it himself
me said, that his grateful townsmen would erect it in the square.¹¹

a particularly close tie to this kinsman, a bond grounded no doubt by their
so an uncanny similarity in physical appearance noted by his family, including
eyes and short physical stature. An interesting family story tells that in third
"what he wanted to be when he grew up, he would answer, 'I want to be a
great-granddaddy.'"¹² From the rich heritage of his family and the South, he
romantic and idealized conception of war, cloaked in the mists of time and possessing
ldly quality.

h this background, it should come as no surprise that the Falkner boys took an
e interest in the events of the First World War. "When war broke out in Europe in
ack Falkner remembered, 'Bill and John and I would get together in our bedroom at night,
out some maps of that continent, get the morning newspaper, and figure out the lines of
e. This was especially true during the battle of Verdun from February to September,
16."¹³ As the war dragged on and America's involvement in the conflict seemed more and
ore certain, Jack, the second oldest, began expressing a desire to enter the Marine Corps. Older
brother William, however, kept his longings for the romance of the flying corps quiet until the
news that the his long-time sweetheart was to marry another man because her family considered
William unpromising.¹⁴ As an antidote to heartbreak, he decided to enlist as a pilot. He wanted a
commission so badly that, in an attempt to meet the strict physical standards required for pilot
training, William resorted to a "desperate expedient" in order to bring himself up to standard: "He
stuffed himself with all the bananas he could hold and drank all the water he could swallow, he
said, and presented himself at the recruiting station. He was rejected as under regulation weight
and height."¹⁵

In an effort to cheer him and draw his mind to other pleasures, Phil Stone, William's friend
and mentor, invited him up to New Haven, Connecticut, where Stone was attending Yale Law

School. As luck would have it, several of Stone's friends had already served in the war and encouraged Falkner's enthusiasm for the Royal Air Force, as well as helping both of them to speak like Englishmen and to forge letters of recommendation from an imaginary vicar, the Reverend Mr. Edward Twimberly-Thorndyke, who described them as "god-fearing young Christian gentlemen."¹⁶ Thanks in part to their help, and his own determination not to fail again, Falkner was accepted for pilot training in the RAF-Canada, on his way to fulfilling his romantic aspirations:

He shared too the kind of glamorous idea of combat which persisted even in spite of the ghastly slaughter in battles such as Verdun. An ideal for him and Phil Stone was the legendary Chevalier de Bayard, "*chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*." Their imagination, like that of Southerners before them, was captured by the image of this early sixteenth-century French knight who had fought gallantly for his king in Italy, falling finally before overwhelming numbers. By this time the idea of military heroism had become inextricably linked with death. With it was also associated the idea of living as intensely as one could in a short time. Death had come to have a kind of fascination for many of the young men who so eagerly boarded the troop trains and transports. As one veteran put it, "In those years death itself exerted a curious magnetism on young men...and death became a romantic dream for the new generation of American writers."¹⁷

Besides his more idealized notions, practical considerations probably helped to influence Falkner's choice of the RAF: "Airmen generally fared better than others, eating in better messes, living in towns, and sometimes even being billeted in châteaux. 'We had come to believe,' [James] McConnell had written, 'that we would wage only a *de luxe* war.' And for one with a taste for smart, trim clothes, what could be more attractive than the slim boots, shining leather harness, peaked cap, and light blue of the RAF?"¹⁸ In a letter to his parents announcing his intention to join the RAF, it is evident that the intensity of his youthful ardor had temporarily outdistanced any reasonable expectations:

I have got a chance to join up with the British and get a commission as second lieutenant—leftenant they call it—in about three months after I am sent to training camp. It's a wonderful chance, for there is no thing to be had in the U.S. Army now, except a good job

stopping boche bullets as a private. The chances of advancement in the English Army are very good; I'll perhaps be a major at the end of a year's service.¹⁹

As a cadet in the RAF, William maintained his masquerade as an Englishman, changing the spelling of his last name to 'Faulkner,' and other vital statistics such as his birthdate and birthplace. Surviving lecture notes and papers from his time in ground school seem to indicate that he took his studies in aviation quite seriously; among passages pertaining to telegraphy, reconnaissance, and photography are extremely detailed and skillfully rendered drawings of contemporary aircraft along with lists of information regarding their individual construction and capabilities.²⁰ His personal correspondence also reflected his enthusiasm. To be sure, there were the expected complaints about the quality of food, his cleaning duties, having to sleep on boards, the aches caused by interminable marching in new Army boots, and the usual "soldierly cynicism about the military institution."²¹ Yet even his troubles seem to possess a touch of the comic: "This is certainly an immoral place. I have had stolen to wit: My stick, razor, mirror and brushes, knife, fork and spoon, and a pair of puttees. I am going to nail every thing else I have to the floor."²² For the most part, Faulkner enjoyed the company of the other cadets, and was impressed and envious of the decorated heroes who appeared now and then in their midst, complete with service chevrons and wound stripes. The subjects taught at the School of Aeronautics appealed greatly to this often unsteady student:

The longer I am here the better I like it. No more rifle drills and fatigue parties now. We are at lectures all day, wireless classes and theory of flight and airplane construction and it is very interesting. Like being in school again, only the subjects are not dry-as-dust abstract things, like x =the angle of an isosceles triangles so many degrees, and so on, or stuff like what a certain herb found in India will do to the liver of a man who has spent most of his life at the north pole.²³

His level of interest and diligence was no doubt surprising, considering Faulkner never even received a high school degree.

Despite his military training, or perhaps because of its distance from the actual fighting and horrors, Faulkner's romantic image of war, and flying in particular, continued. A poem he wrote while attending ground school indicates the extent of his engagement with the soldierly ideal:

THE ACE

The silent earth looms blackly in the dawning
Sharp as poured ink beneath the grey
Mists spectral, clutching fingers

The sun light
Paints him as he stalks, huge through the morning
In his fleece and leather, and gilds his bright
Hair. The first lark hovers, singing, where
He flashes through the shining gates of day.²⁴

Almost in spite of his romantic dreams, Faulkner's ambitions were cut short one week before his completion of ground school with the coming of the Armistice and the end of the war in November, 1918. No one can be sure as to the exact extent of his experience in the RAF, but several discrepancies have arisen. Throughout his correspondence home there are contradictory reports regarding his actual flying experience: "Twice during this time he wrote that there would be no more flying in Canada, but between times he claimed to have flown."²⁵ It is most likely that Cadet Faulkner was never allowed to pilot an airplane before completing ground school. On his certificate of service he was cited as having passed his Groundwork with a 70% with "Special Qualifications and Courses of Instruction" specifying only his Cadet Wing and School of Aeronautics training and "under 'Casualties, Wounds, Campaigns, Medals, Clasps, Decorations, Mentions, Etc.' appeared again only that dead and empty word: —NIL—."²⁶ As Joseph Blotner, Faulkner's biographer, described it, "There in the cold phrases of the King's Regulations was the death of the hopes that, jacketed and goggled, he might walk out to the flight line for the dawn patrol or lounge on leave in the smart blue uniform."²⁷ Especially painful was the knowledge that

his brother, Jack, had already been serving in Europe with the Marine Corps for quite some time, actually receiving an injury while fighting in the Argonne Forest.²⁸ But Faulkner's imagination was more than up to the task of supplying the adventure and daring which reality had not allowed him. Various stories of his flying antics during the war would abound, each growing with the retelling, until years later he would regret having spoken at all.²⁹ He explained away the lack of flying credentials on his certificate by saying that the cadets were permitted to stay after the Armistice and "take flight instruction if they wished."³⁰ Among one of his favorite stories from this time was the following:

"The war quit on us before we could do anything about it," he told Jack the following spring. "The same day they lined up the whole class, thanked us warmly for whatever it was they figured we had done to deserve it, and announced that we would be discharged the next day, which meant that we had the afternoon to celebrate the armistice and some airplanes to use in doing it. I took up a rotary-motored Spad with a crock of bourbon in the cockpit, gave diligent attention to both, and executed some reasonably adroit chandelles, an Immelman or two, and part of what could easily have turned out to be a nearly perfect loop."

"What do you mean—part of a loop?" his brother asked.

Bill laughed. "That's what it was; a hangar got in the way and I flew through the roof and ended up hanging on the rafters." He had to climb down on one of the hangar support poles, he said.³¹

He continued the charade when he arrived home, having acquired a British officer's uniform through the mail, complete with RFC wings, a swagger stick, a "linen handkerchief tucked up into his sleeve and a pair of leather gloves—carried, not worn—in the same hand that held the slim cane," as well as a limp from the purported hangar incident.³² He cut the figure of an experienced officer who had served overseas so well that the other American veterans in Oxford would salute him when he was in uniform: "To them it meant he had been overseas and they saluted an overseas man. They turned up their noses at our own officers who had not been over and refused to acknowledge them in any way."³³ There is also evidence that he and his family looked down on his friend Phil Stone at one time for the latter's failure to participate in the war.³⁴

It must have been a heady time, between the salutes of the soldiers around town and the loving admiration heaped upon him by parents and brothers, his romantic image of the dashing war hero was now complete.

His rosy-coloured view of war would not undergo any drastic changes until his own personal tour of Europe, possibly mirroring his grandfather's trip, in 1925. Traveling through the devastated French countryside, what had previously been abstract lists and figures of the dead and wounded became shatteringly real stories of full-blooded young boys and the collective tragedy which befell them in the trenches and battlefields. In Paris, he was struck by the numerous "inscriptions to dead soldiers" near the cathedrals and the "many many young men on the streets, bitter and gray-faced, on crutches or with empty sleeves and scarred faces. And now they must still fight, with a million young men already dead between Dunkirk and the Vosges mountains, in Morocco. Poor France, so beautiful and unhappy and so damn cheerful. We don't know how lucky we are, in America."³⁵ Death was no longer wrapped in a mystique of romance and heroism, gaining a grim, personal, and concrete form in the rows upon rows of unmarked graves. His letters home gave the impression of a sensitive young man slowly coming to terms with the bleak aftermath of modern mechanized warfare:

Walking through the war-zone. Trenches are gone, but still rolls of wire and shell cases and "duds" piled along the hedge-rows, and an occasional tank rusting in a farm yard. Trees all with tops blown out of them, and cemeteries everywhere. British, mostly.³⁶

I passed Cantigny, where American troops first entered the war. I think that was where Madden Tate [A sixth grade classmate of Faulkner's] was wounded. Compiègne and Montdidier were 8 miles behind the front for 3 years, so they are not damaged much. But beyond that eight miles it looks as if a cyclone had passed over the whole world at about 6 feet from the ground. Stubs of trees, and along the main roads are piles of shell cases and unexploded shells and wire and bones that the farmers dig up.

Poor France! And now America is going to hold their noses to the grindstone. If some of those Senators would just come over here, see what France has done to repair that country in which every single house was burned, see farmers plowing and expecting every minute to strike an unexploded shell and be blown to kingdom come, see children up to 10 and 12 crippled,

jerking with rickets from lack of food—when I get home I think I'll make a speech before the senate, if they'll let me. Certainly a country rich enough to afford Prohibition can help them a little.³⁷

Living for a time in the atmosphere of postwar Europe and witnessing the aftermath of violent destruction and upheaval, Faulkner would reassess his earlier view of the war and would carry these images and feelings with him, and the lessons learned, to his death.

However, in the middle of 1940, as Europe was embroiled in yet another "world war," Faulkner felt the same stirrings that he had in his youth. Stirrings which, strangely enough, were affecting his abilities as an artist:

What a hell of a time we are facing. I got my uniform out the other day. I can button it, even after twenty-two years; the wings look as brave as they ever did. I swore then when I took it off in '19, that I would never wear another, nohow, nowhere, for no one. But now I dont know. Of course I could do no good, would last about two minutes in combat. But my feeling now is better so; that what will be left after this one will certainly not be worth living for.

Maybe the watching of all this coming to a head for the last year is why I cant write, dont seem to want to write, that is. But I can still write. That is, I haven't said at 42 all that is in the cards for me to say. And that wont do any good either, but surely it is still possible to scratch the face of the supreme Obliteration and leave a decipherable scar of some sort. Surely all these machines that can destroy a thousand lives or stamp out an entire car gassed and oiled and ready to run in two seconds, can preserve, even by blind mischance and a minute fault in gears or timing, some scrap here and there, provided it ever was worth preserving.³⁸

In a visceral, knee-jerk reaction to the mounting scale of World War II, what he called the "cave instincts" urged him to fight again. A month after the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, his mood was still bleak:

This world is bitched proper this time, isn't it? I'd like to be dictator now. I'd take all these congressmen who refused to make military appropriations and I'd send them to the Philippines. This day a year and I dont believe there will be one present second lt. alive.

I have organised observation posts for air raids in this county, and am a sergeant in charge of air and communications in the usual local unit. But that's not enough. I have a chance

to teach navigation (air) in the Navy as a civilian. If I can get my affairs here established, I think I'll take it.³⁹

Later in the year, he would go before a Naval board for a commission in the Bureau of Aeronautics, but not satisfied with merely a "desk job," he asked around in order to further his options:

Good for Don [Klopfer]. Do you know how he managed to get into the Air Force? They turned me down on application, didn't say why, may have been age, 44.

I have a definite offer from the Navy, but I want an Air Force job if possible. I still haven't given up hope. Did he get in by mere application, or did he have influence? Or was he a specialist in some line?

I'll appreciate any information, as to whether what influence I might wangle will help or harm. I was turned down after only about four weeks, so maybe there is some definite factor against me, like my age or lack of school degrees, or perhaps because I wrote my Senator and asked him to put in a word when I sent in the application. The Navy job is at a desk in the Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington. I want to stay out doors if possible, want to go to California.⁴⁰

In an especially disgruntled mood over his endless financial troubles at home, he wrote: "Even a military job will dig me up and out for a while. ...Incidentally, I believe I have discovered the reason inherent in human nature why warfare will never be abolished: it's the only condition under which a man who is not a scoundrel can escape for a while from his female kin."⁴¹

However, on the occasion of his stepson, Malcolm, receiving a commission, he acknowledged the yearning of youth for glory and yet at the same time accepted his role as observer and advisor, one with which he would become increasingly comfortable in the postwar years::

I think you are wise to get into the service. If you wait, they'll get you anyhow. But there is a better reason. You have more aptitude for being a regimented soldier than you think, even though you have no avocation for it. You will never have that: to be a good soldier infers not only a capacity for being misled, but a willingness for it: an eagerness even to supply the

gaps in the logic of them who persuade him to relinquish his privacy. And I'm afraid that the same old stink is rising from this one as has risen from every war yet: vide Churchill's speech about having no part in dismembering the Br. Empire. But it is the biggest thing that will happen in your lifetime. All your contemporaries will be in it before it is over, and if you are not one of them, you will always regret it. That's something in the meat and bone and blood from the old cave-time, right enough. But it's there, and it's a strange thing how a man, no matter how intelligent, will cling to the public proof of his masculinity: his courage and endurance, his willingness to sacrifice himself for the land which shaped his ancestors. I don't want to go either. No sane man likes war. But when I can, I am going too, maybe only to prove to myself that I can do (within the physical limitations of age, of course) as much as anyone else can to make secure the manner of living I prefer and that suits my kin and kind.

The next step opens out here, of course, and this stops being a letter and becomes a sermon. So I'll take this step in one jump, and quit. We must see that the old Laodicean smell doesn't rise again after this one. But we must preserve what liberty and freedom we already have to do that. We will have to make the liberty sure first, in the field. It will take the young men to do that. Then perhaps the time of the older men will come, the ones like me who are articulate in the national voice, who are too old to be soldiers, but are old enough and have been vocal long enough to be listened to, yet are not so old that we too have become another batch of decrepit old men looking stubbornly backward at a point 25 or 50 years in the past.⁴²

In the years after the Second World War, and indeed for the remainder of his life, he would continue to echo the need for the old, himself included, to step forth and vocalize the need to preserve liberty and freedom and privacy; it was a role he would fulfill. In the meantime, he would continue to confine his "preachifying" to his friends and relations, including offering bits of advice on overcoming a pilot's two obstacles, foolhardiness and fear.⁴³ True to the sentiments he had expressed to Malcolm, Faulkner would begin assuming a more visible stance on the blight of war and its causes in the years following World War II. In a speech given to his daughter's high school graduating class, he reiterates the need for individuals to speak out, to redress the upheavals caused by radical shifts in the balance of power. He summed up his sentiment with the phrase, "If youth knew; if age could," stating:

that when you are young, you have the power to do anything, but you don't know what to do. Then, when you have got old and experience and observation have taught you answers, you are tired, frightened; you don't care, you want to be left alone as long as you yourself are safe; you no longer have the capacity or the will to grieve over any wrongs but your own.⁴⁴

Faulkner went on to say that it is the young men and women across the world who have the "power to change the world, rid it forever of war and injustice and suffering," but he warned that no problem can be solved through ideology, through a "glib answer or pattern either."⁴⁵ Through his observation and experience, and the repeated articulation of his fears and hopes, his thoughts on war, and the clashing ideologies which spawn it, began to crystallize. As became increasingly evident from his writings, both public and private, he was convinced that war was the machine by which Authority, the legion of "simple politicians and time-servers," the manufacturers of ideology and party-lines both Right and Left, maintained and perhaps even furthered their positions of power. Ideology was the primary tool, and fear its potent product; for only through fear, of either some outside evil, some Great Satan, or an even more perverse use of internal means, such as the secret police in Nazi Germany, are they able to reduce individual humanity to a mass, a mass capable of being manipulated, directed, controlled:

What threatens us today is fear. Not the atom bomb, nor even fear of it, because if the bomb fell on Oxford tonight, all it could do would be to kill us, which is nothing, since in doing that, it will have robbed itself of its only power over us: which is fear of it, the being afraid of it. Our danger is not that. Our danger is the forces in the world today which are trying to use man's fear to rob him of his individuality, his soul, trying to reduce him to an unthinking mass by fear and bribery—giving him free food which he has not earned, easy and valueless money which he has not worked for;—the economies or ideologies or political systems, communist or socialist or democratic, whatever they wish to call themselves, the tyrants and the politicians, American or European or Asiatic, whatever they call themselves, who would reduce man to one obedient mass for their own aggrandisement and power, or because they themselves are baffled and afraid, afraid of, or incapable of, believing in man's capacity for courage and endurance and sacrifice.⁴⁶

Rather than having to think for oneself, ideology provides the answer, fills in the "gaps of logic" which would otherwise cause the individual to question the system. He expressed criticism over the current state of affairs, where an individual "can hope to continue only by relinquishing and denying his individuality into a regimented group of his arbitrary factional kind, arrayed against an opposite opposed arbitrary factional regimented group, both filling the same air at the same time with the same double-barreled abstractions of 'peoples' democracy' and 'minority rights' and 'equal justice' and 'social welfare'—all the synonyms which take all the shame out of irresponsibility by not merely inviting but even compelling everyone to participate in it."⁴⁷ He viewed with alarm the conglomeration of individual men and women into faceless committees and lobby groups, for the sake of security and safety in numbers, spouting glib and utterly meaningless slogans and abstractions. With these abstractions the propagandists accomplish two tasks: First, they reduce individuals to integers, or mere numbers, in a mass; and second, by this reduction they further fortify their position and with this added strength propagate their invasion of individual rights. "...Today any organization or group, simply by functioning under a phrase like Freedom of the Press or National Security or League against Subversion, can postulate to itself complete immunity to violate the individualness—the individual privacy lacking which he cannot be an individual and lacking which individuality he is not anything at all worth the having or keeping—of anyone who is not himself a member of some organization or group numerous enough or rich enough to frighten them off."⁴⁸ Faulkner was especially guarded about his personal life, which would explain why he placed such a high value on the "individual privacy" as one of the keys to individual liberty. Whatever the masses arrayed against him though, he believed that the individual could turn the overwhelming tide of numbers, that it in fact is a duty of the privilege of freedom: "Because man's hope is in man's freedom. The basis of the universal truth which the writer speaks is freedom in which to hope and believe, since only in liberty can hope exist—liberty and freedom not given man as a free gift but as a right and a responsibility to be earned if he deserves it, is worthy of it, is willing to work for it by means of courage and sacrifice, and then to defend it always."⁴⁹ For only by standing up, speaking out, can one stop

mindless acceptance of propositions antithetical to the freedom of the individual. Only through eternal vigilance can that freedom be maintained, given meaning and kept from becoming mere abstractions and "empty mouthsounds." Freedom is earned, not given or inherited; to wit, freedom is not free:

...One other thing, lacking which, freedom and liberty and independence cannot even exist.

That thing is the responsibility, not only the desire and the will to be responsible, but the remembrance from the old fathers of the need to be responsible. Either we lost it, forgot it, or we deliberately discarded it. Either we decided that freedom was not worth the responsibility of being free, or we forgot that, to be free, a man must assume and maintain and defend his right to be responsible for his freedom. Maybe we were even robbed of responsibility, since for years now the very air itself—radio, newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, the voices of politicians—has been loud with talk about the rights of man,—not the duties and obligations and responsibilities of man, but only the "rights" of man; so loud and so constant that apparently we have come to accept the sounds at their own evaluation, and to believe too that man has nothing else but rights;—not the rights to independence and freedom in which to work and endure in his own sweat in order to earn for himself what the old ancestors meant by happiness and the pursuit of it, but only the chance to swap his freedom and independence for the privilege of being free of the responsibilities of independence; the right not to earn, but to be given, until at last, by simple compound usage, we have made respectable and even elevated to a national system, that which the old tough fathers would have scorned and condemned: charity.⁵⁰

By shirking the responsibility to maintain oneself and one's individual freedom, one allows freedom to be corrupted. That which empowers us, the freedom which allows individuals to pursue their pleasures as they see fit, is also a vulnerability. For it allows perversion from within, permits an ideology to form not only without our gates or front doorsteps, but inside us too. And this ideology can form from the mere ossification and obsolescence of our own ideals; it is this stiffening and rigidity which Faulkner warns against most. He believes that if freedom is to be defeated, it will not be an outside force which conquers the free, but the free themselves by taking their freedom for granted and allowing their ideals to become mere empty mouthsounds. While

there have been criticisms that in propounding an ideal of anti-ideological foundations Faulkner was actually furthering another ideology himself, that of the "American Way" or the "American Dream,"⁵¹ he was not; it is more correct to view Faulkner's individualism as a set of "basic enabling assumptions" of individual freedom and liberty which "do not a consistent ideology make."⁵² Which is not to say that injustices have not been perpetrated in the name of freedom and that democracy is antithetical to ideology. Democracy, by his way of thinking, is not the cure-all of political and social ills and banisher of ideology. It is merely the best that history has yielded in allowing maximum freedom and maximum security.⁵³ In his support of democracy, he was also cognizant of its dangers; it is not immune to ideology. In the constant parade of the terms "security," "freedom," "justice," and others divorced of their consequences for everyday individuals, he warns of an erosion of the meaning, the power of those words, when they are used as merely tools, forecasting the subsequent erosion of individual freedoms, leading again to mass manipulation, and eventually, war.

Finally, a word remains to be said concerning Faulkner's view of the interrelationship between literature, ideology, and war. He was unequivocal in his belief that ideology is the death of art. He stated that any impulse to further political aims through literature could only serve as a detriment to the art:

If a spirit of nationalism gets into literature, it stops being literature. Let me elaborate that. I meant that the problems which the poet writes about which are worth writing about, or composing music, or painting the pictures are the problems of the human heart which have nothing to do with what race you belong to, what color you are—they're the anguishes, the passions, of love, of hope, of the capacity, the doom of the fragile web of flesh and bone and mostly water, of which we are in articulation, must suffer, stuck together by a little electricity in a world of mostly coincidence, that we can endure it all.⁵⁴

Censorship, the tool with which to quiet dissent, receives a scathing indictment: "Well, there should be no such thing as censorship. If the mind has got to be protected by the law from what will harm it, then it can't be very much of a mind to begin with."⁵⁵ Art, when filtered through an

ideology, becomes a self-imposed form of censorship. For instance, he said that any contemporary "Russian artist on the surface is a Communist first before he is anything else"⁵⁶ The only way to reach members of other nations, to bridge the gaps of understanding and of logic, is to approach them not as representatives of separate and foreign states and ideologies, but simply as individuals. This thinking informed his efforts as a sort of goodwill ambassador during the 1950s, a role he undertook to address the "universal dilemma of mankind," the problems existing in international relations because "individual men and women of different races and tongues and conditions cannot discuss with one another these problems and dilemmas which are primarily theirs, but must attempt to do so only through the formal organizations of their antagonistic and seemingly irreconcilable governments."⁵⁷ Only if individuals are allowed to meet and "communicate man to man regardless of race or color or condition" would an understanding be possible; his many efforts to meet others as an individual, rather than a spokesman for a system, attest to his belief in the possibility of individuals of disparate backgrounds and aims working together. So opposed was he to the imposition of inflexible standards that he viewed even injecting a story with a moral, giving literature a "message" was unnecessary:

Let [the author] stick to his story. If he feels that evil enough, he can't keep it out of the story. He don't have to make an effort to bring it in to show anyone. Let him stick to his story dealing with men and women in the human dilemma. If he feels that social evil enough, it will be there. That was the case of Sherwood Anderson and Sandburg and Dreiser and the other people writing in Chicago about that time—they were not propagandists on social evils. They couldn't keep the evil, the awareness of it, out, because it moved them as people. That was a part of their own dilemma.⁵⁸

To impose artificial boundaries, to consciously implant literature with an agenda stands in opposition to the very freedom which the artist needs in order to create. As for war, Faulkner understood through experience that the shaking of foundations of faith and belief, the reassessment forced by catastrophe, although shattering in the present, benefited art in the long

run. In speaking to the youth of Japan after the Second World War, he made analogy to the South after the Civil War:

I believe that is the only reason for art—for the music, the poetry, the painting—which man has produced and is still ready to dedicate himself to. That art is the strongest and most durable force man has invented or discovered with which to record the history of his invincible durability and courage beneath disaster, and to postulate the validity of his hope.

I believe it is war and disaster which remind man most that he needs a record of his endurance and toughness. I think that that is why after our own disaster there rose in my country, the South, a resurgence of good writing, writing of a good enough quality that people in other lands began to talk of a "regional" Southern literature even until I, a countryman, have become one of the first names in our literature which the Japanese people want to talk to and listen to.⁵⁹

His words are reminiscent of the speech he gave upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950, wherein he lamented that the "tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear" of being blown up, forcing men and women to forget the only thing he considered worth writing about, "the human heart in conflict with itself," adding that the poet's, the writer's, duty and privilege is to help overcome this fear, "to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail."⁶⁰

William Faulkner, while extolling the virtues of individual freedom and liberty, resisted the temptation to rigidly standardize what these fundamental ideals entail. In placing the emphasis of his life's work and art on the individual, rather than on set inflexible standards, he attempted to bring to light the diversity and richness of the individual experience. For when an effort is made to make codified yet ultimately confining systems of thought from open-ended ideals, they cease being ideals and become a fixed and intransigent ideology. And the danger of ideology is its dehumanization and reduction of the individual and an inevitable clash with opposing viewpoints,

similarly arrayed within their own ideological systems: a clash, a battle, a war, in which the reduced integer becomes just another number in the machine, a pawn to be moved about and disposed of at will.

Soldiers' Pay

Soldiers' Pay is William Faulkner's first novel and was composed primarily during the months he spent in New Orleans, before his tour of Europe, during the early months of 1925. In the Big Easy he was befriended by Sherwood Anderson; the older man in some respects took the younger aspiring writer and poet "under his wing" and the two would often meet to discuss literature and art in general. Or as Faulkner put it years later, "he'd talk and I'd listen."⁶¹ Young William, like others, was fascinated by his mentor's "magical ability to illuminate the commonplace and endow it with significance" so that "ordinary things shone and secret universal meanings were disclosed in ordinary events."⁶² Anderson's gift for portraying profundity in simplicity was already evident in *Winesburg, Ohio* and recognizing a similar gift in his pupil, he advised Faulkner: "You're a country boy," he said; "all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from. But that's all right too. It's America too; pull it out, as little and unknown as it is, and the whole thing will collapse, like when you prize a brick out of a wall."⁶³ As Faulkner developed as an artist, he would follow Anderson's advice and return again and again to the richness of his own "little postage stamp of native soil," creating an "apocryphal kingdom" wherein the world's honor and pity and lusts and passions could be played out in miniature.

However, Faulkner would not immediately exploit the fecundity of his native Mississippi and her people as a source for his writing. He was yet young; with youthful exuberance, and pride too, he set out to prove his worldliness by centering his first novel around the disillusionment and alienation fostered by the First World War. *Soldiers' Pay* was Faulkner's entry into an already burgeoning field of post-war fiction. The novel generally received good reviews upon its publication, most of which stressed his promise as a young writer while at the same time pointing up the selfconsciousness of his style. And today, when the mannerisms of

youth in the early '20s seem even more out of place, it can be seen clearly as a "rather selfconscious attempt on Faulkner's part to enroll among the wastelanders."⁶⁴ Influences abound within the novel, from James Joyce to F. Scott Fitzgerald to T.S. Eliot to the romantic poets.

The influence of the romantic poets and of classical mythology are the distinguishing characteristics of *Soldier's Pay*, setting it apart from other realistic war fiction. The landscape of Faulkner's novel is decidedly pastoral, populated with visions of fauns, satyrs, and nymphs. Whatever its flaws in plot development, character motivation, and dialogue, the style of the book, most notably its "decadent poetic prose," is the "strength of the book."⁶⁵ Seemingly out of place in a book dealing with the aftermath of World War I, Faulkner's use of the pastoral makes more sense when taken into context with his early yearnings to be a poet. In his poetic works, such as *The Marble Faun* and *A Green Bough*, Faulkner follows noticeably in the tradition of Swinburne and Yeats:

Then on every hand awakes
From the dim and silent brakes
The breathing of the growing things,
The living silence of all springs
To come and that have gone before;
And upon a woodland floor
I watch the sylvans dance till dawn
While the brooding spring looks on.
The spring is quick with child, and sad;
And in her dampened hair sits clad
Watching the immortal dance
To the world's throbbing dissonance
That Pan's watchful shrill pipes blow
Of the fiery days that go
Like wine across the world; then high:
His pipes weave magic on the sky
Shrill with joy and pain of birth
Of another spring on earth.⁶⁶

Thus the pastoral elements evident in *Soldiers' Pay* are a natural extension of Faulkner's early work as a poet; indeed, many of the chapter epigrams and snatches of verse quoted within the text are cannibalized from *A Marble Faun* and *A Green Bough*. In addition to this artistic continuity, pastoralism also fits in strongly with the novel's system of ideas; as busy as scholars have been tracking down the exact sources of influence for Faulkner's poetic prose, little attention has been paid to the presence of Nature for a thematic purpose. For, "if the opposite of war is peace, the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral. Since war takes place outdoors and always within nature, its symbolic status is that of the ultimate anti-pastoral."⁶⁷ Thus, implicit in Faulkner's depiction of the pastoral landscape of his fictional Charlestown, Georgia, is its antithesis to the hell of the trenches from which the soldiers have returned. The contrast implied, but not stated, between the killing field of Europe and a quaint rural Southern hamlet, along with the choice of an episodic rather than a continuous narrative structure further emphasize the disjointed quality of the division and alienation of the returning soldiers from the society which they left four years previous.

Yet rather than deal with the effects of the war on society with a broad, frontal ideological assault, Faulkner chooses instead to focus on distinct individuals, crafting the novel around very personal dimensions. To be sure, there are indications that the novel was originally conceived as having a greater military emphasis, centered around Cadet Julian Lowe and full of "army sayings and cadet phrases,"⁶⁸ some elements of which still remain in the book's first chapter, wherein returning soldiers gradually drink themselves silly and cause an uproar on a train. But as his work on the novel progressed, Faulkner adopted a more intimate approach, becoming more and more intrigued by the personal interactions between the characters. Besides a personal inclination, this shift away from the adventuresome jaunts of fresh cadets and half-inept officers might be explained by Faulkner's own lack of combat experience. Although his experience and observations during ground school must have provided a good deal of information, they were without doubt not nearly enough to provide, even combined with imagination, the realism of an *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Neither could he hope to portray the local color and ambience of

postwar Europe as seen through the eyes of such disillusioned expatriates as Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*, which was published in the same year as *Soldiers' Pay*. Struggling with these limitations and in light of his preference for the plight of the individual, a preference which would continue to dominate his best work, it is not at all surprising that Faulkner should change his emphasis from the facile and inexperienced Cadet Lowe to the returning wounded hero, Donald Mahon.

From the beginning, it is clear that Donald Mahon is going to die. He is both physically and mentally injured by a plane crash during the war: he bears a "dreadful scar across his brow," his "right hand [is] drawn and withered,"⁶⁹ and he suffers from increasing blindness and some form of psychic trauma, most probably amnesia. Communication with him is almost impossible: he usually mimics a reply in response to another's question and often does not seem to be aware of the events around him. The disconnection of his consciousness reflects the spiritual and idealistic detachment of the other veterans. All suffer, for their own particular reasons, from an inability to vocalize their war experiences, hence denying them the opportunity to exorcise their ghosts. The horror of modern mechanized warfare has blighted Mahon and his fellow soldiers, irrevocably separating them from the society to which they return, a condition which Paul Fussell addresses in his excellent study of British literature and World War I in *The Great War and Modern Memory*:

One of the cruxes of the war, of course, is the collision between events and the language available—or thought appropriate—to describe them. To put it more accurately, the collision was one between events and the public language used for over a century to celebrate the idea of progress. Logically there is no reason why the English language could not perfectly well render the actuality of trench warfare: it is rich in terms like *blood, terror, agony, madness, shit, cruelty, murder, sell-out, pain and hoax*, as well as phrases like *legs blown off, intestines gushing out over his hands, screaming all night, bleeding to death from the rectum*, and the like. Logically, one supposes, there's no reason why a language devised by man should be inadequate to describe any of man's works. The difficulty was in admitting that the war had been made by men and was being continued *ad infinitum* by them. The problem was less one of "language" than of gentility and optimism; it was less a problem of "linguistics" than of rhetoric.⁷⁰

Thus the physical and psychic wounds which the soldiers bear fly in the very face of the gallantly streaming banners and the rhetoric used to "celebrate the idea of progress" with which the flower of a nation's youth was sent off to war. The nobility and battle-cry of Wilsonian ideology, of the "war to end all wars" or the "war to make the world safe for democracy," simply falls short of explaining away the horrors and atrocities committed under the auspices of these abstractions. Yet the abstractions, the ability of ideology to gloss over the particulars and present a palatable and unified generalization, allow the public to come to terms with, or more truthfully to dismiss, the horror and to carry on. Standing in the way of this dismissal, this purging of the collective conscience, are the scars, especially the highly visible physical scars, of the veterans. But even these scars in time are sublimated into a symbol of Ruined Youth, a quick label applied in order to rationalize and subsequently forget the nightmare. It is obvious from the reaction of Donald's neighbors to his homecoming that a pervasive and rather perverse abstraction of the violence to living flesh and blood has already taken place in their minds. They flock to catch a glimpse of him, to hear exciting war stories, reducing him to nothing but a show, a freak distraction for the "solid business men interested in the war only as a by-product of the rise and fall of Mr. Wilson, and interested in that only as a matter of dollars and cents, while their wives chatted about clothes to each other across Mahon's scarred, oblivious brow."⁷¹ As a result of his injuries and his inability to communicate, Donald's chief role is "conceived in abstract terms as the Wounded Hero, a figure of myth," whose lack of definition allows "other characters [to be] judged in terms of their behaviour towards him."⁷²

Although they are not physiologically hampered from communicating their experiences, the other veterans are as estranged from society as Donald. For them, a mere substitution of one wasteland for another has occurred, from the battlefield to the curious yet distant society which sent them off to war but which is now divorced from them by "virtue" of the difference of their wartime experiences. The separation of the veterans from "normal" society, their inability to reassimilate their lost lives, is most evident in Chapter V, on the occasion of the dance party.

They are literally and figuratively out of step with the times and demands of society. All the pretty young women which flocked to them before and during the war because of the uniform now find better and more stimulating company in the bright young boys who know the latest dance steps: "This, the spring of 1919, was the day of the Boy, of him who had been too young for soldiering."⁷³ The dancing boys even look on the soldiers contemptuously, noting their uniformity even in peacetime: "They were all of a kind: there was a kinship like an odor among them, a belligerent self-effacement. Wallflowers. Wallflowers. Wallflowers."⁷⁴ Especially poignant is the picture of corporal-pilot James Dough, whose artificial leg and "festering arm between the bones of which a tracer bullet had passed"⁷⁵ render him incapable of dancing; he finds refuge in a swing in the yard. Others join him and they smoke quietly outside, few words passing between them as they impotently observe the life swirling within.

A final indication of the abstraction of the soldier as individual in the war is the case of Dewey Burney. A "ne'er-do-well" before the war, it is he who panics in the trenches at the rumor of gas and shoots his commanding officer in the face; he dies an ignominious death. But for his mother, who is probably secretly glad to be rid of him, he has become her passport to higher social status: "above her dull and quenchless sorrow she knew a faint pride: the stroke of Fate which robbed her likewise made of her an aristocrat. The Mrs. Worthingtons, the Mrs. Saunderses, all spoke to her now as one of them, as if she, too, rode in a car and bought a half dozen new dresses a year."⁷⁶ The death of Mrs. Burney's son has in some perverted sense become a medal of honor for her; she almost values it for its utility, not understanding in any real sense the meaning of death, in Dewey's case or any other. Meeting Captain Madden in town, she asks him in a pitying and condescending manner how he is. He replies that he was "all right," to which she coldly retorts, "But then you wasn't killed. All soldiers wasn't like Dewey: so brave—foolhardy, almost...."⁷⁷ And only a few moments ago, she had been thinking, "He was not any good, but he was my son."⁷⁸ Granted, she is suffering from the pangs of grief and her mental stability may be called into question, Mrs. Burney nevertheless shows a careless regard for the actual circumstances of her son's death, focusing instead on its use to her as a symbol.

Reflecting the shift of values Faulkner believed was inevitable after wartime, *Soldiers' Pay* exhibits signs of the decay of ideology within society itself. Appropriately, it is Reverend Mahon, Donald's father, who stands out most in this regard. The Reverend is extremely lackluster in his pastoral duties, spending more time in his garden than in pursuing the requirements of his office. In particular, he prizes his rosebush, which he calls, "my son and my daughter, the wife of my bosom and the bread of my belly: it is my right hand and my left hand."⁷⁹ He even recounts, with relish, leaving a conference at which the bishop would be present because of the threat of a change in the weather: "The sky was becoming overcast, it was already turning colder. And then, three miles from home, we came upon a stream and found the bridge gone. After some shouting we attracted the attention of a man plowing across the stream and he came over to us in a skiff. I engaged my driver to await me, was ferried across, walked home and covered my rose, walked back to the stream and returned in time. And that night—' the rector beamed upon Januarius Jones '—snow fell!"⁸⁰ He is portrayed as an intellectual and very well-read. Yet he cannot face up to the reality of Donald's condition and most of his neighbors' time is spent shielding him from the inevitability of his son's death, a strange predicament for a pastor who should be leading his flock, not the other way around. Even more telling is the last scene of the novel. The Reverend Mahon and Joe Gilligan, a friend who accompanies Donald home, take a moonlight stroll through the country and happen upon a Negro church service. They hear singing "swelled to an ecstasy, taking the white man's words as readily as it took his remote God and made a personal Father of Him."⁸¹ Although the "shabby church" is no match for the "consummate grace of a spire and a gilded cross"⁸² of the Rector's, through the "crooning submerged passion of the dark race" it achieves an individual character, "beautiful with mellow longing, passionate and sad."⁸³ The Negro congregation anticipates the deeply spiritual Dilsey who is almost alone among all the characters of *The Sound and the Fury* in treating Benjy with genuine compassion and love, treating him not as a means to an end but as an end in and of himself. Hers is a personal religion of internal pity and empathy, not a system of commandments forced upon her by external sources. Overintellectualized and withdrawn from the world, the

Rector will seemingly never know the deeply personal Deity that even these simple folk share a bond with. He is separated by his self-created and self-sustained world of abstractions and verbal wordplay which allow him only to dance around the heart of the matter. Turning from the church, the two lonely men return to their own world, "feeling dust in their shoes."⁸⁴

Although it is obviously a young writer's mannered attempt to emulate postwar disillusionment of the times, *Soldiers' Pay* contains elements which anticipate important developments in Faulkner's later works. Most prominent is his concern with the individual and the maintenance of distinct identity over and against abstraction and restrictive systems of thought. An identification which relies too heavily upon any ideology, as is the case with the veterans, places one in danger of being discarded in the uncertainty and shift of values after great conflict. Faulkner offers no remedy or countermeasure to ideological abstraction, an area which receives greater attention in *Flags in the Dust*, but instead takes great care in crafting a complex thematic structure and distinct personalities. As one critic comments, "*Soldiers' Pay* is ultimately a novel of people, not of ideas, and that is its primary strength."⁸⁵

Flags in the Dust

Faulkner firmly believed that *Flags in the Dust* would be the novel to make his name as a writer. He contacted his publisher, Horace Liveright, writing that "I have written THE book, of which those other things were but foals. I believe it is the damdest best book you'll look at this year, and any other publisher."⁸⁶ After the selfconsciously worldly outings of his first two novels, first with fashionable disillusionment and angst towards the Great War in *Soldiers' Pay* and then with sophisticated skepticism in dealing with the artistic community of New Orleans in *Mosquitoes*, he finally took Anderson's advice to heart and drew from the rich fount of inspiration of his native Mississippi. Marveling at his own discovery years later, he said, "I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual and the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a gold mine of other people...."⁸⁷ So fertile were the possibilities of his new creation and his use of it in *Flags in the Dust* that the novel became somewhat unwieldy, suffering from a lack of focus. Liveright, whose firm published both of Faulkner's previous novels, not only declined *Flags in the Dust* but also advised him, as a friend, not to option it out to any other publishing companies; he believed it would ruin Faulkner's chances of ever being published again.⁸⁸ Fortunately, Harrison Smith of Harcourt, Brace and Company saw potential in the manuscript and an arrangement was arrived at whereby Harcourt, Brace would publish the novel on the condition that it would be extensively edited.⁸⁹ Faulkner agreed, understandably wishing to see it in print even if in a compromised form, and Ben Wasson, one of Faulkner's friends from the University of Mississippi, was enlisted to do the cutting. Wasson sharpened the focus of the novel on the Sartoris family, deleting passages having to do with secondary characters not directly related with the family itself. As a result, one-quarter of the original text of *Flags in the Dust* was excised and published in 1929 as

the novel, *Sartoris*. However, many pages detailing the locale and personalities of Yoknapatawpha County, preliminarily named Yocona County in *Flags in the Dust*, were removed, especially much material defining the character of Horace Benbow.⁹⁰ Since Horace Benbow plays a crucial part in the purposes of this study, *Flags in the Dust*, which was published posthumously in 1973, is the cited text and not *Sartoris*. The restored material, besides illuminating Benbow's character more fully, adds immeasurably to the Yoknapatawpha saga and its origins in Faulkner's art. For it is in the fictional, or apocryphal, kingdom of Yoknapatawpha County that Faulkner found his true voice and identity as a writer, the town of Jefferson and its environs serving to treat in microcosm, through the lives of its simple Mississippi hill folk, conditions which affect all humanity. Yoknapatawpha can be seen as a natural outgrowth of his individualism and his concern for particulars which through analogy may be applied to the universal; he preferred to call this his portrayal of "the human heart in conflict with itself."

In terms of this conflict of the human heart, and its relation to the dehumanization and deindividualization of men symptomatic of warfare and ideology, *Flags in the Dust* starts where *Soldiers' Pay* leaves off. Whereas Faulkner's first novel deals with the disillusionment and the difficulty of reintegration faced by the veterans of the war due to the abstraction of their identity by the uniformity of ranks, *Flags in the Dust* offers insight into the successful preservation of identity, even in the face of ideology, through the character and bearing of Buddy MacCallum.

The MacCallums are simple hill folk. Through their portrait Faulkner expresses his admiration and respect for both the durability and purity of life close to nature. They live in the country outside of the town of Jefferson and are content to live on and out of the land; their means are modest and they have no pretensions to sophisticated society or town life. Their house exhibits their humility: "The walls were of chinked logs; upon them hung two colored outdated calendars and a patent medicine lithograph. The floor was bare, of hand-trimmed boards scuffed with heavy boots and polished by the pads of generations of dogs; two men could lie side by side in the fireplace."⁹¹ Each of the MacCallum boys does his part to ensure the smooth operation of the household: Henry "superintended the kitchen (he was a better cook now than Mandy) and the

house, and "his sole relaxation was making whisky, good whisky, in a secret fastness known only to his father and to the negro who assisted him, after a recipe handed down from lost generations of his dour and uncommunicative forbears;"⁹² Stuart is "a good farmer and a canny trader,"⁹³ Jackson looks after the dogs, experimenting between a new hybrid of fox and hound;⁹⁴ Buddy is the hunter, possessing an "uncanny and seemingly clairvoyant skill in anticipating the course of the race."⁹⁵ When the MacCallum household begins its work at four in the morning, Buddy does his share, heading into the woods in spite of the weather, not minding a soaking, seeming to his family as if "'he's spent his whole life in that 'ere river bottom, with a hunk of cold cawnbread to eat and a passel of dawgs fer comp'ny."⁹⁶ In addition, Buddy, the youngest MacCallum, stands out because "with his sapling-like leanness [he] stood eye to eye with that father who wore his eighty-two years as though they were a thin shirt," he sparks "a thought which each believed peculiar to himself and which none ever divulged—that someday Buddy would marry and perpetuate the name."⁹⁷ Buddy's natural simplicity served him well during the war, to which he found himself drawn with a young man's curiosity and determination:

He had run away at eighteen and enlisted; at the infantry concentration camp in Arkansas to which he had been sent, a fellow recruit called him Virge [the name he shares with his father] and Buddy had fought him steadily and without anger for seven minutes; at the New Jersey embarcation depot another man had done the same thing, and Buddy had fought him, again steadily and thoroughly and without anger. In Europe, still following the deep but uncomplex compulsions of his nature, he had contrived, unwittingly perhaps, to perpetrate something which was later ascertained by authority to have severely annoyed the enemy, for which Buddy had received his charm, as he called it. What it was he did, he could never be brought to tell, and the gaud not only failing to placate his father's rage over the fact that a son of his had joined the Federal army, but on the contrary adding fuel to it, the bauble languished among Buddy's sparse effects and his military career was never mentioned in the family circle....⁹⁸

There are extenuating circumstances for Mr. MacCallum's rage, stemming from his own experience: "In 1861 he was sixteen and he had walked to Lexington, Virginia, and enlisted, served four years in the Stonewall brigade and walked back to Mississippi and built himself a

house and got married."⁹⁹ Of interest, though, is Buddy's respect of his father's anger, which is manifested in his not showing the medal in the house nor speaking of his military career; his independence of any ideological basis for participating in the war frees him from hating a "Yankee medal" because his "pappy and Stonewall Jackson aint never surrendered."¹⁰⁰ The "deep but uncomplex compulsions of his nature" are evinced in his "slow, inarticulate idiom of the war":

It was a vague, dreamy sort of tale, without beginning or end and with stumbling reference to places wretchedly pronounced—you got an impression of people, creatures without initiation or background or future, caught timelessly in a maze of solitary conflicting preoccupations, like bumping tops, against an imminent but incomprehensible nightmare.¹⁰¹

But in spite of his inability to pronounce the place names and the simple impression he receives of events, his vision of the horror of the war as an "incomprehensible nightmare" is perhaps truest, despite the various explanations and justifications of ideology which merely disguise humanity's rapacity and senseless killing. When Young Bayard asks him how he liked the army, he responds, still unswayed by dreams of glory or ideological slogans: "Not much,' Buddy answered. 'Aint enough to do. Good life for a lazy man."¹⁰² Faulkner would return to the nobility of these simple people in the short story, "The Tall Men," written in 1942. An investigator travels to the McCallum (Faulkner here changes the spelling of their name) farm to arrest Buddy's sons for evading the draft. When Buddy realizes what the man is asking for, he instructs the boys to pack immediately and go with the man to enlist, believing in his simplicity that when one's country calls, one should answer. Again, the McCallum's unideological fortitude and independence, even in light of hard times for farmers and the programs of the New Deal, are highlighted in the local marshal's talk with the investigator:

"These here curious folks living off here to themselves, with the rest of the world all full of pretty neon lights burning night and day both, and easy, quick money scattering itself around everywhere for any man to grab a little, and every man with a shiny new automobile already wore out and thrown away and the new one delivered before the first one was even paid for, and everywhere a find loud grabble and snatch of AAA and WPA and a dozen other three-letter

reasons for a man not to work. Then this here draft comes along, and these curious folks ain't got around to signing that neither, and you come all the way up from Jackson with your paper all signed and regular, and we come out here, and after a while we can go back to town. A man gets around, don't he?"¹⁰³

Their fidelity to the spirit, as opposed to the investigator's strict adherence to the letter, of the requirements of duty is drawn with sharp effect. The marshal, who accompanies the investigator out to the McCallum's, sums up the "deep but uncomplex compulsions" of these "tall men:"

"Yes, sir. We done forgot about folks. Life has done got cheap, and life ain't cheap. Life's a pretty durn valuable thing. I don't mean just getting along from one WPA relief check to the next one, but honor and pride and discipline that make a man worth preserving, make him of any value. That's what we got to learn again. Maybe it takes trouble, bad trouble, to teach it back to us; maybe it was the walking to Virginia because that's where his ma come from, and losing a war and then walking back, that taught it to old Anse [Buddy's father's name has changed, too]. Anyway, he seems to learned it, and to learned it good enough to bequeath it to his boys. Did you notice how all Buddy had to do was to tell them boys of his it was time to go, because the Government had sent them word? And how they told him good-by? Growned men kissing one another without hiding and without shame. Maybe that's what I am trying to say."¹⁰⁴

The implications are clear: Buddy MacCallum's (or McCallum's) immunity to the ephemeral trappings of martial glory or political dogma stem from his deeply individual roots in family and tradition.

By contrast, Young Bayard Sartoris is alienated by his rage and despair. He dwells on the death of his twin brother, Johnny, who was shot down before Bayard's eyes in the war. Bayard's visit with the MacCallums and his talk with Buddy about the war revive memories of the day of Johnny's death:

Perhaps he was dead, and he recalled that morning, relived it again with strained and intense attention from the time he had seen the first tracer smoke, until from his steep side-slip he watched the flame burst like the gay flapping of an orange pennon from John's Camel and saw his brother's familiar gesture and the sudden awkward sprawl of his plunging body as it lost

equilibrium in midair; relived it again as you might run over a printed tale, trying to remember, feel, a bullet going into his body or head that might have slain him at the same instant. That would account for it, would explain so much: that he too was dead and this was hell, through which he moved forever and ever with an illusion of quickness, seeking his brother who in turn was somewhere seeking him, never the two to meet.¹⁰⁵

He separates himself from his family, his rage and despair spurring him towards self-destructive activities. Bayard drinks heavily and his drives recklessly, testing both the limits of himself and the automobile. Spurred by a deathwish, he mounts a wild stallion against the advice and better judgment of both the owner and the groom:

The beast burst like unfolding bronze wings: a fluid desperation; the onlookers tumbled away from the gate and hurled themselves to safety as the gate splintered to matchwood beneath it soaring volcanic thunder. Bayard crouched on its shoulders and dragged its mad head around and they swept down the lane, spreading pandemonium among the horses and among the wagons there. ...The stallion moved beneath him like a tremendous mad music, uncontrolled, splendidly uncontrollable. The rope served only to curb its direction, not its speed, and among the shouts from the pavement on either side he swung the animal into another street that broke suddenly upon his vision. ...Someone screamed from a neighboring veranda, and the group of children broke, shrieking; a small figure in a white shirt and diminutive pale blue pants darted from the curb into the street, and Bayard leaned forward and dragged at the rope, swerving the beast toward the opposite sidewalk, where the two negroes stood. The small figure came on, flashed safely behind, then rushing green beneath the stallion's feet; a tree trunk like a wheel spoke in reverse, and the animal struck clashing fire from wet concrete, slipped, lunged, then crashed down; and for Bayard, a red shock, then blackness.¹⁰⁶

Shortly after Bayard recovers from the fall, he wrecks his automobile while driving too fast down a hill and missing a bridge. Unsatisfied with this near-death experience, or perhaps in order to prove himself, he continues his reckless driving, this time in the company of his grandfather, Old Bayard:

On the other side of the road a ravine dropped sheer away, among scrub cedars and corroded ridges skeletoned brittly with frost and muddy ice where the sun had not yet reached;

the rear end of the car hung timelessly over this before it swung again, with the power full on, swung on until its nose pointed down hill again, with never a slackening of its speed. But still it would not come into the ruts again and it had lost the crown of the road, and though they had almost reached the foot of the hill, Bayard saw they would not make it. ... "Hang on," he shouted to his grandfather. Then they plunged. ... The car slewed in a long bounce. Another vacuum-like interval, then a shock that banged the wheel into Bayard's chest and wrenched it in his tight hands, wrenched his arm-socket. ... The car had never faltered and he dragged the leaping wheel over and swung it down the ravine and opened the engine again, and with the engine and the momentum of the plunge, they crashed on down the ravine and turned and heaved up the now shallow bank and onto the road again. Bayard brought it to a stop.

He sat motionless for a moment. "Whew," he said.¹⁰⁷

Although he and the automobile escape relatively unscathed, the damage is done: Old Bayard suffers a heart attack and dies. Now two deaths haunt him. His guilt and grief drive him to pilot an experimental aircraft which no one else is willing to fly. It is a biplane with no cables connecting the wings but instead a system of tension springs, which is supposed to work in theory. Bayard accepts the challenge, despite warnings to the contrary, and even ignores the inventor's wild cries and gesticulations, waving him to stop, as he takes off. He finally achieves the death he has been stalking all along:

But only the wingtips responded by tipping sharply upward; he flung the stick forward before they ripped complete off, and he knew that only the speed of the dive kept him from falling like an inside out umbrella. ... He pulled the stick back again; again the wingtips buckled and he slapped the stick over and kicked again into that skid, trying to check his speed. Again the machine swung its tail in a soaring arc, but this time the wings came off and he ducked his head automatically as one of them slapped viciously past it and crashed into the tail, shearing it too away.¹⁰⁸

Bayard Sartoris reminds one of nothing so much as a cornered beast, trapped by his own anger and frustration, which in lashing out destroys not only the source of its rage but itself, too.

Throughout the novel he approaches most situations unthinkingly, with a raging bestial quality that renders him almost inhuman, precluding any sure sense of identity.

As a third alternative, Horace Benbow is not much of an improvement over Bayard Sartoris. He is presented as a foil to Bayard, to the latter's animal nature, as an intellectual, a studied romantic idealist who is utterly out of touch with the world. His days consist of random meanderings of the imagination, separating him both from the world, and more importantly, his sister Narcissa, who is the only family he has. In all affairs, he possesses a curious detachment, a distance indicated by his involvement in the war through the Y.M.C.A., not the armed forces. He returns to Jefferson with resignation: "He was a lawyer, principally through a sense of duty to the family tradition, and though he had no particular affinity to it other than a love for printed words, for the dwelling-places of books, he contemplated returning to his musty office with a glow of...not eagerness: no; of deep and abiding reluctance, almost of pleasure."¹⁰⁹ "Almost" is an appropriate word to describe Benbow. In contrast to Young Bayard's complete immersion in the physical world, Horace has retreated into an intellectual one. He is educated to such a degree that everything appears rather abstract, and his unchanging days on earth are a sort of cage:

At Sewanee, where he had gone as his father before him, he had been an honor man in his class. As a Rhodes Scholar he had gone to Oxford, there to pursue the verities and humanities with that waiting law office in a Mississippi country town like a gate in the remote background through which he must someday pass, thinking of it not often and with no immediate perspective, accepting it with neither pleasure nor regret. Here, amid the mellow benignance of these walls, was a perfect life, a life accomplishing itself placidly in a region remote from time and into which the world's noises came only from afar and with only that glamorous remote significance of a parade passing along a street far away, with inferences of brass and tinsel fading beyond far walls, into the changeless sky. ...His life was a golden and purposeless dream, without palpable intent or future with the exception of that law office to which he was reconciled by the sheer and youthful insuperability of distance and time.¹¹⁰

Despite his pursuit of the "verities," he returns to an affair with Belle Mitchell, a married and utterly vapid society woman; this move further alienates his sister and she surprises him by marrying Bayard Sartoris. He even has an affair with Belle's younger sister, seduced by her charms, before finally marrying Belle once she is divorced. Even in his new situation, he quits

"the desk and the room and the town and all the crude and blatant newness into which his destiny had brought him, and again that wild and delicate futility of his roamed unchallenged through the lonely region into which it had at last concentrated its conflicting parts."¹¹¹ His withdrawal and dissipation, though lacking the grim finality of Bayard's, is just as complete.

Through his portrayals of Buddy MacCallum, Bayard Sartoris, and Horace Benbow in *Flags in the Dust*, Faulkner indicates the importance of tradition to the preservation of individual identity. A balance must be struck between the needs of mind, body and spirit, an equilibrium which Bayard and Horace do not achieve. Only Buddy, in his simplicity and certainty, is able to move forward and maintain his identity despite his experience in the war. In emphasizing the healing to be found in home and hearth, Faulkner was reflecting his own realization of the potential riches of his own "postage stamp of native soil," an awareness which led to the creation of his most enduring work: not a story; not a novel; but an entire world, the world of Yoknapatawpha County, peopled with characters as diverse as the world he wished to address.

The Unvanquished

When Faulkner first began writing the stories which would become *The Unvanquished*, he was more than a decade removed from his experiences in the First World War; by the time the novel was published, twenty years had passed since the Armistice. Much of the material in the novel appeared first as separate short stories in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Scribner's Magazine* between the years of 1934 and 1938. They deal with Bayard Sartoris' (the Old Bayard of *Flags in the Dust*) boyhood adventures during the Civil War with his companion, Ringo, the son of one of the Sartoris slaves. Feeling that the stories held together as a continuous narrative, Faulkner edited the existing stories and added two chapters which carry Bayard into young adulthood.¹¹² The progress of Bayard's growth as a moral agent throughout the book comes to a head in the final chapter, "An Odor of Verbena," where he is forced to choose between the violence and honor and pride of the Southern code in which he has been raised and his own personal conviction, not yet fully realized, that killing, for whatever reason, is indefensible. After treating the Great War as a central theme in numerous short stories and at least peripherally in three of his novels, his fiction naturally turned from explored territory onto new and fertile ground. Continuing the literary examination of Southern families begun in *Flags in the Dust*, *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*, and drawing from the rich heritage of his own family, Faulkner was drawn more and more towards the defining moment of Southern tradition, the Civil War. Observation and experience had already served him well in preserving the memories and folktales of his "undefeated spinster aunts" and imagination would now allow not only an outlet but a synthesis of the ideals of the past with Faulkner's own beliefs and values. Chief among his contributions to the legend is a respectful questioning of Southern ideals.

In his treatment of the Civil War in Faulkner's fiction, Thomas Nordenberg states that the Southern men who participated "[fought] to preserve the way of life they [had] become used to

leading, not to defend the ideological base of their society."¹¹³ Certainly the immediate justification for the War Between the States was an effort to preserve the sovereignty and sanctity of "States' Rights" from the intrusive impositions of a Federal Government. But if the Civil War was not fought on an ideological basis, but rather to defend a way of living, one might ask what that way of living was. The inevitable answer is the social, political, and economic agrarian society based upon the enslavement of a large segment of its population on the arbitrary grounds of skin color. In one sense, Nordenberg is right; Southern resistance was initially generated by a defense of individual rights. But as the War continued, it became increasingly obvious that the concept of an association of States fighting for their individual liberty and freedom, while at the same time denying those very rights to a large segment of its own populace, was a contradiction and error of the highest order. And that is where ideology steps in. The ideals of Southern tradition and chivalry were used subconsciously to cover up what Faulkner calls the "gaps of logic" endemic to their ideology, an economic, political, and social system founded upon and inextricably tied to the oppression of the African-American people. Thus inconsistencies in thinking were abstracted into empty mouthsounds such as Southern "honor" and "purity" and "integrity" and "independence." Nordenberg himself acknowledges that "the South became an *object* [italics mine] of patriotism."¹¹⁴ The South, then, as object, as symbol, became an index of fear, the fear of a minority people of losing their political hegemony over the subjugated majority, of losing the source of their economic livelihood, of losing the established superiority of their social status. Ideology is the tool which mobilizes the masses in the name of some holy crusade, demonizing the enemy, those "damn Yankees," and manipulating and exaggerating individual fears of "foreign invaders" and the potential power in freed slaves. It is a denial, in the face of truth, of a corrupt and archaic society that its fundamental tenets undermine its very reasons for resistance. While Southern tradition and custom no doubt had their origins in colorful and interesting people with a great concern for courtesy and integrity, the crucible of war and inflammatory effects of ideology sublimated the true essence of these ideals, leaving only behind a dried and fragile husk, an obsolete accretion of once noble passions reduced to rigid, codified

behavior. For when charity and compassion are manifested in a fixed doctrine rather than arising from an individual compulsion, motivation for moral behavior becomes external and hence highly unreliable. Only when these acts are made voluntarily, from an internal sense of right and wrong, are they truly given meaning. Too often, as is evident in Faulkner's works, blind adherence to the traditions of the South amounts to at best a subscription to stilted and empty mannerisms and at worst a dangerous blend of violence and romance.

No one character quite embodies the controversy, or contradiction, of the Southern tradition in any of Faulkner's novels, for better and for worse, more than Colonel John Sartoris. John Sartoris approaches an almost mythic status, his reputation looming well above his modest proportions:

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. There were others besides him that were doing the things, the same things, but maybe it was because he was the only one we knew, had ever heard snoring at night in a quiet house, had watched eating, had heard when he talked, knew how he liked to sleep and what he liked to eat and how he liked to talk. He was not big, yet somehow he looked even smaller on the horse than off of him, because Jupiter was big and when you thought of Father you thought of him as being big too and so when you thought of Father being on Jupiter it was as if you said, 'Together they will be too big; you won't believe it.' So you didn't believe it and so it wasn't.¹¹⁵

Like Colonel William Clark Falkner, Sartoris raises his own regiment of soldiers, is demoted from his post by his own men, and subsequently forms another band of partisan rangers to fight Union troops. His Southern pride chafes at the thought of "outsiders" in a distant capital dictating how affairs ought to be managed and social relationships ordered in his native land; he fights out of the necessity to preserve the integrity of his home and his individual liberty. Sartoris and his men fight "for four years with the avowed purpose of driving Federal troops from the country,"¹¹⁶ but in the slippery slide of ideology, their nobility soon becomes desperation, causing them to go "on with the War for two years after they knew they were whipped."¹¹⁷ They fight with the fury of a

cornered animal, whatever the conditions, out of the necessity for sheer endurance. With the wonder of a child, Bayard asks him, "How can you fight in mountains, Father?" His answer, expressing the desperate straits of a cornered ideologue, is simply: "You can't. You just have to." Unable to acknowledge the collective fiction of their ideals, Sartoris and his men unconsciously substitute "the smell of powder and glory, the elected victorious" for "only the will to endure, a sardonic and even humorous declining of self-delusion which is not even kin to that optimism which believes that that which is about to happen to us can possibly be the worst which we can suffer."¹¹⁸ Thinking, rational reflection, has long ago been subsumed by fear, a desperate clinging the last shreds of the remembered past in open defiance and denial of present circumstances. They maintain the seriousness of their cause, denying the "declining self-delusion" even when they

return home, afoot like tramps or on crowbait horses, in faded and patched (and at times obviously stolen) clothing, preceded by no flags nor drums and followed not even by two men to keep step with one another, in coats bearing no glitter of golden braid and with scabbards in which no sword reposed, actually almost sneaking home to spend two or three or seven days performing actions not only without glory (plowing land, repairing fences, killing meat for the smoke house) and in which they had no skill but the very necessity for which was the fruit of the absent occupations from which, returning, they bore no proof—actions in the very clumsy performance of which Father's whole presence seemed (to us, Ringo and me) to emanate a kind of humility and apology, as if he were saying, "Believe me, boys; take my word for it: There's more to it than this, no matter what it looks like. I can't prove it, so you'll just have to believe me."¹¹⁹

But there is no more than what appearances reveal; only a delusionary ideology can substitute dignity for the ignoble and petty activities which the men finally resort to. Despite the "humility and apology," Colonel Sartoris, under the pretense of defending his ideals, is reduced to stealing horses from enemy troops and in the meantime cannot even provide for his own family. "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."¹²⁰ The irony is almost laughable, if it were not so tragic; swearing to cleanse the land of the contaminating presence of Union troops, who incite the slaves to revolt against their masters, Sartoris' own family must seek the Union's charity in order to survive. Yet his men, and the town of Jefferson in general, respect him and believe he embodies the virtues of a Southern gentlemen. They flock about him and look to him for leadership even after the war,

because Father's troop (like all the other Southern soldiers too), even though they had surrendered and said that they were whipped, were still soldiers. Maybe from the old habit of doing everything as one man; maybe when you have lived for four years in a world ordered completely by men's doings, even when it is danger and fighting, you don't want to quit that world: maybe the danger and the fighting are the reasons, because men have been pacifists for every reason under the sun except to avoid danger and fighting.¹²¹

Following him in regimented fashion, they stand behind him when he attempts to block with the threat of violence the election of a former slave to the post of town marshal and the efforts by Northern "carpet baggers" to rally freeman votes. To ensure that "the election would never be held with Cash Benbow or any other nigger in it"¹²² he shoots and kills the two Burdens from Missouri, the name of the men killed containing an ironic twist. Paranoia also motivates him to form a band of "night riders to keep the carpet baggers from organising the Negroes into an insurrection."¹²³ His bloody deeds are not solely reserved for intimidating former slaves or Northerners. Again in a similar fashion to Colonel Falkner, John Sartoris' business activities are fraught with controversy, violence usually being the result. Bayard recounts what must have been an increasingly familiar sight:

I watched him clean the derringer and reload it and we learned that the dead man was almost a neighbor, a hill man who had been in the first infantry regiment when it voted Father out of command: and we never to know if the man actually intended to rob Father or not because Father had shot too quick, but only that he had a wife and several children in a dirtfloored cabin in the hills, to whom Father the next day sent some money and she (the wife) walked into the

house two days later while we were sitting at the dinner table and flung the money at Father's face.¹²⁴

However, finally the untenable stance of his methods, if not his beliefs, forces Sartoris to renounce his tradition of violence. He finally admits, "I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity nor the end."¹²⁵ He realizes that a "moral housecleaning" is necessary and that his ways, and the ideals they embodied, are outdated. Understanding that "now the land and time are changing; what will follow will be a matter of consolidation,"¹²⁶ he sends Bayard to study law, so that his son might retain in an ethical manner what he has attained in much less so. But he cannot escape his past, even if he himself abrogates violence. Ben Redmond, an ex-partner on the railroad and the man Sartoris defeats for a seat in the legislature, embittered by Sartoris' success at his expense and the many taunts suffered as a result, finally confronts Sartoris and shoots him dead. The Colonel, though, true to his word, "had the derringer inside his cuff like always, but he never touched it, never made a move toward it."¹²⁷

As a foil to the strict ideologue John Sartoris, Faulkner presents an alternative in the person of Granny Rosa Millard. It falls to Granny to fend for hearth and home while John is off pursuing "perhaps the most exciting game of all,"¹²⁸ a role which she is more than adequate to fulfill. Her instinct for independence and perseverance are remarkable. She shows no signs of hesitation whatsoever in crossing through areas of heavy fighting in order to go to Memphis, as John Sartoris asks. A Confederate officer met along the way cannot believe her courage, exclaiming, "'Good Lord, ma'am! You can't go a step farther!'"¹²⁹ He offers to provide an escort, which she declines. Trying another tack, the gentleman suggests that she take shelter in a nearby house while he sends for Colonel Sartoris, to which she replies pointedly, "'Thank you,' Granny said. 'Wherever Colonel Sartoris is, he is doubtless busy with his own affairs. I think we will continue to Memphis as he instructed us.'"¹³⁰ Granny is equally firm in her piety and sense of decorum, especially in her upbringing of Bayard and Ringo. As punishment for transgressions, these instructions invariably issue forth: "'Go to the kitchen and get a pan of water and the soap,'

she said. 'Get the new soap.'"¹³¹ The resultant scene is comic yet serves to subtly reinforce the strength of Granny's beliefs:

It was late, as if time had slipped up on us while we were still caught, enmeshed by the sound of the musket and were too busy to notice it; the sun shone almost level into our faces while we stood at the edge of the back gallery, spitting, rinsing the soap from our mouths turn and turn about from the gourd dipper, spitting straight into the sun. For a while, just by breathing we could blow soap bubbles, but soon it was just the taste of the spitting. Then even that began to go away although the impulse to spit did not, while away to the north we could see the cloudbank, faint and blue and faraway at the base and touched with copper sun along the crest.¹³²

As much as she expects of the boys, she is equally hard on herself, not shirking her responsibility for their moral upbringing, or her ultimate accountability for the same. Her penance is real and she never attempts to avoid admitting her own faults:

She just said "Come," and turned and went on, not toward the cabin but across the pasture toward the road. We didn't know where we were going until we reached the church. She went straight up the aisle to the chancel and stood there until we came up. "Kneel down," she said.

We knelt in the empty church. She was small between us, little; she talked quiet, not loud, not fast and not slow; her voice sounded quiet and still, but strong and clear: "I have sinned. I have stolen, and I have borne false witness against my neighbor, though that neighbor was an enemy of my country. And more than that, I have caused these children to sin. I hereby take their sins upon my conscience."¹³³

Strict though she may be, with Bayard and Ringo as well as herself, her piety is saved from the abstraction of ideology by its intrinsic nature. Like Faulkner's best religious believers, such as Dilsey or the congregation heard singing to their personal God at the end of *Soldier's Pay*, Granny's religious feeling arises from within, from a genuine heartfelt conviction, and is not dictated simply by the requirements of dogma. Pity and compassion make her beliefs intimate and personal, preventing the inevitable alienation which results from an externally applied value system. She helps those in need out of instinctive empathy and frustration with the injustices of

the world, reaching out to others not because doctrine says it is right, but because she feels so; the distinction is important. Her tender mercies are most evident in her treatment of the former slaves who have abandoned the plantations, who follow the Union Army to the promise of freedom. In their newfound emancipation, they march towards a mythical River Jordan in their minds, shuffling blindly after the troops in scores, leaving the aged and the infirm to fend for themselves along the way. Looking on with pity, she feels that most of them would be better off staying where they came from, not because of any faith in the system of slavery, but because she instinctively realizes the terrible burden that their newfound freedom has brought them. The words "freedom" and "liberty" are yet abstractions, mouthsounds for these people who have never experienced these rights; they follow these talismans of hope offered by the Union, failing to understand the full implication of the words due their separation from them since the birth of slavery. Thus the allure of the rights which the government has promised them takes on gigantic ideological proportions, inspiring in them a nameless wanderlust,

the motion, the impulse to move which had already seethed to a head among his [Ringo's] people, darker than themselves, reasonless, following and seeking a delusion, a dream, a bright shape which they could not know since there was nothing in their heritage, nothing in the memory even of the old men to tell the other, 'This is what we will find'; he nor they could not have known what it was yet it was there—one of those impulses inexplicable yet invincible which appear among races of people at intervals and drive them to pick up and leave all security and familiarity of earth and home and start out, they don't know where, emptyhanded, blind to everything but a hope and a doom.¹³⁴

They move in a mass, driven by the idea of liberty, unthinking and unfeeling, shaped by the power of ideology to a undifferentiated sea of humanity: "All of a sudden all three of us were sitting up in the wagon, listening. They were coming up the road. It sounded like about fifty of them; we could hear the feet hurrying, and a kind of panting murmur. It was not singing exactly; it was not that loud. It was just a sound, a breathing, a kind of gasping, murmuring chant and the feet whispering fast in the deep dust. I could hear women, too, and then all of a sudden I began to

smell them."¹³⁵ Faulkner himself recognized the delicate balance between freedom and equality on the one hand, and the volatility of race relations on the other. Believing firmly that freedom for all men must be earned, maintained, and defended, he nevertheless stressed that those who had never had the privilege, due to the fear and ignorance of their oppressors, of exercising their fundamental rights ought to be moved gradually towards full independence; they must be given time to not only seize upon the idea of liberty, but also to the practice. In the heightened racial tensions of the 1950s, it was Faulkner who advised both parties, but especially the leaders for African-American equality, to "Go slow now."¹³⁶ He suggested that the NAACP "must adjust itself psychologically, not to an indefinite continuation of a segregated society, but rather to a continuation as long as necessary of that inflexible unflagging flexibility which in the end will make the white man himself sick and tired of fighting it."¹³⁷ In the end, he felt the flexibility and endurance of the African-American race would prevail, if through no other method than shaming the nation into redressing past injustices. Faulkner stressed patience and flexibility (although he admitted that these things might seem "easy enough to say glibly"¹³⁸ as a white man). Granny also reflects this mentality in her actions, even if her words to a black woman do betray the pervasive legacy of the curse of slavery when she asks the woman, "Who do you belong to?"¹³⁹ But whatever Granny's personal feelings, ambiguous as they are, she does not hesitate to help the woman, who has been sick and trying to keep up with the group and tend to her newborn baby at the same time. Advising her to go back home, Granny nevertheless gives her food and a wagon ride so that she might catch up with the others, despite knowing what Ringo tells her: "She done found um. Reckon she gonter lose um again tonight though."¹⁴⁰ Granny displays similar kindness and thoughtfulness later on by and distributing rations for an even larger group left to her by the Union Army itself, which simply cannot manage the impossible number of former slaves running after them.¹⁴¹ Ultimately, however, her most profoundly touching acts center around the people back home, both black and white. At first Faulkner cleverly isolates her actions from her motives, creating seeming inconsistency in Granny's character. The adventure begins when Granny's silver, which is buried in the yard inside a trunk for safety's sake, is carried off by Yankee

troops angered by having botched a chance to capture Colonel Sartoris. She rides straight into a Union camp, asks to see the commanding officer, and states her case. Colonel Dick, gentleman that he is, tries to accommodate her by signing a requisition letter to restore her silver, the two Sartoris mules, named "Old Hundred" and "Tinney," and the servants Loosh and Philadelphia to her. But in an extraordinary comedy of errors, the orderly transcribing the letter has mistakenly written: *"You will see that bearer is repossessed in full of the following property, to wit: Ten (10) chests tied with hemp rope and containing silver. One hundred ten (110) mules captured loose near Philadelphia in Mississippi. One hundred ten (110) Negroes of both sexes belonging to and having strayed from the same locality."*¹⁴² She tries to tell them the truth, but the soldiers are so busy with the business of war that they misinterpret her explanations, with the help of some lying on Ringo's part, and give her even more mules and horses. As she is an honest woman, one would think the subterfuge would end there. However, again with Ringo's help, Granny continues to secure mules and horses from various Union camps in the area by recopying the letter numerous times, changing the commanding officers' names and unit numbers accordingly. According to the account of Ab Snopes, the "agent" who sells "borrowed" livestock in Memphis, she saves "six thousand and seven hundred and twenty-two dollars and sixty-five cents, less the dollar and thirty-five cents I spent for whisky that time the snake bit one of the mules."¹⁴³ But a nobler motive lies behind her deviation from religious principles against stealing, just as was the case when she lied to protect Bayard and Ringo earlier from Union troops after the two boys fired upon them. She scrupulously brings the money she earns from the mule sales to church, "[sending] out word back into the hills where they lived in dirt-floored cabins, on the little poor farms without slaves. It took three or four times to get them to come in, but at last they all came—men and women and children and the dozen niggers that had got free by accident and didn't know what to do about it."¹⁴⁴ She bears public witness for her sins and asks them all to pray for her. Then, in the true spirit of charity, she tells Ringo, "Bring the book":

It was a big blank account book; it weighed almost fifteen pounds. They opened it on the reading desk, Granny and Ringo side by side, while Granny drew the tin can out of her dress and spread the money on the book. But nobody moved until she began to call out the names. Then they came up one at a time, while Ringo read the names off the book, and the date, and the amount they had received before. Each time Granny would make them tell what they intended to do with the money, and now she would make them tell her how they had spent it, and she would look at the book to see whether they had lied or not. And the ones that she had loaned the brand-blotted mules that Ab Snopes was afraid to try to sell would have to tell her how the mule was getting along and how much work it had done, and now and then she would take the mule away from one man or woman and give it to another, tearing up the old receipt and making the man or the woman sign the new one, telling them on what day to go and get the mule.¹⁴⁵

Granny's selfless and sincere motives cause Bayard to imagine what others "would have thought up to say—about all soldiers did not carry arms, and about they also serve, and how one child saved from hunger and cold is better in heaven's sight than a thousand slain enemies."¹⁴⁶ Indeed, even the lieutenant who finally catches onto and puts a halt to Granny's operation admits defeat in the face of her superior ability:

"I'd rather engage Forrest's whole brigade every morning for six months than spend that same length of time trying to protect United States property from defenseless Southern women and niggers and children. Defenseless!" he shouted. "Defenseless! God help the North if Davis and Lee had ever thought of the idea of forming a brigade of grandmothers and nigger orphans, and invading us with it!" he hollered, shaking the letters at Granny.

"Listen," he said. "We are on evacuation orders now. Likely I am the last Federal soldier you will have to look at. And I'm not going to harm you—orders to that effect too. All I'm going to do is take back this stolen property. And now I want you to tell me, as enemy to enemy, or even man to man, if you like. I know from these forged orders how many head of stock you have taken from us, and I know from the records how many times you have sold a few of them back to us; I even know what we paid you. But how many of them did you actually sell back to us more than one time? ...I know you don't have to tell me, and you know I can't make you. I ask it only out of pure respect. Respect? Envy. Won't you tell me?"¹⁴⁷

In an interestingly poetic twist, Granny finally meets her end when she steals not for charity, but for herself, and puts her faith in Southern ideology. Ab Snopes, plays on Granny's fears of having "made independent and secure almost everyone in the county save herself and her own blood," and "that Father would return home to his ruined plantation and most of his slaves [would have] vanished."¹⁴⁸ Snopes conjures up this frightening image and asks "how it would be if, when he came home and looked about at his desolate future, she could take fifteen hundred dollars in cash out of her pocket and say, 'Here. Start over with this'—fifteen hundred dollars more than she had hoped to have."¹⁴⁹ In addition, she makes the mistake of believing that Grumby, the man who has the horses she hopes to "requisition," is one of a breed of mythical figures, the Southern man, reasoning "that what side of a war a man fought on made him what he is."¹⁵⁰ She trusts in the myth, despite common knowledge that Grumby and his men, appearing in the countryside immediately after the Union retreat, were known for "raiding smokehouses and stables, and houses where they were sure there were no men, tearing up beds and floors and walls, frightening white women and torturing Negroes to find where money or silver was hidden."¹⁵¹ Further thinking that they would not hurt a woman alone, Granny forbids Ringo and Bayard from following her; they do not even hear the fatal shots fired by Grumby's men, terrified as only outlaws are by the official names the forged letter bears. Tragically, the two boys' "knowing at fifteen [years of age] that Grumby, or whoever he was, was a coward and that you might frighten a brave man, but that nobody dared frighten a coward,"¹⁵² is not enough to prevent her death.

Granny Millard and Colonel Sartoris notwithstanding, by far the individual whose struggle with ideology is the most engaging is Bayard Sartoris. The gradual progress of his individual perspective on the fabric of the world, from initial indoctrination to eventual independence, is central to an understanding of the ideological implications of *The Unvanquished*. From the first lines of the novel, it is clear that Bayard has inherited the values of his father and views the war as the struggle between the incompatible ideologies of South and North, filtered through the romantic musings and imaginative exaggerations common to young boys. His activities are

reminiscent of nothing so much as Faulkner's own early fascination with World War I, which the author and his brothers would trace out on maps spread upon their bedroom floor:

Behind the smokehouse that summer, Ringo and I had a living map. Although Vicksburg was just handful of chips from the woodpile and the River a march scraped into the packed earth with the point of a hoe, it (river, city, and terrain) lived, possessing even in miniature that ponderable though passive recalcitrance of topography which outweighs artillery, against which the most brilliant of victories and the most tragic of defeats are but the loud noises of a moment. To Ringo and me it lived, if only because of the fact that the sun impacted ground drank water faster than we could fetch it from the well, the very setting for the stage for conflict a prolonged and wellnigh hopeless ordeal in which we ran, panting and interminable, with the leaking bucket between wellhouse and battlefield, the two of us needing first to join forces and spend ourselves against a common enemy, time, before we could engender between us and hold intact the pattern of recapitulant mimic furious victory like a cloth, a shield between ourselves and reality, between us and fact and doom.¹⁵³

Bayard and Ringo act out in abstract the battles of the war in microcosm, with the mock seriousness and injured pride of boys at play, both vying for the role of Confederate soldier and neither wishing to identified as the Yankee. Through experience in testing the limits of one another's patience, they arrive at a convention where Bayard "would be General Pemberton twice in succession and Ringo would be Grant, then I would have to be Grant once so Ringo could be General Pemberton or he wouldn't play anymore."¹⁵⁴ They eagerly anticipate the homecoming of Colonel Sartoris in order to hear firsthand of "the cannon and the flags and the anonymous yelling."¹⁵⁵ Both boys believe unquestioningly in the myth of Southern righteousness and the evil nature of the "Yankee devils." They are possessed of an acute xenophobia, expressed once as, "I knowed Yankees wasn't folks, but I never knowed before they horses ain't horses."¹⁵⁶ On another occasion, Ringo asks about Tennessee, where the Colonel has been fighting: "What does they eat up there, Marse John? Does they eat the same things that folks eat?"¹⁵⁷ Isolated by their innocence, both the war and the ideologies which support it take on abstract, ephemeral qualities which protect them from the horror and suffering of real flesh and blood:

And we had hear about battles and fighting and seen those who had taken part in them, not only in the person of Father when once or twice each year and without warning he would appear on the strong gaunt horse, arrived from beyond that cloudbank region which Ringo believed was Tennessee, but in the persons of other men who returned home with actual arms and legs missing. But that was it: men had lost arms and legs in sawmills; old men had been telling young men and boys about wars and fighting before they discovered how to write it down: and what petty precisian to quibble about locations in space or in chronology, who to care or insist *Now come, old man, tell the truth: did you see this? were you really there?* Because wars are wars: the same exploding powder when there was powder, the same thrust and parry of iron when there was not—one tale, one telling, the same as the next or the one before. So we knew a war existed; we had to believe that, just as we had to believe that the name for the sort of life we had led for the last three years was hardship and suffering. Yet we had no proof of it.¹⁵⁸

When the proof does come, in the person of a Union soldier on horseback, Bayard and Ringo, true to the preaching of the ideology they have heard from their earliest days, automatically run into the house to take down the musket above the mantel. But not before Bayard remembers thinking, in spite of his upbringing, "He looks just like a man."¹⁵⁹ The reflexive mechanism of doctrine quickly erases this thought and it is replaced with his frightened cry to Ringo, signifying the demonization of the freedom offered by the Union as moral turpitude, or simply sin: "Do you want to be free?" I said. "Do you want to be free?"¹⁶⁰ They hear and see and think nothing, feeling only the overwhelming need to vanquish the intruder:

We had practiced before, once or twice when Granny was not there and Joby would come in to examine it and change the cap on the nipple. Ringo held it up and I took the barrel in both hands, high, and drew myself up and shut my legs about it and slid down over the hammer until it clicked. That's what we were doing, we were too busy to look; the musket was already riding up across Ringo's back as he stooped, his hands on his knees and panting, "Shoot the bastud! Shoot him!" and then the sights came level, and as I shut my eyes I saw the man and the bright horse vanish in smoke. It sounded like thunder and it made as much smoke as a brush fire, and I heard the horse scream, but I didn't see anything else; it was Ringo wailing, "Great God, Bayard! Hit's the whole army!"¹⁶¹

Fortunately, they only hit the horse and not the rider. It is this incident which forces Granny to lie to protect them from the wrath of the Union soldiers; the two companions crouch beneath her chair and behind the sheltering screen of her skirt as she swears "that there are no children in or about the house."¹⁶²

In spite of the contemporary social and racial standards, the deep and genuine friendship of the two boys indicates Bayard's early instinctive, if incomplete, break with the accepted ideology. Faulkner makes the equality of boys in their own minds certain from the very beginning, "even though Ringo was a nigger too, because Ringo and I had been born in the same month and had both fed at the same breast and had slept together and eaten together for so long that Ringo called Granny 'Granny' just like I did, until maybe he wasn't a nigger anymore or maybe I wasn't a white boy anymore, the two of us neither, not even people any longer: the two supreme undefeated like two moths, two feathers riding above a hurricane."¹⁶³ They share the same bed, or pallet as circumstances dictate. For them, experience dictates superiority and Bayard freely admits Ringo's strengths: "That's how Ringo and I were. We were almost the same age, and Father always said that Ringo was a little smarter than I was, but that didn't count with us, anymore than the difference in the color of our skins counted. What counted was, what one of us had done or seen that the other had not, and ever since that Christmas I had been ahead of Ringo because I had seen a railroad, a locomotive."¹⁶⁴ In the business with the mules, Ringo's growth outdistances Bayard's, the difficulty of planning and implementation adding appreciably to the former's maturity. Ringo and Granny set about forging the letters of requisition, plotting their progress on a map with representations for the different Union cavalry troops stationed in the country. "Ringo had drawn it (Father was right; he was smarter than me; he had even learned to draw, who had declined even to try to learn to print his name when Loosh was teaching me; who had learned to draw immediately by merely taking up the pen, who had no affinity for it and never denied he had not but who learned to draw simply because somebody had to.) with Granny showing him where to draw in the towns."¹⁶⁵ They remain the closest of friends, but the gap is noticeable, Bayard noting without hint of resentment, "He had got taller during the summer; he

was taller than me now, maybe from the exercise of riding around the country, listening out for fresh regiments with mules, and he had got to treating me like Granny did—like he and Granny were the same age instead of him and me."¹⁶⁶

His friendship with Ringo aside, however, Bayard is still young and exhibits the "reasoned" violence of Southern myth. When Granny is murdered by Grumby, he sets out on a deliberate manhunt, bypassing all precepts of law and justice, slipping into Thomas Hobbes' equation of the state of nature as the state of war, where man's avarice and ambition are checked only by his ability to legitimate them, in a state of "continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."¹⁶⁷ He tracks Grumby for weeks, from December to late February, losing count of the days after about forty, in spite of a personal warning by one of Grumby's men and a note pinned to the body of a hanged old Negro. The words in the note are prophetic, warning Bayard that he is being given one more chance to turn back: "*Take it, and some day become a man. Refuse it, and cease even to be a child.*"¹⁶⁸ There being no honor among thieves, Grumby's own men tie him up and leave him behind for Bayard and Ringo, the band tired of having to flee the area and the spoils available to them as outlaws, telling Grumby,

"We had a good thing in this country. We would have it yet, if it hadn't been for you. And now we've got to pull out. Got to leave it because you lost your nerve and killed an old woman and then lost your nerve again and refused to cover the first mistake. ...And all because you got scared and killed an old woman you never saw before. Not to get anything; not for one single Confed bank note. But because you got scared of a piece of paper on which someone had signed Bedford Forrest's name. And you with one exactly like it in your pocket now."¹⁶⁹

Motivated by grief and rage, but unimpeded by the moral ideology of Southern tradition, he faces down Grumby, who appears "big and squat, like a bear. ...He seemed more like a stump than even an animal."¹⁷⁰ The more experienced Grumby manages to shoot first, then grapples with Bayard after his shots miss the mark. Luckily, Ringo has the presence of mind to jump on Grumby with his pocket knife; Grumby runs, avoiding the mismatch in numbers. Bayard, who has

been paralyzed up to this point, finally makes his move: "...My arm began to come up with the pistol and he turned and ran. He shouldn't have tried to run from us in boots. Or maybe that made no difference either, because now my arm had come up and now I could see Grumby's back (he didn't scream, he never made a sound) and the pistol both at the same time and the pistol was level and steady as a rock."¹⁷¹ It is perhaps appropriate, in a poetic sense, that Bayard is forced to shoot Grumby in the back. Reverting further into a bestial rage, Bayard carries the body back to town, where he performs a grotesque ritual which an approving neighbor recounts with relish: "'The proof and the expiation!' Uncle Buck hollered. 'When me and John Sartoris and Drusilla rode up to that old compress, the first thing we see was that murdering scoundrel pegged out on the door to it like a coon hide, all except the right hand. 'And if anybody wants to see that, too,' I told John Sartoris, 'just let them ride into Jefferson and look on Rosa Millard's grave!' Ain't I told you he is John Sartoris' boy? Hey? Ain't I told you?'"¹⁷²

Although he is John Sartoris' boy, and follows his father's adherence to Southern codes of honor and vengeance, he is also in great part shaped and helped by Uncle Buck McCaslin. Uncle Buck himself is firmly rooted in some contemporary Southern traditions. Although he works toward the eventual freedom of any man who is willing to "live on and out of the land," he nevertheless deeply resents the presence of Northern troops in Mississippi. "'Kill the blue-bellied sons of bitches. Kill them!'"¹⁷³ he shouts at Bayard. In some ways, Uncle Buck subscribes as much to the dominant Southern ideology as any other man. His most profound effect on Bayard comes after Granny's murder, when he approaches the boy at the funeral:

...I thought they had all gone, I looked around, and there was Uncle Buck. He came up to us with one elbow jammed into his side and his beard drawn over to one side like it was another arm, and his eyes red and mad like he hadn't slept much, and holding his stick like he was fixing to hit somebody with it and he didn't much care who.

"What you boys going to do now?" he said.

..."I want to borrow a pistol," I said.

He began to holler then, but quiet. Because he was older than us; it was like it had been at the old compress that night with Granny. "Need me or not," he hollered, "by Godfrey, I'm going! You can't stop me! You mean to tell me you don't want me to go with you?"

"I don't care," I said. "I just want a pistol. Or a gun. Ours got burned up with the house."

"All right!" he hollered. "Me and the pistol, or you and this nigger horse thief and a fence rail. You ain't even got a poker at home have you?"

"We got the bar'l of the musket yet," Ringo said. "I reckon that's all we'll need for Ab Snopes."

"Ab Snopes?" Uncle Buck hollered. "Do you think it's Ab Snopes this boy is thinking about? ...Hey?" he hollered, hollering at me now. "Hey, boy?" ...Now Uncle Buck was talking at Ringo, and not hollering now. "Catch my mule," he said. "I got the pistol in my britches."¹⁷⁴

Uncle Buck not only encourages Bayard to take justice into his own hands, he rides with the boys as they come closer and closer to hunting Grumby down. He helps them track Grumby, showing them where to look and how to glean information from even those who try not to give anything away. Close to the mark, Uncle Buck even suffers a bullet wound from one of Grumby's men who enters their campsite to warn them off; eventually the infection grows severe enough to keep him from proceeding any farther. He declines their offer to ride back home with him, leaving the two boys with these words, "You boys go on. It ain't going to be long now. And catch them!" He begun to holler, with his face flushed and his eyes bright, taking the pistol from around his neck and giving it to me, 'Catch them! Catch them!'"¹⁷⁵

Bayard admires Uncle Buck and his twin, Buddy, for their progressive attitude towards the blacks on the McCaslin plantation, whom the twins allow to live in the manor house built by their fathers. To them, the "big colonial house" symbolizes the corruption and greed and curse of the entire plantation system upon which their inherited estate is built. The twins make a farcical show of locking the field workers up in the house after a day's work although they know that the inhabitants are already in the act of escaping through windows and backdoors even as the key is turning:

...Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy knew this and that the niggers knew they knew it, only it was like a game with rules—neither one of Uncle Buck or Uncle Buddy to peep around the corner of the house while the other was locking the door, none of the niggers to escape in such a way as to be seen even by unavoidable accident, nor to escape at any other time; they even said that the ones who couldn't get out while the door was being locked voluntarily considered themselves interdict until the next evening.¹⁷⁶

Their mock show disguises a way of thinking incompatible with traditional Southern ideology, an approach mirroring Faulkner's own belief that these people without a history, an heritage of remembered freedom, "...upon whom freedom and equality had been dumped overnight and without warning or preparation or any training in how to employ it or even just to endure it...",¹⁷⁷ must gradually be introduced to the responsibilities and difficulties which come with it:

Father said they were ahead of their time; he said they not only possessed, but put into practice, ideas about social relationship that maybe fifty years after they were both dead people would have a name for. These ideas were about land. They believed that land did not belong to people but that people belonged to land and that the earth would permit them to live on and out of it and use it only so long as they behaved and that if they did not behave right, it would shake them off just like a dog getting rid of fleas. They had some kind of a system of bookkeeping which must have been even more involved than their betting score against one another, by which all their niggers were to be freed, not given freedom, but earning it, buying it not in money from Uncle Buck and Buddy, but in work from the plantation.¹⁷⁸

The sympathetic portrayal of Uncle Buck and Buddy is a sign of Faulkner's realization that idealism, when tempered by experience and actually put into practice, given concrete form, can be a force for change. The danger lies in the often natural tendency for idealism to abstract into ideology, causing the holder of previously open ideals to entrench himself in an immovable and exclusionary system. Idealism in the abstract, when it searches for and demands absolute perfection from a quite imperfect world, causes a necessary retreat from the world, a withdrawal to utopian dreams and worlds of the imagination which bear little resemblance to reality; sometimes the idealist has no recourse but death. Doreen Fowler points to such misguided and

ultimately ineffective idealists as the Reverend Mahon of *Soldiers' Pay*, Horace Benbow of both *Flags in the Dust* and *Sanctuary*, Quentin Compson of *The Sound and the Fury*, and the Reverend Hightower of *Light in August*,¹⁷⁹ to her list might also be added characters from *A Fable*, to be discussed later, and Uncle Buck's son, Ike McCaslin of *Go Down, Moses*. Ike, feeling a strong revulsion towards the continued inequality of the McCaslin workers, and all blacks, and their continued exploitation, seeks to wash his hands of the "white man's curse" by repudiating and relinquishing his legal rights to the McCaslin estate. Or, in his own words:

'I cant repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father's and Uncle Buddy's to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never Grandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation. Because it was never Ikkemotubbe's fathers' fathers' to bequeath Ikkemotubbe to sell to Grandfather or any man because on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realised, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing.'¹⁸⁰

Therefore, he moves himself and his wife into a bungalow provided by his wife's father and continues in the belief of the righteousness of his act. His wife desperately longs for the estate and offers herself to him in exchange for his acceptance of his inheritance, but he stands firm. So in the process of inflexibly adhering to his ideals, Ike alienates himself from his wife, his family, and realistically, from the world. For by escaping to an ascetic lifestyle and renouncing his heritage, fraught with evil and injustice though it may be, he effectively voids himself and the potential power of his ideals for change, making not only a neutral choice in that by withdrawing he effects no check of the evil he is opposed to, but actually producing a negative result in robbing himself, and those for whom he makes the gesture, of the positive power to make a difference.

When Ben Redmond murders his father, Bayard is again faced at the age of twenty-four with a situation he resolved with such violent and grotesque means while only fifteen. Again, his elders, those who are supposedly setting an example for him to follow, are arrayed on the side of tradition, of the violently visceral and unthinking reaction their ideology both expects and

demands. George Wyatt and other men from Colonel Sartoris' old troop await his arrival from college until well after midnight, with "that curious vulture-like formality which Southern men assume in such situations."¹⁸¹ Still under the influence of the wartime ideology which effaced their individual natures, they are cattle, "like so many men who return from wars to live on Government reservations like so many steers, emasculate and empty of all save an identical experience which they cannot forget and dare not, else they would cease to live at that moment, almost interchangeable save for the old habit of answering to a given name."¹⁸² Faulkner makes a subtle allusion to the literary tradition of the Greek chorus, describing the scene as "Wyatt and the others stood with the unctuous formality which the Southern man shows in the presence of death—that Roman holiday engendered by mist-born Protestantism grafted onto this land of violent sun, of violent alteration from snow to heat-stroke which has produced a race impervious to both."¹⁸³ The Colonel's body is on display in the parlor, in full regimental uniform, "sabre, plumes, and all;"¹⁸⁴ in the face of overwhelming tragedy, these men have smothered their grief in ritual and ceremony, the abstraction of formality rendering their overpowering emotions manageable, capable of being channeled towards revenge. The old troopers simply cannot wait for their brand retributive justice, Wyatt even offering to "...take this off your hands, any of us. Me."¹⁸⁵ His stated motive for relieving Bayard of the duty, the honor, is, "You're young, just a boy, you ain't had any experience in this kind of thing. Besides, you got them two ladies in the house to think about. He would understand, all right."¹⁸⁶ Wyatt's belief in Bayard's youth and innocence are cruelly ironic in light of the latter's more than sufficient experience with Grumby. Even such a learned man as Professor Wilkins, with whom Bayard has been studying law for "three college years," stands by nervously when the younger man, The Sartoris, first hears the news, "trying to find the words with which to offer me his pistol too. I could almost hear him: 'Ah, this unhappy land, not ten years recovered from the fever yet still men must kill one another, still we must pay Cain's price in his own coin.'"¹⁸⁷ Although it seems as if the Professor regrets the killing and violence, the quote implies a fatalism which precludes an individual's ability to stop the madness; in effect, his compassion means nothing, for it makes no tangible contribution to the

end of all killing, whatever the reasons. Quite the contrary; as Bayard is leaving, "Professor Wilkins was still somewhere beside or behind me and still offering me the pistol and horse in a dozen different ways."¹⁸⁸ Bayard's peers also pressure him to fulfill the code. On the way home Ringo, who in some ways has "changed even less than I had since that day since that day when we had nailed Grumby's body to the door of the old compress,"¹⁸⁹ suggests, "We could bushwhack him.... Like we done Grumby that day. But I reckon that wouldn't suit that white skin you walks around in."¹⁹⁰ Ringo, virtually a Sartoris himself, desires vengeance, but instinctively feels the change that has come over Bayard in the intervening years since they killed and disfigured Grumby. Bayard, thinking of home, anticipates having to face his cousin Drusilla, now Colonel Sartoris' widow. She also upholds the Southern ideology, having been indoctrinated while fighting in the War as a member of the Colonel's regiment, where, in her own words, "...in the troop I was just another man and not much of one at that..."¹⁹¹ Her statement, "We went to the war to hurt Yankees..."¹⁹² evinces the ideological filter through which she views the world. Due to her own attachment to the myth, Bayard foresees this scene:

Drusilla would be waiting for me beneath all the festive glitter of the chandeliers, in the yellow ball gown and the sprig of verbena in her hair, holding the two load pistols (...I could see her, in the formal brilliant room arranged formally for obsequy, not tall, not slender as a woman is but as a youth, a boy, is, motionless, in yellow, the face calm, almost bemused, the head simple and severe, the balancing sprig of verbena above each ear, the two arms bent at the elbows, the two hands shoulder high, the two identical duelling pistols lying upon, not clutched in, one to each: the Greek amphora priestess of a succinct and formal violence).¹⁹³

The sublimation of Drusilla's insistence to mythic Greek proportions is an indication of just how lost she is within the seduction of ideology. Her words serve to indicate the seriousness of her delusion: "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. No; I. I gave it to you; I put it into your hands; Oh you will thank me, you will remember me when I am dead and you are an old man saying to himself, 'I have tasted all

things."¹⁹⁴ She does to recognize, or refuses to acknowledge, the significance of the Colonel's renunciation of violence, clinging instead to his old and outdated ways. Drusilla continues to demonize the opposition long after the war is over, overruling Bayard's objection that the victim's of the Colonel's violent ways were men, human beings, with convenient labels as justification for unspeakable acts: "They were Northerners, foreigners who had no business here. They were pirates."¹⁹⁵ In fact, she sees their deaths as positive acts: "There are worse things than killing men, Bayard. There are worse things than being killed. Sometimes I think the finest thing that can happen to a man is to love something, a woman preferably, well, hard hard hard, then to die young because he believed what he could not help but believe and was what he could not (could not? would not) help but be.' Now she was looking at me in a way she never had before."¹⁹⁶ She commands Bayard to kiss her, causing an association in his mind with the Fall, thinking "then of the woman of thirty, the symbol of the ancient and eternal Snake and of the men who have written of her, and I realised then the immitigable chasm between all life and all print—that those who can, do, those who cannot and suffer enough because they can't, write about it."¹⁹⁷ The last phrase emphasizes Faulkner's own conviction that ideals which stay ideals and are prevented from being put into practice lose their force, their efficacy. Drusilla presses Bayard to fulfill her ideal of the rite of manhood so that her attraction to him, now that the Colonel is dead, might finally be realized and fully consummated.

Bayard is unmoved. He has already made up his mind; now the only doubt in his mind and heart is whether he will have the courage to act in a manner which will be considered cowardice:

...Already I was beginning to realise, to become aware of that which I still had no yardstick to measure save that one consisting of what, despite myself, despite my raising and background (or maybe because of them) I had for some time known I was becoming and had feared the test of it; I remember how I thought while her hands still rested on my shoulders: *At least this will be my chance to find out if I am what I think I am or if I just hope; if I am going to do what I have taught myself is right or if I am just going to wish I were.*¹⁹⁸

He clearly comprehends that in order to give his father's death meaning, in order for the Colonel's refusal to draw his weapon and perpetuate the cycle of violence and bloodshed, he must make a stand. His principles will carry no substance until they are put into practice, even at the risk of personal injury, or death. In what might have been a final goodbye, Bayard, having already decided his course of action, ignores the temptations the Professor offers him, until

...I realised that what Professor Wilkins wanted was to shake my hand. We shook hands; I knew he believed he was touching flesh which might not be alive tomorrow night and I thought for a second how if I told him what I was going to do, since we had talked about it, about how if there was anything at all in the Book, anything of hope and peace for His blind and bewildered spawn which He had chosen above all others to offer immortality, *Thou shalt not kill* must be it, since maybe he even believed that he had taught it to me except that he had not, nobody had, not even myself since it went further than just having been learned. But I did not tell him. He was too old to be forced so, to condone even in principle such a decision; he was too old to have to stick to principle in the face of blood and raising and background, to be faced without warning and made to deliver like by a highwayman out of the dark: only the young could do that—one still young enough to have his youth supplied him gratis as a reason (not an excuse) for cowardice.¹⁹⁹

This conclusion, the idea that in order to break free of the bonds of the old ideology youth must step forward, becomes increasingly prevalent in Faulkner's later public and private writings. Still, he faces the coming storm with extremely mixed emotions. He tells Aunt Jenny, "You see, I want to be taught well of." To which she answers, "I do. ...Even if you spend the day hidden in the stable loft, I still do."²⁰⁰ Bayard rides into town, catching a glimpse of the new courthouse, with its implicit emphasis on justice, but a justice meted out by law and order, where Ringo joins him; Bayard sees "the pistol, the outline of it inside his shirt, probably the one we had taken from Grumby that day we killed him."²⁰¹ George Wyatt also meets him en route, offering his own pistol when Bayard admits he is not carrying his father's derringer. After Bayard's refusal, Wyatt speaks "in a whisper thin with fury: 'Who are you? Is your name Sartoris? By God, if you don't kill him, I'm going to.'"²⁰² Bayard makes clear to him that this is a family affair and that only a Sartoris will do what is to be done, hearing which Wyatt calms and replies, still misunderstanding

Bayard's intent because he is limited by his own limited view, "You'll have to excuse me, son. I should have knowed you wouldn't do anything that would keep John from laying quiet. We'll follow you and wait at the foot of the steps. And remember: he's a brave man, but he's been sitting in that office by himself since yesterday morning waiting for you and his nerves are on edge."²⁰³ Wyatt's characterization of Redmond as a "brave man" recalls Bayard's own realization in the Grumby case that "you might frighten a brave man, but that nobody dared frighten a coward"²⁰⁴; at least in the present situation Bayard can be assured of fair play. Bayard mounts the stairs to Redmond's office, enters, and without a word walks steadily towards him in a "dreamlike state in which there was neither time nor distance, as though the mere act of walking was no more intended to encompass space than was his sitting."²⁰⁵ Redmond raises his pistol and fires, but Bayard sees that Redmond is clearly not aiming at him and hears no bullets. Redmond lays the pistol down "in short jerks," rises "with a queer ducking motion of his head;" grabbing "his hat from the rack and with his head still ducked aside and one hand extended," he heads "on to the station where the south-bound train was just in and got on it with no baggage, nothing, and went away from Jefferson and from Mississippi and never came back."²⁰⁶ Hearing the shots and seeing Redmond leave in such a hurry, Wyatt and the other men rush up the stairs, believing Bayard slain like his father, but find him holding the pistol, his head down on the desk. "My God!" George Wyatt cried. 'You took the pistol away from him and then missed him, missed him *twice*?' Then he answered himself—that same rapport for violence which Drusilla had and which in George's case was actual character judgment: 'No; wait. You walked in here without even a pocket knife and let him miss you twice. My God in heaven.'²⁰⁷ The episode ends on a hopeful note, with George the old ideologue beginning to understand the choice, the individual thoughtful decision free of the trappings of ideology and tradition, based upon the fundamental belief in the right of all men, Ben Redmond included, to freedom and liberty, and most of all, life:

"...You ain't done anything to be ashamed of. I wouldn't have done it that way, myself.

I'd a shot at him once, anyway. But that's your way or you wouldn't have done it"

"Yes," I said. "I would do it again."

"Be damned if I would.—You want to come home with me? We'll have time to eat and then ride out there in time for the —" But I couldn't do that either.

"No," I said. "I'm not hungry after all. I think I'll go home."

"Don't you want to wait and ride out with me?"

"No. I'll go on."

"You don't want to stay here, anyway." He looked around the room again, where the smell of powder smoke still lingered a little, still lay somewhere on the hot dead air though invisible now, blinking a little with his fierce pale unintroverted eyes. "Well by God," he said again. "Maybe you're right, maybe there has been enough killing in your family without—Come on." We left the office. I waited at the foot of the stairs and soon Ringo came up with the horses. We crossed the square again. There were no feet on the Holston House railing now (it was twelve o'clock) but a group of men stood before the door who raised their hats and I raised mine and Ringo and I rode on.²⁰⁸

A Fable

Traditional criticism of *A Fable* has tended to read the novel as an allegory of Christ's life; all the major elements are present: the twelve disciples, the Last Supper, the Three Temptations, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection. However, it may be instructive to view the story not as a strict allegory so much as a loose analogy, a sublimation of some of the most powerful symbols of Western thought. Faulkner himself encouraged this line of thinking, stating: "I think that whenever my imagination and the bounds of that pattern [of Christ's life] conflicted, it was the pattern that bulged...that gave. When something had to give it wasn't the imagination, the pattern shifted and gave. That may be the reason that a man has to rewrite and rewrite—to reconcile imagination and pattern."²⁰⁹ Joseph Blotner calls *A Fable* "a novel saturated with Christian lore but one which employs it in the service of what is to me Faulkner's fundamental Humanism rather than Christianity."²¹⁰ Furthermore, Faulkner, in one of his private letters, clearly indicated that the Christ-like figure, a corporal in the French army during the First World War, is not meant to literally represent Christ but to serve as a metaphor for the sentiment in all men which desires to end war, "some movement in mankind which wished to stop war forever."²¹¹ It was merely convenient to use the figure of Christ because of the *a priori* associations most readers would already have; associations which seem to have hampered rather than contributed to its understanding and acceptance. Thus *A Fable*, with its strong use of powerful traditional symbols, is often overlooked or at least relegated to the rank of a 'minor work' because of the perception of it as simply a medium of "naked ideas."²¹² The importance of ideas within the context of the novel, occupying a more prominent role than in any of Faulkner's previous novels, so the criticism goes, robs the story and the individual characters of the richness and variety which are the strength of his 'major works.' Granted that this is true at least in some degree as regards the characters patterned after Christian archetypes, *A Fable* is nevertheless significant in that it is the

conscious attempt of a mature artist to sum up the conclusions of his life's experience, to communicate through his art the lessons he has learned and wishes to share. Elements of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech and other public pronouncements are found within the novel. Further, it must be remembered that Faulkner worked on *A Fable* for over a decade, wanting it to be just right, his work on the novel spanning the years from the closing days of the Second World War, which was the immediate impetus for the novel's genesis, to his increasing role as elder statesman of American letters in the early 1950s.

The corporal, as the Christ figure, is central to the novel, as central as Benjy Compson is to *The Sound and the Fury* or Donald Mahon to *Soldiers' Pay*; he is the centripetal force to which the other characters are drawn. The corporal himself receives very little attention and space in *A Fable*, and rightly so. His importance is as a symbol through which others draw or give meaning. The individual responses to what the corporal represents, and the elaboration of those responses, form the heart of the narrative. The corporal merely initiates the action and then fades into the background because of his already strongly circumscribed role as a Christ figure. But the real interest does not lie in his character; in fact, he has very little character to speak of. He is a simple man, illiterate, who comes from a remote, unnamed Eastern European nation; that much only is divulged. However, his instigation of a mutiny in a French regiment during May 1918 informs the plot and subplots. For what the corporal and the mutiny represent are the individual desire to end war and the individual's power, right, and duty to stand up and do so. Granted, one individual alone will not end war. But through webs of association and example, the overt act reaches many, who most likely feel the same way and decide for themselves that they too can effect change, curb the authority of mere "politicians and time-servers." But Faulkner, both in *A Fable* and in his nonfiction outlets, stresses that the power lies in the individual, not in humanity as a mass.

The madding crowd opens the novel as it rushes into the town of Chaulnesmont from the surrounding countryside, for it is their husbands and sons who are in the regiment which mutinies and who are subsequently put under arrest. Their grief and anguish has reduced them to an

almost bestial level, flowing from their "hive-dense tenements" where they huddle "in one vast tongueless brotherhood of dread and anxiety."²¹³ Faulkner takes great care in reinforcing the animal imagery whenever the crowd is described. The soldiers posted around the town view the masses pouring from the "warren'd purlieus"²¹⁴ with quiet unconcern, "as though to the troops themselves and to those who had ordered them here, the crowd was like the herd of Western cattle which, once got into motion about its own vortex, is its own warrant both of its own security and of the public's peace."²¹⁵ In fact, the military forces in the midst of the herd have an easy time "breasting through it behind the sharp and cleaving prow of their stripe and bars and stars and ribbons, like an armored ship (or, since a year ago now, a tank) through a shoal of fish."²¹⁶ The images of a ship and fish lead directly into the primary motif used to represent humanity in the mass: water. Keen Butterworth, elaborating on the use of water imagery, writes: "Water has its natural associations with life and is used frequently in literature to symbolize life or vitality."²¹⁷ A "bird's-eye view" yields this picture:

hovel and tenement voiding into land and alley and nameless *cul-de-sac*, and land and alley and *cul-de-sac* compounding into streets as the trickles became streams and the streams became rivers, until the whole city seemed to be pouring down the broad boulevards converging like wheel spokes into the *Place de Ville*, filling the *Place* and then, pressed on by the weight of its own covering mass, flowing like an unrecoiling wave up to the blank gates of the *Hôtel* where the three sentries of the three co-embattled nations flanked the three empty flagstaffs awaiting the three concordant flags.²¹⁸

But Faulkner's use of this motif goes beyond its purely symbolic form; there is an implicit philosophy behind his choice. Throughout the novel, the potential of the masses is emphasized, its passive elemental force; the crowd is "irresistible in the concord of its frail components like a wave in its drops"²¹⁹ and resembles "a vast and growing reservoir."²²⁰ The crowd's identification with water implies its ability to be channeled and directed, made to serve the uses of men clever or strong enough to suit them to their purposes, much as ancient millers used water wheels to furnish power for their work. Repeating the ship and fish analogy in different form, a cavalryman's

progress becomes movement "through the human river which made no effort to avoid him, which accepted the horse as water accepts a thrusting prow."²²¹ A line of infantry forms a "dyke of bayonets"²²² in order to push back the throng of bodies. The amorphous character of the mass, as it moves around and is shaped by buildings, monuments, and other physical obstructions, makes clear the crowd's sacrifice of individual identity and the assumption of elemental qualities which allow external forces to mold them.

Faulkner paints an uncompromising portrait in perhaps his most negative portrayal of the authoritarian structure of the military institution. Soldiers are separated from the rest of humanity by the "insuperable barrier of the vocation and livelihood..., relinquishing volition and the fear of hunger and decision, to the extent of even being paid a few sure sous a day for the privilege and right, at no other cost than obedience and the exposure and risk of his tender and brittle bones and flesh, of immunity forever for his natural appetites."²²³ The military institution imposes upon them a structure which abstracts their identities in a different manner than the elemental reduction of the crowd, but with a similar result. The men of the lowest ranks are mere automatons, who "in return for the right and the chance to wear on the battle-soiled breast of his coat the battle-grimed symbolical candy-stripes of valor and endurance and fidelity and physical anguish and sacrifice, he had sold his birthright in the race of man. But he did not show it. The candy-stripes themselves were the reason that he could not, and his wearing of them the proof that he would not."²²⁴ Thus free of the "fear of hunger and decision," they are merely expected to do as they are ordered, unflinchingly and unquestioningly; they are pawns to be moved about and eliminated by higher forces. The character who best exemplifies the disposable nature of the military is General Gragnon, the division commander of the regiment which mutinies. He is one who "had been intended by fate itself to be the perfect soldier:"

At seventeen, he was an enlisted private; at twenty-four, he had been three years a sergeant and of such destined promise that his regimental commander (himself a self-made man who had risen from the ranks) gave no one any rest until the protégé also had his chance for officers' school; by 1914 he had established a splendid record as a desert colonel of Spahis, and, immediately in

France itself, the beginning of an unimpeachable one as a brigadier, so that to those who believed in him and watched his career (he had no influence either, and no friends too save those, like the obscure colonel of his sergeantry, whom he had made, earned himself by his own efforts and record) there seemed no limit to his destiny save the premature end of the war itself.²²⁵

But inexplicably his career stalls and those around him begin to question his efficacy. The final insult comes in the form of the regiment's mutiny, an act of insubordination which calls into question in dramatic fashion his ability to command. True to his inflexible protocol, Gragnon asks for permission to execute the entire regiment not as a deterrent, "not for justice for himself but for vindication of his military record."²²⁶ The irony lies in the fact that in requesting to sacrifice the regiment for his record, he discovers that he in turn has been sacrificed for the records of his immediate superiors:

It was because that same trained judgment saw at once that this particular attack was intended to fail: a sacrifice already planned and doomed in some vaster scheme, in which it would not matter either way, whether the attack failed or not: only that the attack must be made: and more than that, since here the whole long twenty-odd years of training and dedication paid him off in clairvoyance; he saw the thing not only from its front and public view, but from behind it too: the cheapest attack would be one which must fail, harmlessly to all if delivered by a man who had neither friends nor influence to make people with five stars on the General Staff, or civilians with red rosettes in the Quai d'Orsay, squirm. ...*Lallemont is saving his own neck.* He thought—and now he knew that he was indeed lost—*It's Mama Bidet.*²²⁷

Even after realizing the duplicity of corps commander Lallemont and group commander Bidet, he registers virtually no protest and instead posits the blame on the regiment, which is obviously more expedient since the two generals are his superiors and the men in the regiment are not. Gragnon is sacrificed because of his inflexibility, carrying even the military's rigid discipline to excess. An ideologue to the very end, Gragnon makes his ridiculous request of the old Marshal, the commander-in-chief of all the Allied armies, even while under arrest, his sword lying before him representing "in its furled scabbard the corpse of his career."²²⁸ But if Gragnon is merely intransigent and caught up in his own dreams of military glory and splendor, his superiors are truly

evil. Lallemond views war as an expedient which ensures his own eminence: "The boche doesn't want to destroy us, any more than we would want, could afford, to destroy him. Cant you understand: either of us, without the other, couldn't exist?"²²⁹ Lallemond's adversary is not the German soldier, but the sea of humanity he so despises:

"It is man who is our enemy: the vast seething moiling spiritless mass of him. Once to each period of his inglorious history, one of us appears with the stature of a giant, suddenly and without warning in the middle of a nation as a dairymaid enters a butter, and with his sword for paddle he heaps and pounds and stiffens the malleable mass and even holds it cohered and purposeful for a time. ...We hauled them up out of their ignominious mud by their bootstraps; in one more little instant they might have changed the world's face. But they never do. They collapse, as yours [Gragnon's regiment] did this morning. They always will. But not us. We will even drag them willy-nilly up again, in time, and they will collapse again. But not us. It wont be us."²³⁰

Lallemond expresses a deep and bitter cynicism concerning human life, explicitly postulating a natural hierarchy of worth. His extreme elitism is a stunning critique on Faulkner's part of the nature of leadership: Those who lead are the exemplars of the human race, "giants" among men who have the right and privilege to raise up and dispose of others at will, playing a game where human lives are exchanged as though "gambling a petty stake."²³¹ Group commander Bidet, whose very name is evocative of his view of humanity, sees the "lesser" beings around him not even

as a functioning animal but as a functioning machine in the same sense that the earthworm is: alive purely and simply for the purpose of transporting, without itself actually moving, for the distance of its corporeal length, the medium in which it lives, which, given time, would shift the whole earth that infinitesimal inch, leaving at last its own blind insatiate jaws chewing nothing above the spinning abyss: that cold, scathing, contemptuous preoccupation with body vents and orifices and mucous membrane as though he himself owned neither, who declared that no army was better than its anus, since even without feet it could still crawl forward and fight, and so earned his nickname becuase of his inflexible belief in his doctrine....²³²

Bidet exhibits a curious fear for the potential power of humanity and his own role in keeping the masses ignorant of that power:

'They may even stop the wars, as they have done before and will again; ours merely to guard them from the knowledge that it was actually they who accomplished that act. Let the whole vast moil and seethe of man confederate in stopping wars if they wish, so long as we can prevent them learning that they have done so. A moment ago you [Gragnon] said that we must enforce our rules, or die. It's no abrogation of a rule that will destroy us. It's less. The simple effacement from man's memory of a single word will be enough. But we are safe. Do you know what that word is? ...Fatherland.'²³³

Within Bidet's cold calculations lie the heart of Faulkner's opposition to ideology: The use of banners and slogans to keep individuals from the knowledge of their own abilities, instead channeling those abilities for the selfish ends of others, the self-appointed leaders of humanity. But in a subtly ironic touch, Bidet's lack of vision and faith in humanity is manifested in his

wearing spectacles of such fierce magnification that he was almost blind without them, and even with them too since for a third of the time the lenses were sweated to opaqueness and he spent another third wiping them dry with the end of his burnous in order to see at all before sweating them blind again, and who had brought into the field life of that regiment of desert cavalry something of the monastery, something of the cold fierce blinkless intolerant glare which burns at midnight in the dedicated asepsis of clinical or research laboratories....²³⁴

The group commander's sterile conception of the inherent worth of humanity demonstrates the callousness and utter disregard Authority has for any but its own needs. If the Allied commanders are merciless and thoroughly unsympathetic, their German counterpart is no less so. The German general is brought across the lines of battle in an elaborate plot wherein his plane is shot at for appearances with blank artillery shells; the substitution of blanks for live shells occurs at the higher levels and the soldiers firing the anti-aircraft guns believe they are actually doing their duty. In a sense, they are: the enemy general has been invited to a special conference with the Allied commanders and is flown to a British aerodrome, or airfield. As a sign of his ruthlessness and the

insignificance of an inferior's life, the general shoots his pilot in the face immediately after landing.

This explanation is given to the British soldiers who witness the brutal act:

'Germans fight wars by the rule-books. By the book, a German pilot who lands an undamaged German aeroplane containing a German lieutenant general on an enemy aerodrome is either a traitor or a coward, and he must die for it. That poor bloody bugger probably knew while he was eating his breakfast sausage and beer this morning what was going to happen to him. If the general hadn't done it here, they would probably shoot the general himself as soon as they got their hands on him again.'²³⁵

The German general's strict adherence to the formal requirements of his profession are reminiscent of General Gragnon's own inflexibility and intolerance. It is interesting to note that as a figure of authority, the German general blames his immediate superiors for the blight of war: "It's the politicians, the civilian imbeciles who compel us every generation to have to rectify the blunders of their damned international horse-trading."²³⁶ He muses only half-jokingly about an alliance of the generals and their respective military powers, a collective power which might challenge the authority which controls them, so that the military could stop "engaging each other with half a hand because the other hand and a half was required to defend our back areas from our own politicians and priests."²³⁷ His is the most scathing and truthful indictment of the structure of Authority: In the clamor and din of mutual accusation and suspicion, each party blames every other party while attempting to maintain, if not increase, its own power. But if questioned directly, each party denies responsibility and insists on its own innocence and integrity. The confederation of the generals is a brilliant microcosm of the world of Authority at large with its lack of faith in, and willingness to exploit, humanity.

As commander-in-chief of the Allied forces, the old Marshal best represents the cynicism which informs Authority's exploitation and manipulation of the masses. Keen Butterworth sums up the various roles which the Marshal assumes in the novel: "He is like [Pontius] Pilate because he has the Christ figure executed; he is like Caesar because he commands most of the military forces of the world; he is like Satan because he offers the Christ figure three temptations; and he

is like God because the Christ figure is his son."²³⁸ The citizens of Chaulnesmont, believing the ideological arguments presented to them, think of the Marshal as a hero, the savior of France. For the first half of the book, the reader is only allowed glimpses of the Marshal as he stands above the crowd, "the lone gray man supreme, omnipotent and inaccessible"²³⁹ with "a face wise, intelligent and unbelieving, who no longer believed in anything but his disillusion and his intelligence and his limitless power."²⁴⁰ Although Faulkner never directly states the cause, or causes, of the Marshal's disillusion, the most likely reason is the character's fallen sense of idealism. As a youth, the Marshal had all the makings of a future millionaire and aristocrat: he was the "nephew of a Cabinet Minister...[and] the godson of the board chairman of that gigantic international federation producing munitions which, with a few alterations in the lettering stamped into the head of each cartridge- and shell- case, fitted almost every military rifle and pistol and light field-piece in all the Western Hemisphere and half the Eastern too."²⁴¹ His classmates in the military Academy viewed him with equal amounts of envy and pride, believing that they "had seen at once in that seventeen-year-old face the promise of a destiny which would be the restored...glory and destiny of France too."²⁴² With all the potential power at his command, he needs no family influence whatsoever in graduating at the top of his class. Additionally, he declines to accept a prestigious captaincy upon graduation, an honor which his peers jealously covet, instead opting for an obscure assignment at a remote outpost in Africa. Although no one understands the move, it is implied that the "golden youth" has repudiated his birthright, refusing to advance through the corrupt means of nepotism. His actions parallel those of Isaac McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses*, who refused his inheritance of the family farm because of its foundation in slavery and the ills that came with it. The tenure of the man who will someday be Marshal is quiet until a native woman of the local Riff tribe is violated and murdered. The Riff tribesmen inform the young commander that the only acceptable recompense for these crimes is the life of the man who committed them; otherwise, there will be war. The isolation of the outpost, which is already outnumbered by the Riff, guarantees the complete annihilation of the young man's entire troop, but he devises a plan remarkable for its expediency: He informs his men of the Riff tribe's

threat of war and asks for a volunteer to ride to the next outpost for reinforcements, knowing that it will be the man who committed the crime who will step forward. Step forward he does, and the commander sends him on his way that night. The Riff catch and kill the criminal, just as the commander expected, knowing that they would be watching the camp. By assuming the mantle of leadership, he knowingly, and deceptively, sends a man to his death. Unable to reconcile himself to the sacrifices necessary in order to maintain power, the young man leaves his post and retreats to a "Tibetan lamasery"²⁴³ and neither seen nor heard from for thirteen years. Sometime during this retreat he seduces a married woman in one of the countries through which he travels and fathers the child who will become the corporal, leaving both behind. But when he returns to France on the eve of the Great War, he has suddenly attained the rank of general. In his new position, achieved no doubt through his family connections, he resembles, although an old man now, "a masquerading child beneath the illusion of crushing and glittering weight of his blue-and-scarlet and gold and brass and leather."²⁴⁴ Faulkner repeats the motif of the terrible burden of responsibility which the Marshal bears, but there is reason to believe that the Marshal, in finally giving in to the crucifix of his heritage, has become as hardened and cynical as generals Lallemoné and Bidet. The Marshal is a prototype for the modern politician, the man who always knows exactly what to say to appease another and who stands out in a crowd. His ability to manipulate arguments and other men is evident in his dominance of the Quartermaster General, a situation to be discussed later in this study. The Marshal shows similar skill in trying to persuade his own son, the corporal, to beg pardon and confess the error of leading the men into mutiny in the scene which parallels the Three Temptations. With the skill of a man seeking higher office, the Marshal continually shifts his position, feeling for the corporal's weak points, offering the corporal first freedom and then power by his side:

Because for your profit, I must destroy all eleven of you and so compound tenfold the value of your threat and sacrifice. For my profit, I must let them go too, to be witnesses to all the earth that you forsook them; for, talk as much and as loudly and as long as they will, who to believe in the value—value? validity—of the faith they preach when you, its prophet and instigator, elected

your liberty to its martyrdom? No no, we are not two Greek or Armenian or Jewish—or for that matter, Norman—peasants swapping a horse: we are two articulations, self-elected possibly, anyway elected, anyway postulated, not so much to defend as to test two inimical conditions which, through no fault of ours but through the simple paucity and restrictions of the arena where they meet, must contend and—one of them—perish: I champion of this mundane earth which, whether I like it or not, is, and to which I did not ask to come, yet since I am here, not only must stop but intend to stop during my allotted while; you champion of an esoteric realm of man's baseless hopes and his infinite capacity—no: passion—for unfact. No, they are not inimical really, there is no contest actually; they can even exist side by side together in this one restricted arena, and could and would, had yours not interfered with mine. So once more: take the earth.²⁴⁵

In this thoroughly unsentimental and unfatherly passage, the full extent of the Marshal's cynicism and corruption comes to light. He seems to blame the corporal's death not on his own order but on some ephemeral concept of ruthless Fate, the father and the son locked in a predestined death struggle and unable to compromise their respective positions. Or at least, he is unable, or rather unwilling, to compromise his position; the Marshal has no reservations whatsoever in asking the corporal to compromise his own position and the threat to the father's supreme power which the son represents. The Marshal fully understands that his reign is entirely predicated on his taking advantage of humanity's vice, namely war. He achieves security for himself by recognizing and even planning for "the quality-mark and warrant of man's immortality: his deathless folly."²⁴⁶

The old Marshal is perfectly willing to throw commoners their bread and circuses as long as his power remains unquestioned. Although the Marshal's words echo Faulkner's own in several places, especially regarding humanity's ability to endure and prevail, it would be a mistake to assume he has any love of his fellow beings. Rather, like any effective figure of authority, he has all the contingencies covered and adopts those positions which he finds necessary and expedient at different times and places. Judith Wittenberg accounts for some of the inconsistencies in the characterization of the Marshal by pointing to Faulkner's identification with the character as a patriarchal figure; after all, Wittenberg writes, "Faulkner dedicated *A Fable* to his own child, Jill, because it was published the year she became twenty-one and 'she had inherited lots of my

traits.... This was just a gesture toward her when she became of age and was no longer under my thumb."²⁴⁷ But it is clear from the Marshal's cynicism that he holds very little faith in the idealism of his youth and the potential of humanity. The Marshal has substituted ideology for ideals and his is a disillusioned view of the world; Satan, too, was a fallen angel.

In addition to the Marshal, the novel focuses strongly on other individuals struggling to come to terms with the ideal the corporal represents and their own particular set of values. In a statement written concerning *A Fable* intended probably as dust jacket copy or "pre-publication publicity,"²⁴⁸ Faulkner first puts forward his conception of three of the novel's characters as "the trinity of man's conscience":

Levine, the young English pilot, who symbolizes the nihilistic third; the old French Quartermaster general, who symbolizes the passive third; the British battalion runner, who symbolizes the active third—Levine, who sees evil and refuses to accept it by destroying himself; who says 'Between nothing and evil, I will take nothing;' who in effect, to destroy evil, destroys the world too, i.e., the world which is his, himself—the old Quarter master General who says in the last scene, 'I am not laughing. What you see are tears;' i.e., there is evil in the world; I will bear both, the evil and the world too, and grieve for them—the battalion runner, the living scar, who in the last scene says, 'That's right; tremble I'm not going to die—never.' i.e., there is evil in the world and I'm going to do something about it.²⁴⁹

Faulkner would continue to articulate this view in both private and public forums.²⁵⁰ Not only are the three characters representative of the trinity of man's conscience, but they also represent the paths taken by humanity's idealism and the struggle to either confirm it with, or conform it to, an imperfect world.

The first path of nihilism is the most extreme of the three alternatives. Faced with the disparity between the perfection required by, and implicit to, a fixed set of ideals and the vagaries of human experience, the idealist chooses the ultimate refutation of that experience, an experience so troublesome to the set patterns of a sterile epistemology as to require the final and unanswerable counterargument: Death. Young David Levine does not simply withdraw from the

world, as Horace Benbow, Reverend Mahon, and Ike McCaslin do; he gives up the world completely. The excessive end to which Levine retreats is an index of his complete submission to the ideology of war. Like Julian Lowe, another innocent to the cruel realities of war, he is entirely entranced by martial dreams. "[H]is mind, his whole being, was sleepless and athirst with the ringing heroic catalogue: Ball: McCudden: Mannock: Bishop: Barker: Rhys Davies: and above all, simply: England."²⁵¹ He even feels cheated of the "old commission in the old glorious corps" of the Royal Flying Corps, having to settle for the less prestigious Royal Air Force because Fate had conspired to end the existence of the RFC on April Fool's day, supplanting it with, in his mind, a lesser entity:

he didn't even own the old official Flying Corps tunic at all: his was the new RAF thing not only unmartial but even a little epicene, with its cloth belt and no shoulder-straps like the coat of the adult leader of a neo-Christian boys' club and the narrow pale blue ring around each cuff and the hat-bade like a field marshal's until you saw, remarked, noticed the little modest dull gold pin on either side of it like lingerie-clips or say the christening's gift-choice by godfathers whose good taste had had to match their pocketbooks.²⁵²

His pride and concern with military etiquette remind one of an equally vainglorious, but younger and inexperienced, counterpart to General Gragnon. When Levine hears of the ceasefire following the mutiny on the front, he despairs of a chance to ever prove himself in battle while at the same time secretly relishing the fact that it was the French, and not the British, who called for an armistice. Resigning himself to the prospect of peace, he rationalizes his disappointment not as a missed opportunity for glory, but as the failure to repay the cost of his training as a pilot: "not the bones and meat so much as the nerves, muscles, which had been trained by a government in a serious even though temporary crisis to follow one highly specialised trade, then the government passed the crisis, solved the dilemma needing it, before he had had a chance to repay the cost of the training."²⁵³ He cannot bring himself to finish an incomplete letter to his mother because the cessation of guns has robbed them of their meaning; rather, although he cannot face up to this himself, the peace has robbed him of his meaning. With great surprise, and relish too, he is

assigned to fly one more patrol with Captain Bridesman and a major. The mission is the turning point of his experience. Levine follows the two officers as they shadow a German plane which crosses into Allied territory, amidst heavy bombardment by anti-aircraft batteries. Inexplicably, despite some very close hits by shells, and seemingly direct hits from Levine's own tracer fire, the German plane emerges unscathed and lands safely at the British aerodrome. After the German general shoots his pilot, he is politely escorted away by British soldiers; Captain Bridesman even restrains one of his own men from killing him. Wanting a memento of the occasion to prove he was there, Levine hurriedly asks for Bridesman's help to "borrow the Jerry general's hat. Or maybe just the monocle will be enough—no: just the pistol to hold in my hand."²⁵⁴ Failing this, Levine's attention quickly reverts back to the anomalous ineffectiveness of the Allied fire on the German plane. Levine devises an experiment: Bridesman fires a tracer shell at him directly from the plane. Normally resulting in death, the tracer merely knocks him backward a little, the phosphorus from the shell setting his overalls on fire; the shells he had been firing contained no bullets. Levine suddenly realizes the great deception at play and his role as a pawn within the game; they chose him precisely because he was inexperienced and ignorant, in fact counting on those two traits and his romantic dreams to keep him quiet. The runner observes, "that pilot would have been a child of course, too young for them to have dared inform him in advance, too young to be risked with the knowledge that fact and truth are not the same...."²⁵⁵ Symbolically, through that night and the next morning, Levine observes as the phosphorus slowly eats away at his uniform, matching his erosion of faith in the system. The stink caused by the chemicals in the tracer dominates Levine's senses, representing the stench of hypocrisy of an ideology which has demonized the enemy and commanded its men to kill yet safely escorts the same enemy across the lines, where he kills one of his own men. Frantically trying to recover his faith in the purity of martial valor and glory, his thoughts race to denial: "*Because it's got to last; no more: not last until, just last.*"²⁵⁶ However the "slow thick invisible burning"²⁵⁷ proves too much for him to bear: he retreats to the cloistral darkness of the latrine, "latched the invisible door and drew the invisible pistol from his tunic pocket and," in an absolutely beautiful choice of words, "thumbed

the safety off."²⁵⁸ Confronted by the hypocrisy and bad faith of the sheltering blanket of ideology which offered him the safety of glorious deeds and heroic escapades, he is unable to come to terms with his own disillusionment and chooses suicide.

Levine is not the only idealist who makes this choice: the priest who attempts to convert the corporal Thursday night also embraces death rather than face his disillusionment. The priest is plagued with a formalism in ideology of titles and appearances similar to Levine's trivial distinction between the RFC and the RAF. Although they are "almost of an age," the priest calls the corporal "my son" and insists pettishly that the corporal call him "Father," commensurate with the dignity and status of his office. From their dialogue, it becomes clear that the priest has a clear memory for the mere letter of Christian teachings, but is far from understanding and practicing the Spirit; he makes subtle shifts in his theology in order to respond to the corporal's objections. Additionally, he insists not on Christian principles of love and the affirmation of man, stating unequivocally that religion must be founded not on

a nebulous and airy faith but instead it must be a *church*, an *establishment*, a morality of behavior inside which man could exercise his right and duty for free will and decision, not for a reward resembling the bedtime tale which soothes the child into darkness, but the reward of being able to cope peacefully, hold his own, with the hard durable world in which (whether he would ever know why or not wouldn't matter either because now he could cope with that too) he found himself.²⁵⁹

To him, the supernatural aspect of faith, its inexplicable nature, is a worthless "bedtime tale" to be supplanted by security in the "hard durable world"; despite himself, the priest echoes the Marshal's thoughts on security in a "mundane world." His placement of the institution before or above the principle clearly separates him from the corporal, aligning with the Marshal, whose own institution molds and shapes men to obey unquestioningly the demands of ideology. The priest has been sent to convince the corporal to renounce himself, to save his own life at the expense of his cause. For a member of the clergy he takes a surprisingly worldly view, mentioning nothing at all about the afterlife and divine justice. In an attempt to blackmail him, the priest commands the

corporal to save not only himself, but General Gragnon, whose life he claims the corporal can spare by sparing his own. The additional burden of guilt is supposedly placed on the corporal's conscience in the priest's version of the story. But as the corporal repeatedly replies, it is not he who has ordered them to be executed; it is the Marshal's command. Unable to maintain his incoherent position any longer, the priest finally asks the corporal to save him. The corporal cannot; the priest must save himself. So reliant is the priest on an external source of values, though, he does not see at this most crucial point in his life the power latent within him, as a thinking individual, to effect his own salvation. What spirit of Christ's teachings he might have grasped has been subsumed under the edifice of the church. Blind with despair, he turns to leave as the corporal says, "You've forgotten your gear." Stopping, he replies, "So I have."²⁶⁰ The lines are an interesting repetition of the dialogue which appeared previously between the Marshal and the Quartermaster General, as the latter attempted to tender his resignation. One is tempted to draw comparisons between the father and the son from this parallel, but a crucial difference exists. The Marshal takes an active part in changing, or rather manipulating, the other officer's mind; it is another instance of his playing on the fears and weaknesses of others not even to his advantage, since the vacated position could easily be filled by another drone, but for his amusement. The corporal, however, merely stands firm in his own faith, making no attempt to direct the priest's thoughts, speaking only in defense of his own beliefs. The priest's change is brought about through revelation, a realization of his own from the corporal's example of the hollowness of his value system. Radical doubt springs from his own observations of the corporal's good works. Thinking of a time when he saw the corporal and his men before the mutiny, the priest instinctively feels distanced, "walled by the filth- and anguish-stained backs from where the thirteen would be standing in the circle's center," thinking: *"Yes, there were thirteen then and even now there are still twelve;* thinking, *Even if there were only one, only he, would be enough, more than enough,* thinking *Just that one to stand between me and safety, me and security, between me and peace...."*²⁶¹ The priest is haunted by the fidelity of the corporal's men and the corporal's simple faith. Like Levine, he thumbs "the safety off," figuratively speaking, but even in

death he shows a stultifying formalism ingrained no doubt by his many years of institutionalization, mimicking the wounds of Christ while impaling himself with a bayonet:

It was a spear, so I should have taken the rifle too, and then no more: thinking The left side, and I'm right handed, thinking But at least He wasn't wearing an infantryman's overcoat and a Magazin du Louvre shirt and so at least I can do that, opening the coat and throwing it back and then opening the shirt until he could feel the blade's cold minuscule point against his flesh and then the cold sharp whisper of the blade itself entering, beginning to make a sort of thin audible cry as though of astonishment at its own swiftness yet when he looked down at it barely the point itself had disappeared and he said aloud, quietly: 'Now what?' But He was not standing either, he thought He was nailed there and He will forgive me....²⁶²

The priest offers a stark contrast to the corporal in that he selfconsciously imitates Christ whereas the corporal acts in a naturally compassionate manner. Furthermore, the corporal is martyred and the priest simply commits suicide.

In a much less dramatic manner, the passive response to evil relegates a person to mere observer, possibly able to pity man but unable to effect meaningful change. In *A Fable*, passive characters are at best ambivalent or impotent, and at worst show a callous disregard for humanity. Describing the novel, Faulkner himself denies the effectiveness of pacifism, the only logical refuge for passive agents:

This is not a pacifist book. On the contrary, this writer holds almost as short a brief for pacifism as for war itself, for the reason that pacifism does not work, cannot cope with the forces which produce the wars...that to put an end to war, man must either find or invent something more powerful than war and man's aptitude for belligerence and his thirst for power at any cost, or use the fire itself to fight and destroy the fire with; that man may finally have to mobilize himself and arm himself with the implements of war to put an end to war; that the mistake we have consistently made is setting nation against nation or political ideology against ideology to stop war; that the men who do not want war may have to arm themselves as for war, and defeat by the methods of war the alliances of power which hold to the obsolete belief in the validity of war: who (the above alliances) must be taught to abhor war not for moral or economic reasons, or even for simple shame, but because they are afraid of it, dare not risk it since they know that in

war they themselves—not as nations or governments or ideologies, but as simple human beings vulnerable to death and injury—will be the first to be destroyed.²⁶³

The French Quartermaster General observes the deception and machinations of the Marshal throughout the novel yet never moves to counter the evil he witnesses. His role as passive observer is defined from the beginning and he never develops as a character or as a man. From the beginning he is portrayed as an appendage to the Marshal, clinging impotently to the power and glory the latter represents. The Quartermaster General should be given credit for his foresight; he sees in the person of the future Marshal the "golden destiny of an hereditary crown prince of paradise," and significantly stands "Number Two to the other's One on the day of graduation...."²⁶⁴ This is precisely the problem. His is a vicarious existence, positing his own aspirations for greatness in another's actions. He is also literally in love with the Marshal: "a man with a vast sick flaccid moon of a face and hungry and passionate eyes, who had looked once at that one which to all the world else had been that of any seventeen-year-old youth and relinquished completely to it like a sixty-year-old longtime widower to that of a pubic unconscious girl...."²⁶⁵ He worships the Marshal, along with the latter's Cabinet Minister uncle and board chairman godfather as an unholy Trinity as representations of power. The Quartermaster General glories, in a fatalistic manner, in the Marshal's assumption of the power which is his birthright; the act of nepotism affirming the former's dark sense of the unfailing rapacity of man. History is a testament to this rapacity, a rapacity he admires in the monuments and legends it has bequeathed us:

civilization itself is its password and Christianity its masterpiece, Chartres and the Sistine Chapel, the pyramids and the rock-wombed powder-magazines under the Gates of Hercules its altars and monuments, Michelangelo and Phidias and Newton...; the long deathless roster of its glory—Caesar...and the two Macedonians, our own Bonaparte and the great Russian and the giants who strode nimbused in red hair like fire across the Aurora Borealis, and all the lesser nameless who were not heroes but, glorious in anonymity, at least served the destiny of heroes....²⁶⁶

All men are not created equal, and he will be satisfied by merely being near greatness, serving anonymously his vision of the Marshal's destiny, which he believes is to save France. "So I'm to save France," the Marshal asks, and in subservient fashion comes: "France," he said, not even brusquely, not even contemptuously. "You will save man."²⁶⁷ Enraptured in the Marshal's potency, he seems to have little regard for the humanity which he believes the other will save. He applauds the Marshal's chicanery in sacrificing the man to the Riff tribe; the Quartermaster General views it as trivial choice of "abolishment of a blackguard or the preservation of a flyspeck,"²⁶⁸ neither worth pitying. The doctor with whom he is arguing about the morality of the decision continually insists that the criminal was nonetheless a man, a human being, which sentiment he deflects every time with unfeeling regard as the deserved fate of a "murderer" capable of "only thievery, buggery, sodomy—until now."²⁶⁹ But still, the doctor asserts, a man. A man susceptible to passions and lusts yet always a human being capable of both less and more; at least, capable of more than he, who sits idly by for another to raise him up. Raise him up the Marshal does, though, by offering him the appointment of Quartermaster General, to which gift he exults "with a sort of peaceful vindication not even of great and desperate hope now but of a simple reason, logic: *I will even see the end, accomplishment of it too. I will even be present there.*"²⁷⁰ His most unconscionable act is not blindly worshipping the Marshal, for many are misled by symbols and power, but holding on even when the Marshal's deception becomes apparent. As Quartermaster General, he is kept informed of all troop movements and thus learns of the German general's safe passage and of the barrage of the Allied side, ordered by the military powers making a "last base desperate cast in order to hold [their] last desperate and precarious place," on its own men who cross no man's land for the peaceable purpose of "naked and weaponless hand touching opposite naked and weaponless hand."²⁷¹ Disillusioned by the subterfuge and hypocrisy, he announces his intention to resign, feeling betrayed by the man whom he had believed would not only save the world but "would even absolve us of our failure due to our weakness and fears."²⁷² From the regiment's mutiny, he finally realizes that the world does not need saving by men like the Marshal, but protection and defense from them. However, this

course of action, even before the Marshal convinces him otherwise, exhibits his weakness: instead of using his position to actively combat the evil he sees, he chooses to resign. He even allows himself the vanity of a will to action which he does not possess: "I am responsible, mine is the blame and solely mine; without me and this warrant which you gave me that day three years ago, you could not have done this. By this authority I could have prevented you then, and even afterward I could have stopped it, remanded it."²⁷³ If he could have, why did he not? "While I did have a choice between could and would, between shall and must and cannot, between must and dare not, between *will do* and *I am afraid to do*: had that choice, and found myself afraid. Oh yes, afraid. But then why shouldn't I be afraid of you, since you are afraid of man?"²⁷⁴ Here again he proves wrong and the Marshal tells him, "I am not afraid of man. Fear implies ignorance. Where ignorance is not, you do not need to fear: only respect. I don't fear man's capacities, I respect them."²⁷⁵ Ever the politician, the Marshal undermines the Quartermaster General's new faith by revealing the betrayal of the corporal by one of his own men; the Marshal claims he does not use men, he is wary of them. In a final stroke, he points out the resignation as a sign of the Quartermaster General's own impotence, a "bitter self-flagellation"²⁷⁶ and an empty attempt at martyrdom which pales in comparison to the corporal's sacrifice. He must condemn the corporal, the Marshal says in his best manipulative logic, in order for the mutiny to have any meaning. Far be it for him to "render null and void what you call the hope and the dream of his sacrifice."²⁷⁷ Conquered at last (again), the Quartermaster General exits the office with halting jerky movements, "as though he were blind,"²⁷⁸ reminiscent of Ben Redmond's escape in *The Unvanquished*. As much as he grieves for humanity and the evil which is unnecessarily brought about by the Marshal's authoritarian regime, he cannot or will not act. Even in the end, he stands passively by as the Runner is beaten and discarded by the crowd, observing, "I am not laughing. What you see are tears."²⁷⁹

An equally noncommittal observer in the war is the Sentry, a former English groom. His post is appropriate to the role he has resigned himself to: "the sentry leaned at the aperture while the spaced star-shells sniffed and plopped and whispered down the greasy dark and the remote

gun winked and thudded and after a while winked and thudded again."²⁸⁰ His position is even worse than the Quartermaster General's in that he feels no connection whatsoever to humanity, content to watch "almost idly"²⁸¹ as events take form outside his window. Moreover, he in a lesser sense also capitalizes, like the Marshal, on man's "deathless folly." In an ingenious scheme, the Sentry gives out ten shillings to any man willing to take it, to be repaid at a rate of sixpence a day; the number of men subscribing changes constantly, from ten, at first, to twenty to thirty to an uncountable file outside his door. The men even sign over their "life assurance" policies to him.²⁸² hilariously, the upper levels of command think these actions are out of love, not realizing the pecuniary nature of the Sentry's relationship to the men. He is a strict professional, cold and detached: *"He has ethics, like a banker, not to his clients because they are people, but because they are clients. Not pity: he would bankrupt any—all—of them without turning a hair, once they had accepted the gambit; it's ethics toward his vocation, his trade, his profession. It's purity. No: it's even more than that: it's chastity, like Caesar's wife...."*²⁸³ He plays the odds, and plays them well, with a deterministic certainty of a tidy return: "You mean that all that out there is just a perfectly healthy and normal panic, like a market-crash: necessary to keep the body itself strong and hale? that the ones who die and will still die in it were allotted to do so, like the little brokers and traders without wit or intelligence or perhaps just enough money backing, whose high destiny it is to commit suicide in order to keep the edifice of finance solvent?"²⁸⁴ This scheme of anonymous contribution to a higher destiny resembles the Quartermaster General's own view remarkably well. However, through Reverend Sutterfield's story of the racehorse, the "morose, sullen, incorrigible, foul-mouthed and snarling" Sentry is given a more human dimension. Before the war, the Sentry and the Reverend were the grooms to a matchless three-year-old running horse which was sold to a millionaire for breeding material. As fate would have it, the train carrying the horse and the two men (and the Reverend's son) "plunged through a flood-weakened trestle: out of which confusion and mischance were born the twenty-two months from which the English groom emerged at last a practicing Baptist: a Mason: and one of his time's most skillful manipulators of or players at dice."²⁸⁵ Rather than see the crippled horse, on

three legs now, go to stud on the new farm when its purpose, its very reason for existence, was for the freedom of the race, the three dodge the authorities for months, "the Federal Government, the successive state police forces and the railway's and the insurance company's and the oil baron's private detectives," staying just one length ahead, running the horse "in remote back-country quarter-races and winning most of them."²⁸⁶ The groom's relationship to the horse is likened to a love affair, an "immortal pageant-piece of the tender legend...against the chronicle's grimed and bloodstained pages: Adam and Lilith and Paris and Helen and Pyramus and Thisbe and all the other recordless Romeos and Juliets...."²⁸⁷ The Quartermaster's worship of the Marshal is called to mind. And the aid Sutterfield furnishes, which goes against his religious principles and his position, recall Granny Rosa Millard's choice of the individual over ideology. The Reverend offers no explanation or excuse: "He didn't tell how they did it: only that they did do it: as if, once it was done, how no longer mattered; that if something must be done, it is done, and then hardship or anguish or even impossibility no longer signify...."²⁸⁸ But inevitably, the dragnet thrown out to catch them tightens and the groom, rather than turn the horse over, shoots it. Shoots it, because it would only be set "up in a whorehouse where it wouldn't need any legs at all," alive but unable to run, "keep on running, keep on losing races at least, finish races at least even if it did have to run them on three legs, did run them on three legs because it was a giant and didn't need even three legs to run them on but only one with a hoof at the end to qualify as a horse."²⁸⁹ Afterwards, he has the chance to work with a blacksmith who remarks his natural ability with horses, but he declines: "Because they couldn't see his heart."²⁹⁰ All that is left is the "savage and bandy misanthrope"²⁹¹ with "only the foul raked heavily-checked cap talking (not the heart talking of passion and bereavement)...."²⁹² When he returns to England in 1914 to enlist, "it was as though somewhere behind the Mississippi Valley hinterland where within the first three months he had vanished, a new man had been born, without past, without griefs, without recollections."²⁹³ Most importantly, he returns without faith, any faith at all, which passed away with the death of the spirit and freedom represented both literally and figuratively by the three-legged thoroughbred. In his new savageness and denial, the groom/Sentry extends his

manipulation of chance and mastery of dice playing to the men in his company, resisting the affirmative pleas of the Reverend Sutterfield, who faithfully follows him to France, and the war.

Sutterfield, in contrast to the Sentry, represents a positive and active position in relation to the problem of evil and may be included in the active third of the "trinity of man's conscience" along with the Runner. Through the strength of his faith, faith in the general sense, he follows the Sentry to France and founds "*Les Amis Myriades et Anonymes à la France de Tout le Monde*"²⁹⁴ through the patronage of a rich American woman whose son is a pilot in a French squadron. His affirmation of man is untainted by the disillusionment of the racehorse episode, even though he was

a minister, a man of God, sworn and dedicated enemy of man's lusts and follies, yet who from that first moment had not only abetted theft and gambling, but had given to the same cause the tender virgin years of his own child as ever of old had Samuel's father or Abraham his Isaac; and not even with pride because at last he had finally seen the truth even if it did take him a year, but at least pride in the fact that from the very first, as he knew now, he had performed his part in the pursuit with passion and regret.²⁹⁵

Sutterfield's view of the disputed ownership of the horse is reminiscent of the McCaslin twins' conception of land ownership: "The horse. That they claimed we stole. Except that we wouldn't have stole it, even if we had wanted to. Because it never belonged to no man to be stole from. It was the world's horse. The champion. No, that's wrong too. Things belonged to it, not it to things. Things and people both."²⁹⁶ The simplicity of his statements give no indication of his enormous inner strength and his organization "affirming its grandiose and humble declaration" of *Tout le Monde*, "All the World," allowing soldiers, veterans, young widows, and children a sanctuary, a respite, from the chaos and madness of the war outside, free to grieve or commiserate unhurriedly, "perhaps like people in a railway station where a train has been indefinitely delayed...."²⁹⁷ When asked if he is an ordained minister he answers, in a comic yet touching and meaningful turn:

'I dont know. I bears witness.'

'To what? God?'

'To man. God dont need me. I bears witness to Him of course, but my main witness is to man.'

'The most damning thing man could suffer would be a valid witness before God.'

'You're wrong there,' the Negro said. 'Man is full of sin and nature, and all he does dont bear looking at, and a heap of what he says is a shame and a mawkery. But cant no witness hurt him. Some day something might beat him, but it wont be Satan.'²⁹⁸

Implicitly he understands the need for "the compassion and pity and sacrifice" as well as the "courage and honor and hope and pride" which are necessary to "help man endure by lifting his heart." It is this active role which he fulfills so well in rescuing the Runner from the cynicism which plagues Authority, which has no real faith in humanity.

Initially, the Runner is a highly disillusioned man. He performs valiantly in the war as a private and is duly given a commission as an officer. However, five months afterwards he approaches his company commander, wishing to resign. The company commander interprets his wish to return to the ranks as an inordinate love of man, but the Runner replies, "'It's just backward. I hate man so.'²⁹⁹ This is an incredible statement, considering Faulkner's positioning of the Runner as an individual who stands for positive change in the face of ideology. A close reading, though, of his words reveals not so general a hate for humanity so much as a disgust for its propensity to be seduced by ideology and martial forms, its blind unquestioning obedience to Authority: "'When I...can, by the simple coincidence of wearing this little badge on my coat, have not only the power, with a whole militarised government to back me up, to tell vast herds of man what to do, but the impunitive right to shoot him with my own hand when he doesn't do it, then I realise how worthy of any fear and abhorrence and hatred he is.'³⁰⁰ He not only will not face humanity's ignorance of its own plight, he cannot face it. Because his commander is not willing to humor him, the Runner finds a woman of questionable repute and plots a situation where they will be "taken in *delicto* so outrageously *flagrante* and public, so completely unequivocal and incapable of other than one interpretation"³⁰¹ that he must be demoted to preserve the perceived

purity of his office and the honor of his regiment. His new colonel, fearing he is an agitator, instructs him not to hate man, but to "Hate Germans, if you must hate someone."³⁰² Yet even the colonel recognizes the true objects of the Runner's disdain: "Oh, I know it too: the men who, in hopes of being recorded as victorious prime- or cabinet-ministers, furnish men for this. The men who, in order to become millionaires, supply the guns and shells. The men who, hoping to be addressed some day as Field Marshal or Viscount Plugstreet or Earl of Loos, invent the gambles they call plans. The men who, to win a war, will go out and dig up if possible, invent if necessary, an enemy to fight against."³⁰³ The irony is that the colonel understands his own status as a pawn in the vast military-industrial complex of not only his nation, but all nations, while at the same time fulfilling his role to the letter without attempting to question the process or check its expansion and domination. Things do not look much brighter for the Runner, who now marches about with an unloaded rifle, until he begins to hear of the corporal and his teachings: "all we ever needed to do was just to say, Enough of this—us, not even the sergeants and corporals, but just us, all of us, Germans and Colonials and Frenchmen and all the other foreigners in the mud here, saying together: Enough. Let them that's already dead and maimed and missing be enough of this—a thing so easy and simple that even human man, as full of evil and sin and folly as he is, can understand and believe it this time."³⁰⁴ He reasons that if first individuals stand up against Authority, then more after the first few and more after even those, first the privates and corporals then the captains and majors up to the highest levels, that even "ruthless and all-powerful and unchallengeable Authority would be impotent."³⁰⁵ The dilemma the Runner struggles with is that reasoning something out, and believing and acting on it, are entirely different endeavors. In essence, he fails to believe in the potential of humanity because he has been alienated from belief in the power of the individual by the dehumanization and homogenization of the military and the authoritarian structure of society itself. The mutiny of the corporal's regiment brings him closer to affirmation and belief: "For six thousand years we labored under the delusion that the only way to stop a war was to get together more regiments and battalions than the enemy could, or vice versa, and hurl them upon each other until one lot was destroyed and, the one having nothing left

to fight with, the other could stop fighting. We were wrong, because yesterday morning, by simply declining to make an attack, one single French regiment stopped us all."³⁰⁶ Unlike the Quartermaster General or the Sentry, he recognizes the tangible threat to Authority posed by the resistance; but in order for the mutiny to have any meaning, for the weakening of the power structure by which ideology reduces the individual to a controllable mass to be effective, individuals wishing to stop the war must act. They must act in a way where the isolated act of one regiment's refusal to fight becomes a general laying aside of arms, for if those who do the actual fighting refuse to fight, the fight cannot continue. The regiment's mutiny, then, if followed through by similar actions, would cease to be a symbol for the movement to end war so much as a microcosm: "Besides, it doesn't matter what happened. What matters is, what happened afterward."³⁰⁷ Not only did the French regiment fail to attack, but the German regiment across the line from it also failed, attesting to the corporal's influence and the truth of his message. The final factors which sway the Runner's belief are his talks with Sutterfield and his discovery of the blank artillery shells fired at the German general's plane, waking him from his dogmatic slumbers. He enlists Sutterfield's help and leads a company of men into no man's land unarmed, coercing the Sentry to come with them and for a moment they are successful. The German soldiers opposite them also come forward, "tentative, amazed, defenseless"³⁰⁸ in the realization that they can make a difference. Tragically, both the British and German artillery rain down shells upon them, crushing immediately the soldiers' collective gesture of peace and empowerment. But the point has been made. Six years after the end of the war, the Runner appears at the funeral procession for the Marshal, who is to be buried next to the Unknown Soldier under the Arc de Triomphe. Presumably the only survivor of the barrage, he has been reduced physically to half a man, "since one half of his visible flesh was one furious saffron scar beginning at the ruined homburg hat and dividing his face exactly down the bridge of his nose, across the mouth and chin, to the collar of his shirt."³⁰⁹ He flings the corporal's medal at the casket and suffers a beating from the crowd, which worships the Marshal as the savior of France and the world, still under the mistaken belief that it was he who freed them rather than keeping them from being free. Through blood and

shattered teeth he laughs in the arms of the Quartermaster General: "That's right. Tremble. I'm not going to die. Never."³¹⁰



The implications of the "trinity of man's conscience" are clear: Ideals as enabling assumptions rather than rigid, fixed systems of ideology are effective only when defended and well-maintained. Calls to action may sometimes be necessary, not just expedient. But always, though, Faulkner stressed action "not as nations or governments or ideologies, but as simple human beings vulnerable to death and injury." Liberty and freedom are worth fighting for but not as abstracted empty mouthsounds plastered on the latest banners waved in hopes of keeping a particular political regime in power. The thinking individual must choose and decide, learning to manage the lusts and passions which contribute to humanity's "deathless folly." The sheer number of beings populating the earth, increasing daily, almost statistically guarantees that humanity will endure; but only through conscious individual endeavor will humanity prevail.



Speaking at the 1976 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference on the subject of "Faulkner and War," Shelby Foote, a noted author and Civil War historian, said that "War was not a subject that interested [Faulkner] in a serious way."³¹¹ Mr. Foote stressed the artistic merit of the books in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha saga, favoring them over Faulkner's war novels. However, as details from his biography and the depth of his treatment of the theme of war indicate, Faulkner was indeed affected by the phenomenon of war in both his personal and artistic life. A clear progression is evident in his movement from the selfconscious disillusion in *Soldiers' Pay* to the philosophical and mature musings of *A Fable*, yet his emphasis on the individual, as opposed to the masses that are seduced by ideology, remained constant. He saw himself, especially in his more public role after receiving the Nobel Prize, as a guardian of the sanctity of the individual:

I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.³¹²

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²⁴⁷Judith Bryant Wittenberg, *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), p. 225.

²⁴⁸William Faulkner, *A Faulkner Miscellany*, ed. James B. Meriwether (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1974), p. 162.

²⁴⁹Faulkner, *A Faulkner Miscellany*, p. 163.

²⁵⁰See Faulkner's interview with Jean Stein vanden Heuvel in William Faulkner, *Lion in the Garden*, (New York: Random House, 1968), p.247; also Faulkner, *Faulkner in the University*, 61.

²⁵¹Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 88.

²⁵²Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 87-88.

²⁵³Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 100.

²⁵⁴Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 110.

²⁵⁵Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 318.

²⁵⁶Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 323.

²⁵⁷Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 114.

²⁵⁸Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 326.

²⁵⁹Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 264.

²⁶⁰Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 367.

²⁶¹Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 369.

²⁶²Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 370.

²⁶³Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 162-63.

²⁶⁴Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 247.

²⁶⁵Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 254.

²⁶⁶Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 260.

²⁶⁷Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 264.

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- 287Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 153.
- 288Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 154.
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295Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 159.

296Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 150.

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301Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 63.

302Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 65.

303Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 65-66.

304Faulkner, *A Fable*, p. 68.

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