
UNIT 1 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this introductory unit, we shall study the core features of the short story in general and the American short story in particular. To this end, besides a few initial broadsides on positioning the short story in chronological history, the unit examines several major definitions of this genre. It notes the inadequacies and usefulness of these definitions, and suggests what essentially makes for a well-made short story. In the main, it posits a revaluation of the varied growth and major contributions to the American short story with special reference to Edgar Allan Poe, O. Henry, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and John Barth. The unit also makes a few open-ended observations of the future directions the short story may take.

1.1 INTRODUCING THE SHORT STORY

The short story, it needs be affirmed even at the risk of mouthing a cliché, is at once old and new. It may be as old as the adventure tales of the Odyssey or the religious/moral tales of the Bible. Nearer home, it may be as old as the stories woven into the Mahabharata or those included in the Panchatantra. But as a distinct art form, i.e., as a highly organized and deftly executed short narrative, it is 'a young art' which emerged in the nineteenth century and which has fast come of age. The short story, therefore, is as old as the human instinct to tell and listen to a story and as new as man's/woman's craft of writing it.

The ascendancy and the subsequent establishment of the novel towards the end of the eighteenth century quite possibly encouraged, by example, the growth of shorter fiction as an autonomous genre of English literature. More important, however, was the speedy emergence of periodicals and magazines during the first quarter of the nineteenth century whose readers made insistent demand for short and compact fiction, completed in one issue. The editors of these magazines and papers, keen to boost their circulation and sales, made handsome payments to those writers who could meet their requirements. The short story thus registered its raison d'être and smoothly stepped into a space of its own.

1.2 DEFINITIONS: THEIR INADEQUACIES AND USEFULNESS

Encyclopedia Britannica, a treasure-house of information and knowledge, offers a broad-based and workable sense of what a short story is about. It points to certain mutually interdependent elements of a short story, namely "theme, or the idea on which the story centres; plot, or the planned sequence of action; characters, or the persons who perform the action; and setting, or the time and place of the story." It therefore surmises that a short story "unfolds some kind of idea through the action and interaction of characters at some definite time and place." The Encyclopedia also acknowledges the scope for flexibility in situating these elements in a given short story. Such a formulation is obviously too wide open to pinpoint the distinctive character of the short story. It may serve the purpose of the generalists but it leaves things wanting for a specialist, e.g. the practicing short story writers and the critics of the short story.

The specialists have defined the short story more precisely but always in terms of their own predilections and perceptions, is, in terms of what they consider the core feature of a short story. Their definitions reflect not merely the variations of emphasis in regard to the above-referred elements but also affirmation of one element to the negation of another. The sharply edged inclusions and exclusions of various elements in their definitions often derive from these writers' practice of the craft of story writing in varied and even contradictory ways. Sir Hugh Walpole, for instance, asserts the supremacy of plot as the distinguishing feature of a short story which, according to him, should be "a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and satisfying denouement." Turgenev on the contrary maintains that the short story for him is "the representation of certain persons ... whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting." To him writing stories "was never an affair of plot - that was the last thing he thought of." Again, Ellery Sedgewick stresses on two constituents of plot as the key features of a short story. He holds that "a story is like a horse race. It is the start and the finish that count most." And many others, including Maupassant, would not agree more. But we have Anton Chekhov who finds no use for the beginning and the end in a story. He observes that "a story should have neither beginning nor end."

Further, Edgar Allan Poe, an early and masterly practitioner of the art of modern short story, gives the pride of place to a certain "pre-conceived effect" realized through the plot of a story. In his famous review of the Twice-Told Tales by Hawthorne, he maintains that "in the whole composition (of a short story) there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to one pre-established design." Such an emphasis on a pre-decided unity and totality of effect has also been considered too schematic and prescriptive, and by implication restrictive by several short story writers and critics. The French story writer Merimee, to name just one of them, refuses to subordinate his concern for 'objectivity' and 'impartiality' in a short story to Poe's over-riding accent on the totality of a pre-planned effect. He insisted, time and again, that the short story should, like any other work of art, be allowed to "stand and speak before the reader" on its own and not according to a pre-formulated strategy of its author.

Besides these conflicting definitions, quite a number of short story writers and critics have pointed to the tremendous significance of brevity in a short story. Some of them even tend to suggest the only distinguishing feature of a short story is that it must not be long. H.G. Wells, therefore, used to say that a story "may be horrible or pathetic or funny or beautiful or profoundly illuminating, having only this essential, that it should take from fifteen to fifty minutes to read aloud." Chekhov said much the same thing when he advised the short story writers that if they described a gun

hanging on the wall on page one, sooner or later that gun must go off in the story. Poe also held that a story must be short, although he added that it must not be so short that the 'pre-established design' is not realized. And we have Barry Pain who graphically suggested that the uncommon requirement of a short story was "much the same commonsense that prevents a hostess for giving a very large dance in a very small room."

These observations, however telling or epigrammatic, merely draw attention to the obvious in a short story, and do not really take us far. Nor do the divergent if not contradictory definitions discussed earlier help us in arriving at a consensus. You may, then, naturally think that they all lend much controversy and uncertainty to what constitutes a short story. You may even hold that the absence of indisputable accuracy and satisfactory finality in any of them seems merely to serve the cause of critical confusion.

But the inadequacy of these definitions also implies that the short story is too many things to contain in one single definition. This inadequacy is, indeed, an acknowledgement and affirmation of the limitless possibilities in terms of sheer range of material which this genre has come to realize and continues to realize. It is also suggestive of the infinite flexibility in the modes of writing which the short story easily lends itself to. The fact that there is no definition of short story which can be universally and uniformly acceptable demonstrates that it has evolved, in effect, as a vehicle for every man's/woman's talent. There are, then, plotted stories as also plotless stories; stories which span over a lifetime and stories which sharply telescope a few tiny moments of life, unelaborated and unexplained; stories which have a definite beginning and a definite end, stories which do not bother for such requirements; stories which are prose-poems with all the loveliness of a lyric and stories which are pieces of solid prose in which all emotions, all actions, all reactions are fixed and glazed like in a finely built house; stories which are intricate and cobweb-like and stories which make for a direct, straightforward and gripping reportage; stories which focus on a character without turning into a mere character-sketch and stories which transmute certain ideas and concerns without lapsing into the fixity of an essay. All this points to the insistent and eternal fluidity of the short story and its myriad, inexhaustible manifestations.

It is in this context that several critics have shunned from defining the short story. They have applied judicious discriminations and discernments, and distanced themselves from these highly personalized, exclusivist, and essentialist definitions. Elizabeth Bowen, for instance, has aptly observed that the first and foremost necessity of the short story is its "necessariness." According to her, whatever a short story writer writes about—a state of mind, a moment of revelation, a chain of images, a narrative of events—should be "pressing enough and acute enough to have made the writer write it." E.J.O' Brien has also stressed this qualitative aspect of the short story when he said that the challenge of a short story is how vitally compelling the writer makes whatever he writes. The essential feature of a short story, in this sense, is that it gives you a wound you do not easily get over; and its acid test, you may well remember, is the measure of its depth, power and artistry.

1.3 THE AMERICAN SHORT STORY

In this section we have a close look at the growth and development of the American short story *vis-à-vis* the short story in Europe. We also take note of the major American exponents of this genre, their contribution towards exploring, enlarging and diversifying the scope of the short story, and their innovations and experimentations with the form.

1.3.1 Origins: The First Phase

No year may be cited for the exact origin as much of the American short story as for its counterpart in Europe, although both of them grew up in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Of the earliest stalwarts of American short story, the major ones are Washington Irving (1783-1859), Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (1805-1864). They were contemporaries, and largely wrote in the first half of the nineteenth century. Washington Irving, living in England for most part of his creative period, was encouraged by the reception accorded to his Sketch Book (1819-20), and issued three additional volumes of stories and sketches before 1832. However, although his "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" belong to the classics of American short story, his mode of writing was rather "too leisurely" and the stories therefore often lacked "dramatic tension". Nonetheless, Irving was perhaps the first American to clearly recognize that the short story was a distinct form of literature which required, he wrote to his brother-in-law, "a constant activity of thought and nicety of execution." The key word 'constant' in this phrase conveys the sense of an 'unceasing' and 'persistent' application of mind and art in writing a story and relates, however faintly, to the latter-day definitions of short story as a highly organized, intense and complete genre of literature.

It was, however, Edgar Allan Poe who for the first time formulated a set of principles governing the composition of a short story. His propositions about the short story, as stated in his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales in 1842 (cited earlier), laid down three neat and precise rules: (1) a story must aim at one predetermined effect; (2) it must vigorously exclude everything which does not contribute to that effect and thus possess complete unity; and (3) it must be short, but not so short that the 'pre-established design' cannot be realized. Several critics have found such a theory too restrictive and rigid: but it worked extremely well in his own case. The consummate artistry of his stories – "The Fall of the House of Usher", "Ligeia" and "The Cask of Amontillado" – has seldom been excelled. Poe's theory and practice, indeed, make for a major landmark in the history of short story, if only because he was astute enough to recognize quite some of the essential features of a well-made story; namely, coherence, completeness, mathematical exactitude and artistic unity. Relatively speaking, if Irving focussed attention on creating life-like characters in his short stories, Poe forces attention to the importance of a skillfully plotted/constructed story.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, a close contemporary of Poe and Irving, is better known as a novelist than as a short story writer. Marked by artistic epiphany, his stories like "young Goodman Brown" and "Birthmark" belong to the realm of allegory and parable. However, the depiction of revelatory moments in his stories is often manipulated by a schematic interplay of ideas and moral concepts, and he remains less of an influence as a short story writer than Poe and Irving. Greater contribution to the short story of the time was rather made the writers from across the Atlantic, especially the Russian's like Nikolai Gogol and Alexander Pushkin and the French like Prosper Merimee and Honore de Balzac. "The Overcoat" by Gogol, written in the year 1842 in which Poe published his review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, is a pleasure to read even today. It is subtly suggestive of human anxiety and compassion, and compels attention to a character gripped in a tight-holding situation. Dostovesky has rightly acknowledged its pervasive influence when he remarked, "We have all emerged from 'The Overcoat'". "At about the same time, the French writer Merimee maintained that a short story must be allowed to speak for itself without intrusions and impositions of any kind. His stress on the values of 'objectivity' without prejudice to those of 'technical brilliance' in this genre and his assertion that a story must proceed organically have in course of time become the mainstay of all well-written short stories.

1.3.2 American Short Story after Poe

The American Short Story

American short story after Poe, broadly spanning over the second half of the nineteenth century, was more prolific than impressive. In fact, it offered a curious juxtaposition of stories which were mere tissues of clevernesses with those which had substance and craft, of stories which gloried in artifice and trickery and played to the gallery with those which respected artistry and endeavoured creativity; in sum the popular short story and the quality short story. The two strands, of course, are not necessarily exclusive of each other and quite a number of the finest short story writers combine the two: but the story writers of this period noticeably looked like practicing one to the exclusion of the other. The period very largely threw up either the facile, journalistic and unexperimental story or the serious, meaningful and innovative story. The former kind was represented by writers like Bret Harte (1839-1914) and Stephen Crane (1871-1900). Instinctively aware, like a good journalist, of the popular American demand for a direct, fast-track story of effect, Bret Harte wrote smart and mechanically turned out stories which earned him instant recognition and fame. His "Luck of Roaring Camp", indeed, became 'a national sensation', and Harte was, in a manner of speaking feted as something of 'a national institution'. He evolved and adhered to the best-selling formula for writing a story, the ingredients of which included "people, humour, movement, colour, suspense, surprise, the touch of sentimentalism, the wave of regret, the laughter behind tears." O. Henry, if anything, perfected this formula with great aplomb. More of a showman than a story writer, he had something for everybody in the market-place of story-telling. He, of course, had a sense of tragedy, a certain sympathy for the underdog, and was tirelessly interested in people and could make them tirelessly interesting. Backed by these gifts, he might have become, with vigorous, disciplined application of his craft, a great short story writer. But he chose the easy way out: or perhaps, given the adverse and crushing circumstances especially of his early life, he had to. And thus, even the widely talked about surprise-ending in the best of his stories like "The Gift of the Magi" and "The Last Leaf", on reflection, seems little better than trick-ending. Maupassant, the great French master story writer also used surprise-ending in quite some of his stories: but, as an artist, he was very well aware that surprise-ending alone is its own limitation; O. Henry, the journalist, was perhaps not. Therefore, although quite possibly the greatest popularizer of the short story – greater than even Maupassant – O. Henry remains not much above a second-rate albeit talented story writer who didn't or couldn't exploit his talent.

Outside the shaping and peaking of the popular American short story, the period did witness several innovative and path-breaking writers who were seriously committed to the art of story-telling. Ambrose Bierce, too bitterly uncompromising to be popular, rejected by his time and isolated, was rather a purist who painstakingly distinguished literature from journalism. His stories, such as those included in his volume *In the Midst of Life* are highly individualized endeavours reflecting intensely personal perceptions of men and things. His touch of impressionism and his conscious effort to compress the short story and to interpret character through casual and apparently irrelevant incidents anticipate the later twentieth century writers. In fact, Bierce remains the major connecting link between Poe and the American short story today. Simultaneously, Stephen Crane, who according to Conrad never knew how good his best work was, introduced and integrated the features and facets of 'naturalism' and 'determinism' in American short story. Fearlessly honest and ruthlessly realistic, he didn't initially find any taker for his work from among the American publishers: and his powerful stories like "Maggi" and "The Open Boat" tellingly testify the tragic irony of it all. Yet Crane belongs to that select group of American short story writers who not only enriched but also widened the range of the genre. Like Bierce, he belongs to today rather than the day before yesterday. While the short story in the second half of the nineteenth century America yielded a mixed package, in Europe it was profusely dotted with the names of number of masterly writers: Guy de Maupassant (1850-93), Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), R.L. Stevenson (1850-94), Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), Ivan

Turgenev (1813-83), and several others. Of them the first three, Maupassant, Chekhov and Tolstoy draw greater attention as short story writer; and their stories evidence varied shades of similarities and striking colours of contrast. All the three of them, for instance, reflect an intense inquisitiveness about human conditions: but whereas Maupassant and Chekhov knew a wide variety of human beings, Tolstoy's knowledge of it was wider still and seemed limitless. Further, both Maupassant and Chekhov, as gifted short story writers, knew when to hold their tongue and how not to go on a second too long. Tolstoy, although not that meticulous and insistent about these concerns, paid full honour of recognition to the short story in its own right and never treated it as a mere by-product of novel. Primarily known as the author of memorable novels like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* which earned him an international salute, Tolstoy lent a certain concentration of force and high finish to his short stories, comparable with the very best of Maupassant and Chekhov. Again Maupassant and Chekhov, with their high regard for 'objectivity', would not entangle themselves and their characters in the coils of contemporary morality. For Tolstoy, however, aesthetic and moral concerns are simply inseparable; and his stories leave a lasting impression of a great organic force. His objectivity, therefore, lies in his dispassionate and impartial exploration of myriad facets of human nature. Finally, as for their methods, relatively speaking, Maupassant is direct, swift, logical, naturalistic and brilliant; Chekhov is oblique, apparently casual, beguilingly conversational and subtly gripping; and Tolstoy is more catholic, composite and life-like, for as John Bayley observed, "If life could write, it would write just as Leo Tolstoy did." Few American short story writers are comparable to these three towering figures in the discipline of modern short story. Among a large number of their stories, "Boule de Suif" and "The Necklace" by Maupassant, "The Darling" and "Ward No. 6" by Chekhov, and "Family Happiness" and "The Death of Ivan Ilych" by Tolstoy are compelling little masterpieces. You will find them, I very much hope, a delight to read and re-read.

1.3.3 Renaissance in American Short Story

During the early decades of the twentieth century, while in Europe and more particularly in Britain writers like Katherine Mansfield, A.E. Coppard, James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence kept the flag of short story high and steady, in America the one short story writer who stood out, aside of Henry James (1843-1916), Hamlin Garland (1860-1940) and Edith Wharton (1862-1937), was Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941). Anderson broke free both from the popular, mechanical and stereotypical stories of O. Henry and Bret Harte as well as the unnoticed although serious writing of Ambrose Bierce and Stephen Crane. He also turned his back to European influences and indeed heralded the twentieth century renaissance in American short story. He adhered to the indigenous material and wrote authentically about the remote and obscure Americans of a wide variety living in the Ohio valleys, moving "out of nowhere into nothing". Adopting the midwestern prose rhythms with a studied stylelessness which kept him closer to 'life' than to 'art' he reflected much respect for words, and lent colour and significance to his otherwise colourless and insignificant people. His short stories, at once tough and tender, are suffused with human persistence and heavy melancholy. Anderson's volume of stories Winesburg, Ohio and his short stories like "I Want to Know Why" and "Death in the Woods" are among the finest of American short stories.

1.3.4 Hemingway and Faulkner

The most widely acknowledged voices of the American short story during the second quarter of the twentieth century are those of Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) and William Faulkner (1897-1962), the two authors we shall discuss at greater length in subsequent units. Both Hemingway and Faulkner, initially much under the influence of Sherwood Anderson, sheared away from the older traditions of English and American short story. However, Hemingway's commitment to his craft went several steps ahead of Anderson's stress on keeping his stories closer to 'life' than to 'art'.

and on a certain 'studied stylelessness' in writing. Hemingway, in a manner of speaking, was a man with an axe. He vigorously pruned the language, evolved the 'iceberg principle' of writing, used telling understatements, and conveyed multiple meanings largely through symbolic and ironic implications. Faulkner too pruned the language but he did so like one prunes a tree so that it blossoms anew and prodigiously, and lends "the highest possible degree of saturation" to his work. Hemingway's "A Clean Well-Lighted Place", a four paged story, and Faulkner's "The Bear", running into close to a hundred pages, in this sense, are their representative stories prescribed for your study.

Further, Hemingway initially like Anderson, located his stories in the suburbs of Chicago and in Michigan where he lived during his early impressionable years. But later he became too much 'a citizen of the world' and his characters then were isolates severed from family, community and society at large living in various parts of the globe including Italy, Spain, France, Switzerland, Cuba, and of course the U.S.A. On the contrary, Faulkner, much more like Anderson, focused all along on the regional, in his case, the American South; and his works evoke the decadent and transitional life-cycles of the aristocracy and the very poor in the towns and countryside of this region as well as the inbuilt social anxieties and racial tensions of their lives. Finally, Hemingway was mainly a tragic writer who tested his characters' capacity for establishing their 'gallantry in defeat' and for acquitting themselves with 'grace under pressure' of most trying circumstances. He explores in his works what humans can be and what humans can do in the face of certain death, often enough violent death. But Faulkner's scale of intended emotions is widely different. He is 'a romantic cursed with a pair of realistic eyes'; and he captures intricate and tangled human relationships at varied levels of struggles and conflicts, all suffused with an atmospheric passion and grandeur of their own. The extent to which these two master story writers enriched and enlarged the American short story is matched by few American writers before and after them.

1.3.5 Contemporary American Short Story

At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, the American short story had covered a long distance, broken much fresh ground, and diversified in several directions. Its bag was large and heavy for it contained a wide variety, such as stories of relaxed characterization (Irving) and those of pre-established effect (Poe); stories which came close to allegory and parable (Hawthorne) and those which looked competent but machine-made (Harte); stories which registered high seriousness (Bierce) and those which usher in 'naturalism' and 'determinism' (Crane); stories with surprise-ending which could also degenerate into trick-ending (O. Henry) and those which were, genuinely and firmly, rooted in the region and local colour (Anderson); stories which were like floating little icebergs (Hemingway) and those which evoked the inexorable decadence and transition of the American South (Faulkner). Besides, there were many more kinds of stories by many more writers of very considerable talent, notably Herman Melville, Mark Twain, Henry James, Eudora Welty, Katherine Anne Porter, Richard Wright, William Saroyan, Bernard Malamud, and several others. All of them contributed stories which reflect, astutely and searchingly variously aspects of the American people, society, community, culture, and the nation at large, often enough coupled with innovations and experimentations with the form.

Quite a number of new trends and developments have rapidly transformed the ambience of creative writing in America in the second half of this century. American people were now constantly gripped with making adjustments and coming to terms with, for instance, the explosion of technology, the rise of consumerism, the near total discontinuities of older family and community ties, the entrenchment of high individualism, the growth of nuclear families, the shifting sands of the political scenario from the cold war and the American involvement in the Korean and the Vietnamese wars to the present day emergence of America as the only super power,

the better organized and articulated ethnic, black and feminist voices, the demands of ruthless competitiveness, the modernist structure of American society, the increasing pressure of the postmodern sensibility with its foregrounding or irreverence and subversions and problematizing of all given 'norms', 'meaning', 'sense of reality', and so forth.

It is in such unsettling and unstoppable contexts that authors like Robert Coover (1932-), John Barth (1930-), Donald Barthelme (1933-), Joyce Carol Oates (1938-) and John Updike (1932-) have written their stories in the sixties and the seventies of this century. Faced with successive waves of disorientations and discontinuities all around, some of them have felt compelled to reexamine and redefine the concept of a well-made short story all over again. The position such writers seem to take is that "the hallmarks of the well-made story – consistency of style, rationality of structure, and steadiness of viewpoint – cannot represent the illogic of our lives." It may be noted that in jettisoning the tradition of short story too radically, these writers come dangerously close to causing a total collapse of artistic control in their writing. Nonetheless, the finest of their stories, such as John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse" and Robert Coover's "The Magic Poker" successfully reflect the "paradoxical desire to go beyond 'the action of conventional dramatic narrative' without losing the human 'effect of drama' which is the foundation of the story teller's craft." This rejection of the outmoded, depleted and nearly exhausted conventions of narrative and yet the attempt to recapture its original energies (now enlarged into a whole new discipline of narrationality) sets these stories apart not only from what preceded them but also from the present-day postmodern short story. Rather amorphous in nature and eclectic in approach, the postmodern story rejects all norms lock, stock and barrel and leans too heavily on the tropes of parody and pastiche, of interrogation and skepticism, and on the strategies of the deconstruction of all imagined and artistic constructs. And in as much as it throws the entire heritage of the short story upside down, the postmodern short story may even be called an anti-story: but its definitive evaluations are still in the making. As for its future prospects, we may better refrain from making any predictions about the direction the short story will take, for while the criticism of short story is based on the past, i.e., on whatever short stories have already appeared, the forms of short story will be shaped by future events, many of them "adventitious and unpredictable."

1.4 LET US SUM UP

The short story, we have noticed, is both old and new. Even as all the major definitions of the short story leaves something wanting, they do signify its wide variety. The American short story achieved this wide variety largely through its major practitioners such as Poe, O. Henry, Anderson, Hemingway, Faulkner and Barth. The directions the short story may take in future will depend on the unpredictable course of life in future.

1.5 GLOSSARY

Denouement:	The final unravelling of plot or fiction.
Plot:	The plan, design, scheme or pattern of events in a play, poem or work of fiction.
Epigrammatic:	a short witty statement in verse or prose which may be complimentary, satiric or aphoristic.

Genre:	Type or class of literary work, form or technique. It is a French term. The genre into which literary works are classified are numerous. The most common names are epic, satire, novel, essay, biography, short story.	The American Short Story
Epiphany:	It is a standard term for the description frequent in modern poetry and fiction, of a sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene. Christian thinkers used this term to signify a manifestation of God's presence in the world.	
Allegory:	It is a narrative in which a subject of a higher spiritual order is described in terms of that of a lower. <i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i> is a prime allegory.	
Parable:	a short tale that illustrates a moral principle.	
Impressionism:	The term probably derives from Claude Monet's painting <i>Impression : Soleil Levant</i> (first exhibited in Paris in 1874). The impressionists were a school of painters who were particularly concerned with the transitory effects of light, and they wished to depict the fleeting impression from a subjective point of view. They were not interested in a precise representation; the resulting impression depended in the perception of the spectator.	
Naturalism:	In literary criticism a word, sometimes used loosely as a synonym for realism and also in reference to words which show a pronounced interest in, sympathy with and love of natural beauty (e.g. much of the poetry of Wordsworth).	
Trope:	figurative use of a word (as of 'tread' in 'The years like great black oxen tread the world')	
Parody:	Imitation of another writer's work, where ridicule is the main objective. John Phillip's <i>The Splendid Shilling</i> (1705) parodied the style of Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> .	

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Examine Poe's definition of the short story and its influence on the subsequent American short story writers.
2. Do you agree with the view that the twentieth century short story primarily offers perceptions on human characters? Give reasons in support of your answer.

3. Point out the distinguishing features of the contemporary American short story with illustrations from the stories you have read.

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. H.E. Bates, *The Modern Short Story: A Critical Survey* (1950).
2. Arthur Voss, *The American Short Story: A Critical Survey* (1973).
3. Philip Stevick (edited), *American Short Story: A Critical History: 1900-45* (1984).
4. Gordon Weaver (edited), *American Short Story: A Critical History: 1945-80* (1983).
5. JaEllen Clarey and Susan Lohafer (edited), *Short Story Theory at Crossroads* (1989).

UNIT 2 HEMINGWAY: A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Ernest Hemingway
 - 2.1.1 Chronology
 - 2.1.2 Themes and Concerns
 - 2.1.3 Modes of Writing
 - 2.1.4 Autobiographical Element
 - 2.1.5 Objectivity
 - 2.1.6 Code of Conduct
 - 2.1.7 Symbolism
 - 2.1.8 Irony
- 2.2 *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*
 - 2.2.1 Introducing the Story
 - 2.2.2 Contrasted Characters
 - 2.2.3 Narrative Techniques
 - 2.2.4 Theme of Nothingness
 - 2.2.5 Autobiographical Element
 - 2.2.6 Objectivity
- 2.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.4 Glossary
- 2.5 Questions
- 2.6 Suggested Readings

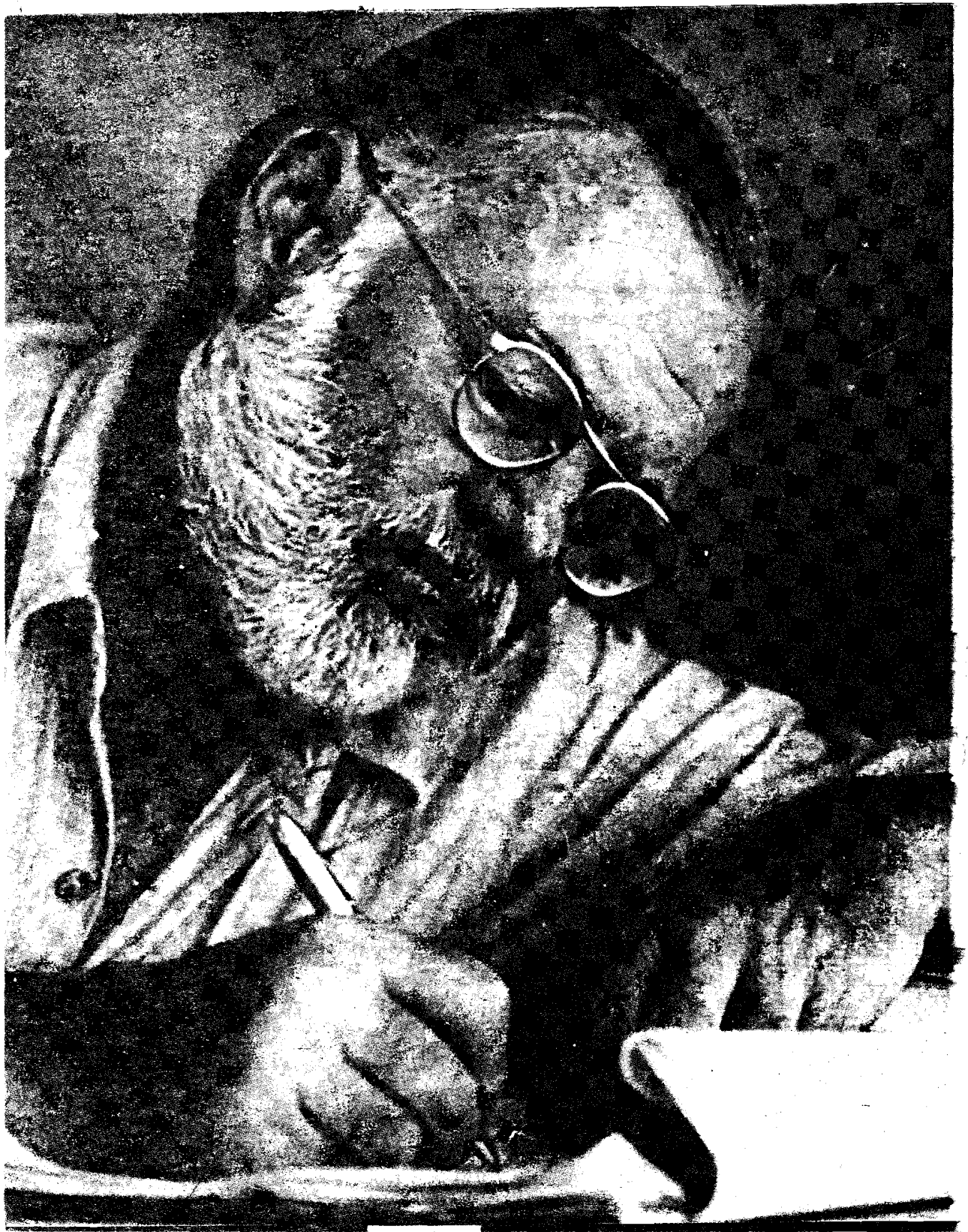
2.0 OBJECTIVES

This second unit is focussed on a close reading of the distinctive features of both Hemingway the short story writer and his short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place." It begins with a select chronology, and moves on to discuss and evaluate the author's major themes and concerns, his mode of writing, autobiographical predilections, artistic objectivity, code of conduct, and narrative techniques, especially those of symbolism and irony. The text of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is critically examined and assessed largely in the context of these tropes. The twin objectives foregrounded in this unit, then, are to assist you in realizing the kind of short story writer, Hemingway is and the kind of short story "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" makes.

2.1 ERNEST HEMINGWAY

2.1.1 Chronology

The following chronology, largely based on the one made out by Earl Rovit, offers a concise biographical perspective on the major events in the life of Ernest Hemingway. It is of course selective, not comprehensive; and during the course of your readings on this author you may notice several other milestones in his life. You may then draw up your own chronology of events relating to Hemingway's life and works.



Ernest Hemingway

- 1899 Born on July 21 in Oak Park, Illinois, son of Dr. Clarence E. and Grace Hall Hemingway.
- 1917 After graduation from Oak Park High School, worked as a reporter on the Kansas City Star.
- 1918 Enlisted as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in Italy; was severely wounded under mortar fire at Fossalta di Piave on July 8.
- 1920-1924 Worked as a reporter and foreign correspondent for Toronto Star and Star Weekly. Met Sherwood Anderson (1920-21), married Hadley Richardson (1921), published Three Stories and Ten Poems in Paris (Contact Publishing Co., 1923), made friends with Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound. As correspondent, covered Greco-Turkish War (1922) and interviewed Clemenceau and Mussolini.
- 1925 Published in Our Time (New York: Boni and Liveright), his first collection of short stories.
- 1926 Published The Torrents of Spring (a novel) and The Sun Also Rises (a novel) with Charles Scribner's Sons. All subsequent works except The Spanish Earth came under Scribner's imprint.
- 1927 Divorced Hadley Richardson; married Pauline Pfeiffer. Published Men Without Women (a collection of short stories).
- 1928-1938 Set up his home at Key West, Florida.
- 1929 Published A Farewell to Arms, his first widely acknowledged novel.
- 1930 Hurt in automobile accident in Montana.
- 1932 Published Death in the Afternoon (a book on bullfighting).
- 1933-1934 Published Winner Take Nothing (1933) a collection of short stories. Made first safari to Africa; also visited Paris and Spain.
- 1935 Published Green Hills of Africa (a book on big-game hunting).
- 1936-1938 Covered the Spanish Civil War for the North American Newspaper Alliance. Published To have and have not (1937) A novel; helped in preparation of the film, The Spanish Earth (published in 1938) a film-script; and issued The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (1938).
- 1940 Divorced by Pauline Pfeiffer; married Martha Gelhorn. Published For Whom the Bell Tolls, another widely acknowledged novel.
- 1942-1945 War Correspondent in Europe, flew with the Royal Air Force, participated in Normandy invasion, and attached himself to the Fourth Infantry Division to liberate Paris. Divorced from Martha Gelhorn to marry Mary Welsh in 1944.
- 1950 Published Across the River and Into the Trees (a novel)
- 1951 Published The Old Man and the Sea, yet another widely acknowledged novel.
- 1953-1954 Revisited Africa; suffered two airplane crashes; was reported dead in the world press. Received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.
- 1961 Died of self-inflicted wounds at his home in Ketchum, Idaho, on July 2.

2.1.2 Themes and Concerns

Hemingway's theme, condensed in one word howsoever simplistic and inadequate, is the violence at the heart of men and things. Its figurations include not only physical violence but also psychic violence, not only the violence of war but also the violence in everyday life, not only the threats and confrontations with violence but also its consequences. This foregrounding of violence also impinges on Hemingway's choice of characters, situations, sense of life and world, and evokes the emotions of fear, pain, hurt, anxiety, empathy, tension, trauma and so forth. Hostile critics of Hemingway censure such a preoccupation with violence as an obsession, find his fictional world narrow and limited, and insist that less is simply less in Hemingway. But his admirers consider such a pre-eminent positioning of violence quite authentic.

and while they acknowledge the limited nature of his world they insist that it is intense and poignant and that in Hemingway's oeuvre less is more.



Young Hemingway, far right, with his family, 1906

To move from this broad spectrum violence as the presiding metaphor in Hemingway's works to the specific and particular themes in his short stories, we notice that they are mainly focussed on the (i) shocks of experience, (ii) violence of war, (iii) man-woman relationships, (iv) quintessential nothingness, and (v) celebrations of values. Boy-protagonist of his stories of shocking, violent experiences are often caught unawares when they, for instance, encounter the contract-killers at a small-town lunchroom ("The Killers") or face the threatened, pointless violence of a demented ex-prizefighter ("The Battler") or witness the violent, ironically tragic death of the much-maligned father ("My Old Man"). The impact of such experiences stupefies and shatters them: nonetheless, contrary to several critics, their stories may not be categorized as the stories of initiation. For they hardly evince any sense of better understanding of the 'self' and the 'surroundings' in their protagonists after the impact, and carry nothing of the ritualistic elements that accompany all initiations. Slightly different are the stories focussed on the violence of war which Hemingway used to call "invaluable and irreplaceable" as a subject and in which he captures "people under tremendous stress and before and after". These stories transmit the predicament for instance, of the older people and the animals left behind during the evacuation of a village under threat of imminent bombardment ("Old Man at the Bridge") or the shell-shocked soldiers whose wounds may have healed but who continue to suffer from the neurosis and frequent nervous break-down ("A Way You'll Never Be") or those who despite their discipline and control over this post-wound neurosis spend sleepless nights

listening to the silkworms eating in the dark ("Now I Lay Me"). They etch out the irrational, impersonal, devastating face of violence the savagery and grimness of which is occasionally countered by the intermittent camaraderie and togetherness of some of the men-at-war.

Subtly suggestive of surface calm and inward restlessness, of high tension and gnawing anxiety are Hemingway's stories of man-woman relationships between unmarried lovers or married couples. Now and then these stories depict sexual inhibitions and deviations in such relationships ("Mr. And Mrs. Elliot" and "The Sea Change"); but more often than not they deal with the temperamental incompatibilities and marital maladjustments between males and females, such as the fertility wish in woman and the evasion of parental responsibility in man ("Cat in the Rain" and "Hills Like White Elephants") or the sullen acquiescence of a wife in the dogged insistence of her husband on forbidden fishing ("Out of Season"), and so forth. Almost as a rule, the male in these stories is determined and dominant and the female submissive but tense and uncertain the former sadistic and the latter masochistically pliant. By investing his women with a greater sense of responsibility and commitment in love/marital relationships which his men fail to share, much less demonstrate, Hemingway the artist seems to castigate the real-life, egotistic, self-aggrandizing Hemingway, and tends to echo Melville's telling phrase: "the conflict of convictions spins against the way it drives".

A class apart, however, are the stories of the ultimate nothingness, of an overwhelming and all-engulfing *nada* which go far beyond gender conflicts and draw attention to a "God-abandoned world", a world with nothing at the centre". Characters in these stories, resigned as they are to all kinds of losses and gloom, find themselves "not in His (God's) Kingdom" ("Soldier's Home"), are irretrievably landed in extremely hostile situations ("In Another Country") and are increasingly deprived of the few redeeming bits of sunshine in the midst of surrounding darkness ("A Clean Well-Lighted Place"). These are essentially stories of total resignation to living without any shred of hope, to living with nothingness.

In contrast, the stories of celebration, of the triumphant ideals in the midst of violent death depict the protagonists of courage. These protagonists withstand and fight the worst challenges of life, make a supreme all-out effort to do whatever they hold closest to their heart, and in a manner of speaking achieve it in death. Plunged in a most trying situation, therefore, a Macomber, for instance, regains his selfhood as a big-game hunter ("The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber") and a Harry his as a writer ("The Snows of Kilimanjaro"); and a Manuel preserves his honour as a bullfighter ("The Undefeated"). The suffering and death of these characters, however, do not involve any proverbial fatal flaw, nor any particular set of circumstances pitted against them; nor do they derive from any secret cause or commotion in the moral order. The stark and inevitable tragedy of these people is just a condition of their lives if only because they refuse to be broken by the world; and in Hemingway's scheme of things, people who refuse to be broken have to be killed. "Commitment in Hemingway's books leads to disaster; and complete commitment to complete disaster", say J.J. Benson. Nonetheless, their acceptance of death with dignity and their gallantry in moments of grief and death is "bracing rather than dispiriting": it affirms the principle of the possibilities of life and of how best can man acquit himself as man.

The themes and concerns of Hemingway create, as R.R. Weeks observes, "a limited range of characters, placed in quite similar circumstances, and measured against an unvarying code." Also, such characters largely remain isolates and expatriates severed from the context of their family, community, society and country, and engage themselves rather exclusively in out-door activities. Naturally then, the range and scope of Hemingway's creative explorations stays restricted in that it relates to "no past, no traditions, no memories" and reflects little sense of "religion, morality, politics, culture or history." Significant areas of human experience are therefore

blocked out to Hemingway readers: but whereas "we may regret this exclusive glorification of brute courage in Hemingway", we "doubt if it is literary criticism to do so". Harry Levin has neatly summed up the strength and limitation of Hemingway's thematic achievement in his remark: "That he has succeeded within limits, and with considerable strain, is less important than that he has succeeded, that a few more aspects of life have been captured for literature". Thus considered, Hemingway's theme(s) more than vindicate their validity and stand out at least in as much as they stand apart.

2.1.3 Modes of Writing

Hemingway's most memorable lesson in writing came from Lionel Moise, an older colleague of his journalistic days at the Kansas City Star. Moise used to say: "Pure objective writing is the only true form of story-telling. No stream of consciousness nonsense: no playing dumb observer one paragraph and God Almighty the next. In short, no tricks." Hemingway religiously followed this golden piece of advice during the course of his writing, both journalistic and literary. Of course he got out of journalism before it began to use up the juice needed for creative writing; but he repeatedly acknowledged, as a latter-day eminent fictionist, the debt he owed to Moise.

In his writing, therefore, Hemingway always endeavoured to cut out emotional exaggeration without lapsing into emotional suppression either. He attempted at once to stimulate and regulate emotion, and to keep it clean and functional. His emphasis, therefore, fell upon the right selection of external details – facts, images, events and actions-which automatically evoked the inward emotion in the reader. In Hemingway's critical parlance this communicated not only "what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel" but also "what really happened in action ... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion."

This method of using selective but representative details of experience in order to evoke the intended emotion came close to what T.S. Eliot had described, more than a decade earlier, as the use of "objective correlative" in any artistic creation. Eliot had defined the objective correlative as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion: such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." Likewise, Hemingway also sought to reproduce 'the real thing' which came through in the right selection of external details and consisted of 'what really happened in action The sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion.' The resemblance between the two theories was too conspicuous to be merely accidental: and Eliot was the first to state it in English criticism.

Characteristically perhaps, the belligerent Hemingway not only gave the impression of devising this technique on his own but also struck a needlessly dismissive and hostile attitude towards the author of "The Waste Land" and "Four Quartets." He has gone on record offering to grind "Mr Eliot into a fine dry powder" and sprinkle "that powder over Conrad's grave" if this could bring Conrad back to life. This vitriolic comment was perhaps his typical defence mechanism to preempt any possible suggestion of his indebtedness to Eliot. A titan of ego, Hemingway has used this strategy against a host of major contemporary writers, including Sherwood Anderson, Gertrude Stein, Scott Fitzgerald and Ford Madox Ford, from each of whom he learned something or the other. It must however be said to Hemingway's credit that in practice he invariably moulded his learnings into something of his own and successfully whittled out one of the most powerful and durable prose-styles of our age.

Whatever the exact measure of Hemingway's debt to Eliot, this method of objective rendering of emotion was truly challenging. It wasn't merely a matter of clever artifice and charming mannerisms as Leon Edel made it out to be. Nor was it simply

the fact that Hemingway invested his writing with "an aura of emotion – by walking directly away from emotion!" It required rigorous concentration on the part of the author as also right absorption and assimilation of experience, and called for its controlled and objective expression. It was a high ideal of prose-writing that Hemingway set for himself, as rewarding as it was demanding. It entailed, as argued by Earl Rovit, the transference of the precise "emotion from the neural system to the texture of a prose narrative," for "caught and frozen in the narrative, the emotion would be safe from the fritterings of time and the distortion of memory." Hemingway learnt it the hard way, and achieved it in the best of his prose-passages.

2.1.4 Autobiographical Element: Biographical Criticism

Ernest Hemingway enjoys a formidable reputation as an autobiographical writer. When once asked if he was writing about himself in his books, he retorted: "Does a writer know anyone better?" His books corroborate this remark, and convey an unmistakable feel of the places he lived in, the activities he was involved in, and the people he came to know. They depict the oppressively genteel Oak Park (where Hemingway was born), the uninhabiting Michigan woods (where he had his early fishing and shooting), and the cities of Paris, Madrid and Venice (where he spent some of the most eventful years of his life). No less do they capture the areas of Hemingway's major interests, such as bullfighting, deep-sea fishing, big-game hunting and the war, all of which he closely watched as a correspondent or particularly liked or disliked make for a large part of his fictionalized world. Pointing to this proximity between his books and the exploits and adventures of his life Hemingway himself remarked: "We have been there in the books ... and where we go, if we are any good, there you can go as we have been."

These autobiographical aspects of Hemingway's works do excite our curiosity about Hemingway the man; but they do not enhance our critical awareness of his works more than marginally. They trigger the identification of the author's fictional characters and situations with their possible counterparts in his life, but not necessarily the illumination of the books themselves. Hemingway's art, though deriving from his life, is intrinsically different in character: it is life-like yet not a copy of his life. It does not describe something that has existed; it makes something that has never existed before. It does not come directly out of the world around him; it comes out of him, out of his imaginative absorption and transmutation of reality. It is not dependent on the extraneous facts of life for the quality of its achievement; it is an organic whole, complete in itself, having an internal logic of its own.

Inadequate appreciation if not total neglect of his autonomy of a work of art has blurred the perspective of some of the major biographical and psycho-biographical critics of Hemingway. They have overplayed their hand in that they have suggested sweeping resemblances between Hemingway's life and his art leading to myopic interpretations of his works. They rightly assert that Hemingway refuses to stay out of his books and that the author and his books are of a single piece; but some of them almost mistake Hemingway the man for the Hemingway hero, and hand out dazzling distortions of his works. Such critics build up their arguments, for instance, on the centrality of the war-wound Hemingway once received (Philip Young) or the Oedipal conflict he experienced in the family context (Richard Hovey) or the public postures he acquired and the personal pronouncements he liberally made (Steward Sanderson) and then proceed on to impose these views all over his works. They, therefore, write with one eye cocked on what they knew of the author and the other on his books. Their gaze is fixed on "an inextricable, twinned, double-exposure image" of Hemingway/Hemingway hero. Basically author-oriented, such criticism distracts us from examining Hemingway's fictions for their own sake. Ben Ray Redman's words of caution, spelled out in his review of *Across the River and Into the Trees*, seem eminently sensible. He observes: "Perhaps we really do know too much about Hemingway, or at least his public poses, to judge his work impartially. If this is so, all of us ... should do our heroic best to thrust aside our knowledge, or half-

knowledge. Otherwise we shall never be able to see clearly the book in hand, the book-in-itself."

If the biographical critics tend to lose sight of making legitimate and necessary discriminations and distinctions between Hemingway and the Hemingway hero, the author's penchant for self-gratifying, autobiographical writing at places gives way to his totally unacceptable self-glorification. He then throws to wind all the basic norms of separating and distancing himself from his created work, and replaces the much needed artistic discipline by notations of self applause. Edmund Wilson brings home this uncondonable lacunae when he contrasts Hemingway's Green Hills of Africa and Death in the Afternoon with his short stories. He suggests that when Hemingway expounds his sense of life "in his own character of Ernest Hemingway, the Old Master of Key West," as he does in Green Hills Africa and Death in the Afternoon "he has a way of sounding silly"; but when he transmits this sense of life objectively, as in most of his short stories, the outcome is "as hard as crystal and as disturbing as a great lyric." The two books, therefore, tend to become "fatuous or maudlin" in contrast to the short stories where Hemingway's art stays "severe, intense and deeply serious." The primary of artistic transformation of reality over mere self-expression, which Northrop Frye insisted on in the case of Wordsworth's poetry, is therefore quite applicable to Hemingway's works. Frye held: "There is no self-expression in Wordsworth's poem, because once the poem is there the individual Wordsworth has disappeared. The general principle involved is that there is no such thing as self-expression in literature." In vintage Hemingway too the self is taken over by the artistic output; and whenever it attempts precedence over art it inevitably bludgeons the artistic endeavour.

It therefore follows that both Hemingway the man and Hemingway the artist, though aspects of the same personality, stood far apart. This distinction, otherwise a commonplace of literary criticism, stays at the centre of any meaningful discussion of Hemingway's works. Hemingway the man was obviously the self but Hemingway the artist was, in a manner of speaking, the other self. The man aimed at public acclamation, the artist at a niche of immortality. The man went for money, the artist into what money does to man. The man flaunted his courage, the artist probed the problems of holding on to one's courage. The man revelled in his virility, the artist captured the adjustments and maladjustments in man-woman relationships. The man paraded himself as a war-hero and a war-veteran, the artist kept up a lifelong love-hate affair with war. The man was at times a reckless public brawler, the artist was reticent and disciplined. The man was at times a reckless public brawler, the artist was reticent and disciplined. The man sought to excel others; the artist to excel himself, to scrutinize his own self-divisions and self-conflicts, and to resolve these into controlled art.

2.1.5 Objectivity

Early in life, Hemingway the artist, disciplined, probing, self-divided and ambivalent, realized the paramount significance of artistic objectivity in writing. In an article published in the Esquire Magazine in 1935, he wrote: "As a man, things are as they should be or should not be. As a man you know who is right and who is wrong. You have to make decisions and enforce them. As a writer you should not judge. You should understand." The implications in this journalistic piece, appropriately called "Monologue to the Maestro," are clear: as a writer Hemingway is concerned with what is and not what "should be or should not be," with who is who and not "who is right and who is wrong," with imaginative realization and projection of experience and not with pronouncing judgement on it.

It is therefore interesting to note how Hemingway's creative anxiety manifested itself through his ambivalence when not conflicting attitudes and responses towards the subjects he wrote about, such as big-game hunting, deep-sea fishing, bull-fighting and the war. He came to love and admire the animals he hunted, feel a sense of oneness and brotherhood with the fish he harpooned and bagged, and experience 'the

moment of truth' in bullfights when "man and bull form one figure as the sword goes all the way in, the leaning after it, death uniting the two figures." Likewise he found the experience of war invaluable and irreplaceable as also irrational and devastating. Thus Hemingway's sense of relating himself with the hunter and the hunted, the bullfighter and the bull, the fisherman and the fish and of love-hate relationship with the war helped him to write "without tricks and without cheating, and 'with nothing that will go bad afterwards."

Some of the general aspects of Hemingway's objectivity have been pointed out by Robert C. Hart in his article "Hemingway on Writing" published in *College English* in 1957. He refuses to force his material and bend his fictions, Hart opines, to any preconceived design. Ideas in his short stories, therefore, are not subjectively imposed upon but objectively lived out. Action is not what should happen but "what would have to happen as it (the story) goes along." Themes are seldom meant to solve a problem, and never "to confirm a solution already laid down." Characters are not fictionalized prejudices and partialities of the author but artistic explorations into human nature, a certain pressing forward into it. And structures keep out "what is non-functional or even malfunctioning," and imply prose as "architecture, not interior decoration."

On these fundamentals Hemingway made no compromise. He was critical of the writers who evaded or ignored these requirements. He criticized Poe for his predetermined effects even if these were "marvellously constructed", Melville for the excess of rhetoric, and Hawthorne and company for not using "the words that survive in language." He even disapproved of Tolstoy, a writer he admired most, for that part of *War and Peace* "where Tolstoy tampered with the truth to make it fit his conclusions." His endeavour throughout remained "to write as truly, as straightly, as objectively and as humbly as possible."

2.1.6 Code of Conduct

The code of conduct, so insistently discerned and so vigorously established in Hemingway's oeuvre by Philip Young, has also been a matter of much debate and controversy. Quite a number of Hemingway's works do embody great admiration for certain values of the code such as courage, honour, duty, discipline etc. But not all of them seem to adhere or even relate to the norms of the code. The code unquestionably operates "among various sporting figures" of Hemingway's short stories and the code hero is distinctly noticeable in some of them. But contrary to Philip Young's proposition, both the code and the code hero do not offer "solution to the problems of a large number of the protagonists of Hemingway's short stories, if only because they neither figure in nor are relevant to them. Their protagonists, when confronted with a test-situation or a nasty experience, do not look to any 'code' or 'code hero': they look to life itself, and learn or fail to learn from it. The code of conduct, therefore, may be central and basic to some of Hemingway's short stories; but it is also irrelevant and beside the point in quite a good number of them.

It is in this sense that the presence of courage and honour in Manuel, an old-growing but intensely committed bullfighter, is an integral and indispensable aspect of his character in "The Undefeated": but the same sense of courage and honour is not required of Nick in "The Battler" when he is threatened with the thoughtless violence of Ad. It may even be stupidly hazardous of Nick's father in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" when he is provoked into quarrelling by Dick Boulton, a bum. Again, lack of physical courage in Macomber who bolts when charged by the lion he had wounded is clearly cowardly of him as a big-game hunter in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber": but the need for this kind of bravery may be utterly irrelevant to the older waiter in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" much though he is involved in the larger fate of mankind.

It therefore seems more appropriate to say that Hemingway's characters, instead of seeking to follow the code as defined and elaborated by Philip Young, seek what James B. Colvert calls "a new morality in action" based on empirical methods and practical experiences. They "reject all value judgements of the past" and "consciously search out the meaning of experience." The meaning arises for them out of their interaction with other characters in the specific fictionalized context. It is rooted in the author's consideration of real-life experiences, not in any infallible and dogmatic code of conduct.

2.1.7 Symbolism

Symbolism and irony, attributes of the art of implication and indirection, are among the major narrative techniques of Hemingway. He makes ample use of both of them in order to interpret the complex reality of his times imaginatively and to lend multiple nuances and resonances to his writing. E.M. Halliday, making the distinction between the two, observes that all human perceptions are "reducible" finally to perceptions of likeness or perceptions of difference, and that symbolism, in the main, points to the "perceptions of likeness" and irony to "those of difference". He also adds that "symbolism signifies through a harmony, irony through a discord; symbolism consolidates, irony complicates; symbolism synthesizes, irony analyzes." Symbolism in Hemingway, we may further add is often a visible sign of something invisible, the small tip of the iceberg on the surface of water suggestive of its seven times larger mass under the surface. It is also a concrete and distinctly notable manifestation of the less concrete and less distinctly notable facet of human experience.

The use of symbolism in Hemingway, it needs be noted, is vastly different from that of the better known symbolists like Poe, Hawthorne and Melville. Unlike theirs, his symbols are not designed to serve the ends of some fable, parable or allegory; nor do they dwell in the realms of magic, mystery or fantasy. In fact Hemingway's kinship with "Poe and Hawthorne and Melville: the haunted and nocturnal writers, the men who dealt in images that were symbols of an inner world," as suggested by Malcolm Cowley, can not be pressed very far. It was a tentative observation made to draw attention to the then unnoticed symbols in Hemingway's works. To be sure, Cowley himself admitted that Hemingway's method was "not in the least like theirs," that his visions though as terrifying as those of Poe ("The Pit and the Pendulum," for instance) were invariably "copied from life," and that in his fictions he never "seems to loosen his grip on reality" which may not quite be the case, for instance, with Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun*. "Haunted" therefore Hemingway may be, as suggested by Cowley, but haunted by an experienced physical reality of the world in our time. "Nightmares" there are in his books, but these are "realities that have become a nightmare."

Hemingway therefore makes the best of both realism and symbolism to communicate his meanings. He retains all the naturalistic and factual details of a realist seeking meaning in actual experience; but he also unfolds the complexity and multiplicity of human experience through its secondary meanings at symbolic level. It is due to such an aesthetic stance that Hemingway's symbols are connotative not denotative, contextual not allegorical. Their significances vary with changing situations. They even trip themselves. The high mountains, associated with peace, permanence and immortality in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" also symbolize the conditions of unnatural living in "An Alpine Idyll," leading to much of the shame and confusion of the upland peasant. Also, they are debunked in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" itself, for while tramping along the snowy mountains feet get bloody and people die. Again, women often symbolic of the home in Hemingway, are nowhere around the "home" the old man seeks for himself in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" or Nick makes for himself in "Big Two-Hearted River." In fact, many a time Hemingway's aim is simply a symbolism of association. The utterances of his characters on such occasions are at once factual and symbolic. Take for instance, "(I am) with all those who need a light for the night" in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place;" "You could not get

away from the sun" in "An Alpine Idyll;" I'm not in His Kingdom" in "Soldier's Home."

Hemingway

It therefore appears that Hemingway was totally on the side of Nick Adams (In "The Three-Day Blow") who disapproved of the symbol of naked sword between the forest lovers lying together. Like Nick he would wonder "what good the sword would do. It would have to say edge up all the time because if it went over flat, you could roll right over it and it wouldn't make nay trouble". Like Nick, too, he wouldn't find it "practical' enough. To be practical, symbols for Hemingway have to be rooted in real-life experiences and operate convincingly.

2.1.8 Irony

The principle of irony in Hemingway largely rests on what Heakon Chevalier has called a contrast between appearance and reality, between surface meaning and under-the-surface meaning. Behind such contrast stands out "the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain."

Manifestations of this principle of contrast in Hemingway's short stories are persistent, recurring and varied. It may be a contrast within a character, or within a situation; or a contrast between two characters, or between two situations. Also, it may be a contrasted view of an idea, an ideal, an episode, an event and an action. As a rule, the sharper the contrast, the more striking the irony; also, the more complex the contrast, the more cumulative the effect of irony.

This cardinal principle of ironic contrast in Hemingway manifests itself in various facets and forms of "confident unawareness" in his characters which may be both real and pretended. When real this confident unawareness may be complete or partial, and when pretended it may be self-assertive or self-deceptive. Complete unawareness, the commonest and simplest prop for irony, is reflected for example in the platitudinous American mother in "A Canary for One" who, impervious to reality, insists that "American men make the best husbands" or in the blindly confident younger waiter in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" who, impatient to go home and unaware of the horrors of *nada*, bullies the old man (the last, lone customer) into leaving the clean, bright café. Compared with this complete unawareness, Hemingway's use of incomplete unawareness, a mix-up of awareness and unawareness in various measures, is subtler and more effective. It is betrayed, for instance, by the doctor in "Indian camp" which is distinctly competent at surgery but totally ignorant of the consequences of humanly intolerable emotional strain; or by Mr. Frazer in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio" who has plenty of knowledge but little understanding.

At the other end of the scale, as opposed to the real unawareness (complete or partial) the pretended unawareness is a 'mask of dissimulation,' a certain "pretending to be what one is not and pretending not to be what one is." It may be self-assertive as in the American in "Hills Like White Elephants" and the man in "the Sea Change" who both refuse to see the reality even though it stares them in the face. But it may also be self-deceptive as in the Elliots in "Mr. And Mrs. Elliot" who pretend to be "very happy" in a situation of perverted compromise, or in Jig in "Hills Like White Elephants" who pretends to "feel fine" even as she unwillingly submits to a forced abortion.

However, quite often in Hemingway the contrast emerges not between a reality and an appearance but between two contextual realities. It points not to the correction of a false experience by a true one, but to two real and true experiences. It then suggests flat, ironic dualities in life each true in its own right, for the reader does not see what is and what merely seems. Human experiences, then, go their contrary or opposite ways, convincingly refuting one another. They are impelled by contradictory pulls, and yield antithetical and antipodal meanings. Ironic contrasts then shade off into ironic contradictions and ironic self-contradictions, typical of the present-day drift in

the concept of irony. In "The Battler," for instance, when Nick is knocked off a moving freight by an apparently friendly brakeman he realizes the need to be tough; but soon after, when he witnesses the degeneracy and mental sickness of Ad, the tough ex-prizefighter, he realizes that toughness also does not do.

Of the many critics of Hemingway who have discussed the function of irony in his fictions, E.M. Halliday has cogently made out the case: "The ironic gap between expectation and fulfillment, pretense and fact, intention and action, the message sent and the message received, the way things are thought or ought to be and the way things are – this has been Hemingway's great theme from the beginning; and it has called for an ironic method to do it artistic justice." J.J. Benson, however, notes the greater significance of ironic detachment in Hemingway's art and finds it central to a good number of Hemingway stories and novels and instrumental in restraining too close an identification of their protagonists with the author.

To be sure, Hemingway's kind of ironic detachment prevents him from accepting half-truths in his long odyssey to arrive at the truth. It keeps him longer on the way and avoids any hasty finality. The finality in the form implied discriminations, affirmations even resolutions may come; but not before the author has taken into account the fuller context, the multiplicity of possibilities, the complexity of issues involved; not too soon or too easily. All this makes for the characteristic Hemingway's view and method of resolving the discords of life into controlled art.

2.2 A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED PLACE

2.2.1 Introducing the Story

Almost all the significant short stories of Hemingway came out between 1921 and 1938. "Up in Michigan," his first short story, was written in 1921; followed by the publication of In Our Time, his first collection of short stories, in 1925. Two more collections, Men without Women and Winner Take Nothing, appeared in 1927 and 1933 respectively. Crowning them all came The Fifth Column and The First Forty-nine Stories in 1938, the volume which included all the earlier stories and a few new ones and which finally established his reputation as a short story writer.

Themes and concerns of these stories as also their modes of writing and formal strategies have already been examined at considerable length in the preceding section. Of Hemingway's formal strategies, it may be noted here, his objective writing and his use of symbolic and ironic implications contributed hugely towards his success as a short story writer. The objective writing helped him to eliminate authorial intrusions and comments and to strip down the delineation of his material to 'the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion', and his symbolic and ironic implications engendered multi-layered significances in the creative endeavour. They led to a foregrounding of the skills of condensation and compression in his stories as well as of the projection of maximum meanings through minimum words, and went a long way in shaping him as a powerful short story writer.

Little wonder, therefore, if some of the perceptive Hemingway critics consider him a greater short story writer than a novelist. Ray West, for instance, holds that Hemingway's supremacy is "least in question" in his stories which, he suggests, may not be the case with the author's novels. Philip Young also gives greater kudos to the stories. Summing up Hemingway's literary situation Young concludes: "Hemingway wrote two very good early novels several very good stories and a few great ones." P.F. Paolini goes a step further and categorically maintains: "It would be neither wrong nor overbold to see the best of Hemingway in his short stories," for they embody "a kind of 'Hemingway in its purest state.'" Such observations are a glowing testimony to what Hemingway could achieve with his masterly pruning of language and his iceberg principle of writing.

"A Clean well-lighted Place," included in Hemingway's short story collection *Winner Take Nothing* forces attention to this impressive control of the author over his craft. Published in the year 1933, it is rather a plotless story in which nothing much happens. In the late hours of night, at a clean well-lighted café, two waiters one young and the other old, while attending upon their lone last customer, an old man of eighty, intermittently talk about his recently attempted suicide; and when the old man finally leaves the café, they pull down the shutters and go home. But this simple story-line is so deftly handled with a profusion of vigorously controlled techniques that the outcome leaves an indelible effect. Through the bits and pieces of the narrative and the dialogues Hemingway builds up a gripping contrast between the two waiters, imbues their behaviour and conduct with disciplined strokes of symbolism and irony, and tellingly inscribes the theme of nothingness and night, of the all-powerful and all-engulfing sense of 'nada', especially in the old man's life. The story also relates to the autobiographical aspects of Hemingway's life and his affinity with the existentialist writers like Sartre and Camus; but in the main it makes for a brightly focussed but stark portraiture of an old man whose despair exists beyond his plenty of money and who walks out of the clean well-lighted café only when he has to, 'unsteadily but with dignity', precisely the way it was with him. The mere four-page story, evocatively chiselled and crafted, remains a chilling little masterpiece, and understandably, a favourite of Hemingway.

2.2.2 Contrasted Characters

The pattern of contrast between the characters of the younger and the older waiters rapidly gathers momentum as the story forges ahead with the alternation of its narrative and dialogues. Although the two waiters work together at the same café, temperamentally they stand poles apart. The younger waiter is not aware of the old man's (their last customer) needs outside of money and material satisfaction: to him these are 'nothing' and absurd and for no reason. But the older waiter allows room for such needs since these may drive people to kill themselves. The younger waiter is in a hurry to close the café; the older waiter is unhurried because "there may be someone who needs the café" at these odd hours. The younger waiter, though he waits upon the old man, is sarcastic and hostile; and taking advantage of his customer's deafness says, "You should have killed yourself last week". But the older waiter knows that the old man is clean and has dignity and "that is all that is provided for these hours". The one is cynical and callous about the soldier with the girl and says, "What does it matter if he (the guard) gets what he's after?" The other is compassionate and says, "He (the soldier) had better get off the street now". The one is "all confidence", all faith in himself oblivious of the test-situations of life in which these may prove altogether brittle and fragile. He has youth and a wife to go home to, and does not see the possibility that he may someday be as old as the old man and may outlive the wife like the old man. The other waiter can visualize such terrors of human existence and can identify with the old man's predicament.

2.2.3 Narrative Techniques

The younger waiter, therefore, betrays a sense of arrested awareness and his perceptions are restricted to noticing only his needs of and their fulfilment with a wife, a job, youth, confidence and money. His concerns are myopic, constricted and self-centered, reckoning only with the immediate, transcient and altogether personal. (We may note his sarcastic remark to the old deaf man and his callous observation about the soldier with the girl.) He does not see that in the flux and whirligig of man's life job does imply loss of job, wife does imply loss of wife, youth does imply age, confidence death of confidence, and money loss of money. He stands in sharp ironic contrast with the older waiter who is conscious of all these atrophying and despairing implications and who reflects larger awareness, concern and empathy. Hence, to the younger waiter the old man tried to kill himself for 'nothing' (for no reason) because he has plenty of money, but to the older waiter the despair of the old man who has now turned eighty, is deaf, unsteady on his feet, and bereft of a wife, is

a despair beyond plenty. The older waiter can see that the old man's home, traditionally a symbol of security and comfort, has, as Carlos Baker indicates, turned into a symbol of 'not-home', and the clean well-lighted café may be the only 'home' where he prefers to stay in as long as permitted. Confronted with this larger awareness of the dark forces of multifaceted 'nada' the older waiter symbolically affirms his solidarity with all the benighted brethren: he is with "those who like to stay late at the café. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night." And towards the end of the story when he ponders that he himself would not be able to sleep at night, he self-deceptively says to himself: "It is probably only insomnia. Many must have it" In fact, it is, more probably, insomnia caused by nada, although one wouldn't ever be too sure of it. The dispassionate notations of the lived experience of 'nada', couched in ironic dualities and symbolic nuances very much stay at the centre-stage of the story.

2.2.4 Theme of Nothingness

Despite all the fellow-feeling and solidarity of the older waiter with the cruel predicament of the old man, it needs to be noted, 'nada' has the last laugh in the story. While turning off the lights of the cafe the older waiter continues to reflect on the old man's fate and says aloud: "It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too... Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it was all 'nada'". Indeed in a universe which is stripped of all meaning and where man is finally deprived of all the things that can sustain him, 'nada' is the stark reality. The older waiter acknowledges the centrality and omnipotence of this swirling an encircling tide of 'nada', of humankind reaching the end of its tether, and of God having abandoned the world. The older waiter therefore replaces, in blasphemous terms, the lord's prayer with the 'nada' prayer.

Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.

This stoic and pensive resignation to 'nada' is further affirmed when on the way home the older waiter stops at a bar, and in response to the barman's question "What's yours?" says "Nada". Perhaps what he really wants are clean well-lighted places of life but in the midst of surrounding nada can ask only for a bit of the same. Perhaps, as H.M. Campbell suggests, "In his weary fancy he even imagines that the effects of 'nada' may be overcome if he considers that he is drinking it. If the younger waiter is an unconscious victim of life's ironic contingencies, the older waiter is their conscious victim: and neither of them can do anything to dispel them.

This projection of the overwhelming power of nothingness and of man's ways of facing down this power by maintaining his separate identity and dignity brings Hemingway close to the existentialist writers. It may however be noted that whereas "to Sartre the meaninglessness is basically an idea (and) to Camus, the absurd is a concept." Hemingway's sense of meaninglessness and absurdity is not based on any philosophical idea or concept. In writing about them he merely reports on life as he finds it. To him all ideas and concepts are valueless: life's experience is the only value. He cares for an idea only to the extent it is "derived from seeing life," and refuses to "see life according to an idea." This story also attests such a contention and depicts "the irreducible hazards and pains of life" without philosophizing or conceptualizing them.

2.2.5 Autobiographical Element

Such ceaseless assaults of nothingness as projected in this story, it may be argued, took their toll from Hemingway himself during the last few years of his life. Those were the days of a very special kind of agony for the always one-up, always

charismatic Hemingway. Most of his friends and companions were either dead or estranged and he had frequent spells of depression and loneliness. His proverbial strength and stamina had gone and he could no longer hunt or fish or shoot the way he once used to. His magic capacity to turn out enduring prose (the ultimate weapon against life) seemed to have gone bad forever and the right words wouldn't simply come to his mind. In sum, he was reduced to a wreck of his former self both in life and in art. Shockingly discovering that he had now landed 'in another country' where the 'clean well-lighted places' of life were getting increasingly shut to him, Hemingway may have pulled the trigger into his forehead and embraced 'the old whore' with self-inflicted wound.

This could be, as Earl Rovit has suggested, the author's "way of selling a position that could no longer be held" calculated punishment of that aspect of himself which had failed him in his need." This could also be his way of demonstrating that he could be destroyed, even self-destroyed, but not defeated. But this was also and quite simply a situation of his destruction at the hands of an omnipotent nothingness. It was sad but inevitable, in view of how he saw and lived life; a case of aggressive isolation in a world which refused to make sense any more and where the presiding metaphor became the nothingness of it all. The epigraph Hemingway wrote for his volume of short stories *Winner Take Nothing*, could as well be applicable to him: "Unlike all other forms of lutte or combat, "such are the conditions in the game of life that Hemingway "shall take nothing; neither his ease, nor his pleasure, nor any notions of glory. If take he must, he takes his own life.

2.2.6 Objectivity

Whatever the extent of the resemblance between the latter-day predicament of Hemingway and that of the protagonist in "A Clean Well-lighted Place," it does not in the least compromise his high regard for objective writing. His objectivity in this depiction of potted human conditions lies in what Wayne C. Booth has called an artist's "impassibilite." The author remains at once concerned yet detached, at once ardent yet reasonable. He keeps out any intrusive streak of rhetoric, and maintains "an impassioned rejection of passion." In doing so, he acquires a sort of classical control over his material, and attempts only to discern and realize, and not to judge. Of course, his implicit assumptions, leanings, approvals and disapprovals, discriminations and distinctions are not wiped out from the story, for his is an objectivity within the folds of artistic propriety and norms and not a scientist's neutrality. A scientist, dealing with physical material and chemical salts can be legitimately neutral towards them: but an artist, dealing with human material, emotions and values, cannot be neutral likewise. Hemingway's objectivity in "A Clean Well-lighted Place" therefore lies in his letting his people speak for themselves, in his letting his narrative unfold itself: the author just holds his tongue and, in a manner of speaking, keeps his hands off the story.

2.3 LET US SUM UP

Hemingway's themes, characters and situations signify a limited world; nonetheless they make for, you must have observed, an intensely realized world. Again, his mode of writing and techniques are simplicity itself: nonetheless this simplicity conveys a lot more than it seems to convey. "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is a glowing testimony to such a practice of the craft of short story writing.

2.4 GLOSSARY

Irony:

The expression of one's meaning by saying something which is the direct opposite of one's thoughts, in order to make one's remarks forceful.

Metaphor:

Metaphor is "an implied comparison" "a simile without 'like' or 'as'. It is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them.

Objective Correlative:

In his essay, 'Harlet and His Problems' T.S. Eliot used this term to explain how emotion is best expressed in poetry. "Objective correlative is a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion, such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

Realism:

it denotes a literary movement of the nineteenth century. It shows real life, omitting nothing that is ugly and painful and idealizing nothing, in art and literature.

Symbolism:

an artistic and poetic movement or style using symbols and indirect suggestion to express ideas emotions etc.

2.5 QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the characters of the two waiters pointing to the role they play in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place"
2. Examine the theme of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and the techniques Hemingway employs to project this theme.
3. Discuss the major concerns of Hemingway in his short stories and the formal strategies he often adopts in highlighting them.

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (1966).
2. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (revised edition) 1974.
3. Scott Donaldson, *By Force of Will: The Life and Art of Ernest Hemingway* (1978).
4. Frank Scapella (edited), *Hemingway: Essays of Reassessment* (1990).
5. Kenneth H. Rosen (edited), *Hemingway Repossessed* (1994).

UNIT 3 WILLIAM FAULKNER: *THE BEAR*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 William Faulkner
 - 3.1.1 Chronology
 - 3.1.2 Faulkner: Then and Now
 - 3.1.3 Themes and Concerns
 - 3.1.4 Modes of Writing
 - 3.1.5 The Yoknapatawpha County
- 3.2 *The Bear*
 - 3.2.1 The relevance/Irrelevance of Section Four
 - 3.2.2 Theme of Growing up/Initiation
 - 3.2.3 Modes of Writing in "The Bear"
 - 3.2.4 Men and Nature: Affinities and Polarities
- 3.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.4 Glossary
- 3.5 Questions
- 3.6 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit attempts to help you understand and evaluate both William Faulkner as a fictionist and "The Bear" as his long short story. Starting off with a select chronology which covers significant biographical details on the author's life and publication information on his work, it examines the early critical debate on and the subsequent critical reputation of Faulkner, the interfusion of his themes in most of his books, his distinctive verbal and technical strategies, especially the stream of consciousness, and the 'specificity' and 'universality' of his imagined Yoknapatawpha country. It then moves on to consider the major features of "The Bear," including the much contested relevance/irrelevance of its section 4, the foregrounding of the theme of initiation in the story, the affinities and polarities between man and nature as evidenced in it, and Faulkner's use of language, at once dense and intense, in this story. The endeavour is not only to familiarize you with what is often called the difficult terrain of Faulkner's oeuvre but also to evoke your pro-active critical interest in him especially in his story "The Bear."

3.1 WILLIAM FAULKNER

3.1.1 Chronology

This chronology is largely based on the one given in *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, edited by Philip M. Weinstein (1995). You may, during the course of your readings on this author, notice several other significant bits of information on his life and works and draw up your own chronology.

- 1897 First of four sons of Murry C. Faulkner and Maud Butler Faulkner, William C. Faulkner was born on September 25 in New Albany, Mississippi. The family name was spelled "Falkner" until WF added the "u" in 1919.
- 1902 The Faulkner family moved to Oxford, the seat of the University of Mississippi. After an indifferent secondary education, he began a friendship with Phil Stone (Four years older), reading widely in classics and contemporary literature.



William Faulkner

- 1918 Attempted to enlist in the U.S. Air Corps to fight in World War I, but rejected because of insufficient height.
- 1919-20 Enrolled as a special student at the University of Mississippi, studied French, wrote a play entitled *Marionettes*, completed his first volume of verse - *The Marble Faun* - which (with Phil Stone's help) was eventually accepted for publication.
- 1921-23 Worked in a New York bookstore managed by Elizabeth Prall, Sherwood Anderson's future wife. Returned to Oxford to serve as university postmaster, a job he notoriously mishandled; in 1923 was fired from it.
- 1924 *The Marble Faun* was published in December.
- 1925 Travelled to New Orleans, was introduced (through Elizabeth Prall) to Sherwood Anderson and his literary circle. Completed his first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*, a "lost generation" story which Anderson's publishers, Horace Liveright, accepted for publication.
- 1926 *Soldiers' Pay* was published in February.
- 1927 *Mosquitoes*, set in New Orleans, was published in April by Liveright.

- 1928 The third novel, *Flags in the Dust*, rejected by Liveright was accepted by Harcourt, Brace, on condition that it be shortened. Began writing *The Sound and the Fury* in the spring and finished it by early fall.
- 1929 Shortened and renamed, *Flags in the Dust*, was published as *Sartoris* in January. Began writing *Sanctuary*. *The Sound and the Fury*, his first indisputable modernist masterpiece, rejected by Harcourt, Brace, was accepted by Cape and Smith. Married Estelle Oldham (a childhood sweetheart now a divorcee). *The Sound and the Fury* was published in October.
- 1930 *As I Lay Dying* was published in October by Cape and Smith, giving WF's fictional country its name of Yoknapatawpha.
- 1931 *Sanctuary*, begun before publication of the two previously completed masterpieces and first conceived as a potboiler, was heavily revised before being published in February. Began writing scripts for MGM and Warner Bros, off and on for 20 years.
- 1932 *Light in August*, WF's first major treatment of racial turmoil, was published in February by Smith and Haas.
- 1934-35 *Doctor Martino and other Stories*, a collection of detective stories, was published in April.
- 1936 *Absalom, Absalom!* was published in October by Random House, thereafter WF's permanent publisher.
- 1938 *The Unvanquished*, a collection of Civil War stories, was published in February.
- 1940 *The Hamlet*, the first novel of the Snopes trilogy, was published in April.
- 1942 *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories*, WF's broadest and most sustained scrutiny of black-white relations, was published in May.
- 1946 Malcolm Cowley's edition of *The Portable Faulkner* was published in May by the Viking Press. Except for *Sanctuary*, WF's novels were out of print; Cowley's ably introduced volume made WF's work inexpensively available to a large reading public.
- 1948 *Intruder in the Dust* was published in September.
- 1950 Won the Nobel Prize for Literature, travelled with his daughter Jill to Stockholm, and delivered his famous Nobel Prize acceptance speech.
- 1951 France awarded him the Legion of Honor. From this point on, WF's work received critical (indeed "canonical") attention and brought him financial security. Increasingly, he wrote and spoke out on political (especially racial) issues. Travelled extensively during the 1950s as a sort of cultural ambassador for the State Department.
- 1954 Won the Pulitzer prize.
- 1957 *The Town*, the second novel of the Snopes trilogy, was published in May. Taught as writer-in-residence at the University of Virginia.
- 1958 Second period at the University of Virginia, February to June.

- 1959 *The Mansion*, the final volume of the Snopes trilogy, was published in November.
- 1962 Died unexpectedly (probably of a heart attack) in a clinic at Byhalia, Mississippi. His funeral took place the next day in Oxford.
- 1963 *The Reivers* won the Pulitzer prize.

3.1.2 Faulkner: Then and Now

Whatever critical attention the canon of William Faulkner attracted until the year 1945 was largely uncomplimentary when it was not hostile. He had by that time published most of his major books including *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942), but critics and reviewers mostly remained unimpressed. The common refrain was that "Faulkner is basically confused in thought and unclear in style." Alfred Kazin, a widely acknowledged and respected critic, for instance, noticed Faulkner's innovations and resourcefulness but complained that he "was curiously dull, furiously commonplace, and often meaningless, suggesting some ambiguous irresponsibility and exasperated sullenness of mind, some distant atrophy or indifference." Wyndham Lewis was harsher still when he observed that Faulkner's characters were "energized and worked-up to no purpose-all 'signifying nothing', 'and that besides 'ill-selected words...' the 'destiny' or 'doom' behind his fiction was merely 'a fraudulent device for operating the puppets.'" Quite in the same vein Clifton Fadiman held that Faulkner's "Anti-Narrative or a set of complex devices [are] used to keep the story from being told... confusing the reader and otherwise enabling Mr. Faulkner to demonstrate that as a technician he has Joyce and Proust punch-drunk!" And Maxwell Geismar who otherwise admired Faulkner's craft and called *The Sound and the Fury* a magnificent novel, insisted that there was a gradual decline in Faulkner's talent because of which he "moved steadily towards the perverse and the pathological and the denial of humanity."

Literary tastes and sensibility, and correspondingly explorations and evaluations, even among the most sensitive and discerning critics, may not only honestly trip but contradict each other: and the above-referred critics, therefore, had every right to their opinion. This was more so in the case of Faulkner, for he was, as a writer, discomfortingly uneven, stunningly original and innovative, and at places difficult to comprehend. Some of this problematic was sensed by Conrad Aiken who found Faulkner's prose "strangely fluid and slippery and so bewildering" that sometimes one felt "tempted to give it up." He realized that Faulkner was ceaselessly struggling to find the right 'form', for "he wanted a medium as a continuum without stops or pauses, a medium which is always of the moment yet is as fluid and undetectable as life itself." At the same time, to him Faulkner's inventiveness, like that of Balzac and James, was "of the richest possible sort-a headlong and tumultuous abundance, an exuberant generosity and vitality, which makes most other contemporary fiction look very pale and chaste indeed." Such notice, however, was taken by a minority of critics right until the early forties, and from most others Faulkner received either short shrift or plain disparagement.

Quite probably, a part of this problematic (a small part though) may be laid at the door of Faulkner himself. He was the kind of person who would not be solicitous about his work, who would put a book at the back of his mind soon after completing it, and who would at times not bother even to keep a personal copy of it on publication. He would not even discuss his work with his peers during the period of writing at or after. He would rather keep his distance from the literary glitterati or whatever of it obtained during his day, and would never seek to benefit from the comments of contemporary critics on his work. Although an uncertain judge of his work, he was much less certain of the judgement of other readers. He seemed to write more for himself than for his readers, as also because he had to rather than he wanted to. In sum, he was a solitary writer, an inward-looking, self-taught and self-contained person who would often be brooding over the tangled human situation in

the Deep South and who happened to be a man of genius. The none-too-planned and instinctive way in which Faulkner went about the business of living and writing, the quirky and unkind bits and pieces of fate, and the inhospitable and yet-to-mellow critical climate and tradition of the thirties and the early forties, all threatened to seal the publishing prospects of Faulkner in future.

William
Faulkner

The critical discourse, however, began to change tracks in its assessment of Faulkner from 1946 onwards. It became more writer-friendly and understanding, and Faulkner's reputation, gradually but steadily, began to rise, the continuing voices of dissent and disagreement notwithstanding. Did it come to happen because of the emergence of a more inclusive modernist critical agenda which, consequent upon the disillusion and trauma of the two World Wars and the Great Depression of the thirties in the United States, was willing to reevaluate and accommodate the healthier parts of past conventions and modes of living cherished by Faulkner, or because of the growing centrality of the critical position which focused more closely on the text including Faulkner's and strongly implied that everything else was rather extraneous to literary criticism, or because of a combination of these and several other factors, is far from certain. What seems certain, as argued by Lawrence H. Schwartz in his well-researched book *Creating Faulkner's Reputation* (1988) is that several individual and institutions collectively contributed to this upswing in Faulkner's literary reputation. Schwartz named primarily Malcolm Cowley, the New Critics, the New York Intellectuals, the Viking Random Publishing House, and the Humanities Division of Rockefeller Foundation, and held that in the post-world war II scenario Faulkner indeed emerged as a representative of cultural democracy and pluralism, of individualism in collision with the domination of any ideology, and of the preservation of personal values. But the breakthrough for this resurgence of interest in Faulkner studies, in any case, came first and foremost with the influential "Introduction" Malcolm Cowley wrote for the volume *The Portable Faulkner* (Viking 1946) and the seminal and highly perceptive essay Robert Penn Warren wrote on Faulkner during the same year.

Cowley's "Introduction" came at a time when more than most books of Faulkner had gone out of print, and were "little read and often disparaged." He stemmed this stereotypical tide, and skillfully pushed "the scope and force and interdependence of Faulkner's work as a whole" into the consideration of his readers. He was the first critic to notice the pivotal emergence/significance of the half-mythical, half-real Yoknapatawpha county in Faulkner's books with the imagined Jefferson town as the seat of the county. More important, he discerned what he called Faulkner's "legend of all the Deep South" and "a whole interconnected pattern" of this legend in the "troubled and painful heritage" of the South and in its increasingly mechanizing, dehumanizing and disaffecting future. It is not that Cowley didn't acknowledge Faulkner's lapses and deficiencies: the early "worthless poems", the early immature stories, the thinly related themes, inapt narrative structures, "awkward experiments" in form, and so forth. But he also put his finger at the distinctive quality of Faulkner's imagination which may not have been disciplined or sophisticated like that of Henry James or James Joyce, but which had "a power, a richness of life, an intensity to be found in no other American writer." Cowley's crowning insight came when he argued that the miniature land Faulkner wrote about made for not only the "entire South" but "rather the human situation revealed in Southern terms." His "Introduction," therefore, powerfully evoked the sense of lived life in Faulkner's books, and effectively claimed that Faulkner's 'fables' stand for "a universal human drama."

Unlike Cowley, Robert Penn Warren didn't attempt to contextualize either Faulkner or his work: instead, he concentrated on the printed word, the word in the fiction of the author, and its implications. Warren, thus, probed and critiqued various aspects of Faulkner's art, and observed: "William Faulkner has written nineteen books which for range of effect, philosophical weight, originality of style, variety of characterization, humour, and tragic intensity, are without equal in our time and

country." Not a devotee but an astute critic of Faulkner, he attempted to put Faulkner's admirers and detractors in place. He noted that Faulkner's "tragic intensity" could at times lapse into "mere emotionalism," his "technical virtuosity" into "mere complications," his "philosophical weight" into "mere confusion of mind," and his dense yet intense prose into something "wildly rhetorical." Like Cowley, he also acknowledged that Faulkner was "a very uneven writer," but emphasized the strength of this limitation when he asserted that Faulkner's unevenness was "in a way, an index to his vitality, his willingness to take risks, to try for new effects, to make new explorations of material and method." What Warren suggested was that although a very major American writer, Faulkner's limitations were "inextricably intertwined" with his great achievements. His perceptions, in retrospect, are in the nature of pioneering criticism of Faulkner by a pioneering New Critic.

From now on recognition came to Faulkner at a fairly good pace if not in quick succession. The American Academy not only gradually included his work in the canon but placed it on the top shelf of American literature. The trickle of articles and books on Faulkner soon turned into a steady stream: and in the fifties and sixties hardly an issue of a scholarly journal would appear without an article on Faulkner and hardly a year would pass without the publication of a serious book on him. His reputation also began to travel across the Atlantic, and subsequently across the Pacific. He received the National Book award in 1950 and again in 1955, and Legion of Honour in 1951. His books twice won the Pulitzer Prize, *A Fable* in 1955, and *The Rivers* in 1963. At the invitation of the University of Virginia, he spent two terms as a writer in Residence in 1957 and again in 1958. And the international salute came to him with the award of the Noble prize in the year 1950. In his brief but landmark speech on the occasion of receiving the prize he declined "to accept the end of man" and maintained that it was the writer's privilege "to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honour and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of the 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." In invoking the writer to help man endure and prevail, Faulkner may be deemed rather prescriptive and too advisory. Nonetheless, these concluding words were totally in consonance with the latter-day, honest-to-God, humanely concerned Faulkner speaking from an august international platform.

But the dissatisfaction with and disapproval of Faulkner's work didn't fail to register itself in the midst of all this celebration and icon duly of the author. Much in the manner of Wyndham Lewis, Sean O'Faolain, writing in the late fifties, thought that Faulkner's style was but a "demagogue's careless, rhetorical, and often meaningless language" which betrayed "an inward failure to focus clearly," in sum, "a lack of intelligence." Also Walter J. Slatoff, in the sixties, observed that Faulkner's prose was luxuriant to a fault and "represents an overabundance of oxymorons, contradictions, oppositions, polarities, which remain unresolved," and that the choice he makes in each of these cases in "the choice not to choose." And although the later Kazin revised some of his earlier opinions about Faulkner, eloquently defended his work against the charge of being primarily "a neurotic manifestation," called *Light in August* a great book, and gave a brilliant expose of Joe Christmas as "the incarnation of man," he nevertheless found Faulkner "compelling rather than believable." He reinforced this objection against Faulkner when he argued "that there is a gap between the talent ("compelling") and the meaning ("believable") and that the polarities and contradictions of material [in Faulkner] have not been 'really' but into 'harmony'."

This pursuit of 'harmony,' of some 'elaborate but coherent aim,' of locating 'meaning' in a work of art stands on quite questionable grounds, as is cogently argued by Robert Penn Warren in his *Introduction to Faulkner* (Twentieth Century Views) in the late sixties. Warren notices that "what many readers prize in Faulkner's work is often the fact of the polarities, contradictions, and inharmonious elements" inherent in life, resulting into "a battle that can never be finally won." and

that the creative process in Faulkner, as indeed in any writer, need not necessarily be "deductive." To him, it is not the "meaning" in Faulkner's fiction but the struggle and effort that goes into creating "meaning" which matters. In any case, whatever "meaning" any book arrives at, "will always rest in perilous balance," embedded in its contextuality and specificity. Something of this disturbing absence of meaning but engaging richness, variety and contrariness of Faulkner was suggested by Russell Roth in *Faulkner Studies* when he wrote that Faulkner's work "flatly denies, or contradicts, or takes issue with most of our fundamental and most dearly cherished assumptions regarding our relation as individuals with the world." Allen Tate's admiration for Faulkner was, however, of a different order: he didn't ever like Faulkner the man but he immensely liked Faulkner the writer "who since the early thirties I have thought was the greatest American novelist after Henry James; a novelist of an originality and power not equaled by his contemporaries, Hemingway and Fitzgerald." Tate therefore observed that Faulkner's "work must be re-read" and "talked about." John Crowe Ransom, however, was particularly struck by the resemblances between Faulkner and the great Elizabethan dramatist John Webster "in the force of his horror, as in the rightness of his sense of human goodness, as in the gift of a language which is generally adequate to the effects intended." He added that imperfections of Faulkner's work "both large and small" notwithstanding, his "perfections are wonderful and well-sustained, and without exact precedent anywhere." The encycloaedic two-volume work of J. Hoffman and Olga Vickery in *Two Decades of Faulkner Criticism* and later *Three Decades of Faulkner Criticism* contributed enormously in re-reading and re-interpreting the author, and in refining and correcting the earlier critical positions/insights. There were also written a large number of exegeses of his work in the fifties and sixties which rather threatened to transform Faulkner into a cult figure but which also, through close textual analysis, rebutted the charge that his work was 'complicated' and 'self-indulgent,' and demonstrated how 'to discriminate values and methods among the individual items' of his entire oeuvre. In short, by the end of the sixties Faulkner was firmly entrenched as an exceptionally talented, highly inventive, weakly disciplined, variously comparable, major American fictionist of the day.

From the seventies right upto the turn of the century, the best of Faulkner has stood the test of time. There has of course been during this period an unprecedented explosion of critical theory; and ever new discourses have both enriched and confounded the critical endeavour, especially with the increasing application of the conceptual and theoretical formulations of Postmodernism, Deconstruction, Post-colonial Theory and Feminism. A whole new range of perspectives and ideologies, of critical tools and tropes, of idiom and terminology has surfaced and taken over the critical function. In addition, over these decades, shifts in the preferences and tastes of the new generations of readers have brought about almost a sea-change in critical revaluations and final pronouncements on all major writers. In the midst these far-reaching changes and challenges, better books of Faulkner have not only emerged unscathed but have consistently arrested attention and earned appreciation. Contemporary critical responses largely find him an enduring achiever as a creative artist. Thadious M. Davis, for instance, holds that Faulkner will endure for "his construction of race" as something "central to his representation of characters," for the problematic of his racial subjectivity in "othering or objectifying of blacks," and for his "location of history and memory as major cites" of his fiction. Davis also acknowledges Faulkner's contribution in his "creation of a language of loss, longing, and desire as the articulation of a modern American sensibility" and for his "location of history and memory as major cites" of his fiction. Davis also acknowledges Faulkner's contribution in his "creation of a language of loss, longing, and desire as the articulation of a modern American sensibility" and in his "envisioning of environment, "the Yoknapatawpha landscape of Mississippi, as both "ecological and social," with a world-view and human concern which roundly rejects the Atomic Bomb and the "aftermath of the Nuclear Age."

While Thadious Davis discerns a certain "ethical realism" in the linkages of these aspects of Faulkner's work, Richard Moreland, in *Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, problematizes the issue rather differently and considers Faulkner's work "modernist and correspondingly critical in its relationship to the social contexts in which and about which Faulkner wrote." Coupled with these perceptions, is the ethnicity and gender-conscious criticism of Faulkner, for example by Lothar Honnighausen, which engages seriously with the author's books. No longer do the critics view Faulkner's art as "a well-wrought urn" of Cleanth Brooks' observation; instead they discern various inescapable incongruities, for instance, between Faulkner's advocacy of a "Go Slow Policy" for racial integration and his strong and path-breaking views on it, between his liberalism and radical reformism on the one hand and conservatism and ameliorism on the other. Probably it is for this reason that critics like Arthur Kinney remind us repeatedly of the need to "contextualize" Faulkner, and to probe and reevaluate his various attitudes as "conditioned by the socio-cultural patterns of his time and place."

The interest in and the impact of Faulkner today stands percolated among the writers and critics all over the world, probably because he "speaks to the hearts of the people." His influence in Japan, Great Britain, Russia and several other countries is already well-documented in *Faulkner: International Perspectives*. He has also been acknowledged as a vigorously engaging fictionist by Jean-Paul Sartre, Andre Malraux and Albert Camus in France, and by Hermann Hesse, Gottfried Benn and Peter Handke in Germany. The Italian novelists Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini have translated several of his books into Italian and consider them as object-lessons on the craft of fiction-writing. The most talked about Latin American novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, referred to him as "his master William Faulkner" and another, Jorge Edwards confessed that "the reading of Faulkner showed me, for the first time in my life, that there is a kind of poetry that can go into narrative fiction." Such accolades from major world-class writers apart, the entry on Faulkner in the latest edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* opens with the statement: "More books and scholarly articles have been written about Faulkner than about any other American writer of the twentieth century." It may also be added that he became a role model for a number of American writers who came after him, including Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty and Toni Morrison. Simultaneously however, we are to remember that Faulkner ever remained "too subtle and too difficult" to become a "popular author," and belonged to the class of those writers whose works are "more admired than read." Nonetheless the best of his books which deal with the subjects he felt 'in his bones' and in which he wrote 'his guts' release and will continue to release abiding pleasure.

3.1.3 Themes and Concerns

Quite unlike Robert Frost and Ernest Hemingway, broadly speaking there is no 'central theme' in the fictions of William Faulkner. Several themes, overlapping and interconnecting each other, tend to emerge from his books. To isolate these themes from their contexts and to enumerate them may sound rather reductive and simplistic. Nonetheless it would be appropriate to indicate them in their specificity and particularity in order to discern what Faulkner is trying to say in his works and what are his major preoccupations and concerns.

Although Faulkner is largely considered a modernist writer, one of his themes, paradoxically as it were, seems to be anti-modernism. In his books he turns his back on the contemporary enterprise of mechanization and industrialization because, he feels it dehumanizes people and turns them into "a kind of human cash register," bereft of belongingness to any community and rootedness in any society. Instead, he celebrates "the glory of the past" because it preserves essential human virtues such as "courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice." This however does not obviate from him the fact that the agrarian, rural society of the past is also largely "inward-turning, backward-looking" and that such a social order is inevitably headed towards a steady decline and decay. He also notices that the past is

getting "frozen in its virtues and vices" and suffers from "massive immobility" and "unchangeableness of human condition."

William
Faulkner

This mixed retrieval of the past in Faulkner is closely associated with another theme, that of simultaneous affirmation and questioning of the values of the feudal, elitist families of his day. Oriented towards the past but coming into maturity in the 20th century, his young characters from these families not only learn of the legendary courage and endurance of the family patriarchs who established themselves in the Mississippi wilderness but also of their guilt and shame, of appropriation and marginalization of the 'other'. Driven by antithetical feelings, therefore, while the young protagonists are drawn to the family for the security it provides they are also repulsed by it for some of its unforgivable and disaffecting practices and traditions. There is a certain collision of their innocence/idealism with the reality of their lives which shocks and confuses them. Indeed, it connects their predicament with what some critics call the theme of natural man (close to the primitive man) versus social man (close to the modern man), or that of a difficult and painful initiation/transition from adolescence into manhood, especially for his well-meaning and conscientious young people.

Such contradictions inherent in the family fortunes of the descendants of the white planters in the Deep South are unisolvably bound to the theme of racial discriminations and Faulkner's unambiguous disapproval of the institution, preservation and perpetuation of the system of slavery. To him it was "a terrible crime against humanity" and a "self-inflicted curse" on the white people. However, in his rejection of the racial subjection and abuse of the black for the profit and pleasure of the white, Faulkner kept shuttling between the positions of an ameliorist and a radical reformist. It is possible that his (white) racial subjectivity did not allow him to take any firm position, and retained his constructions of human conditions within what is usually called the white man's discourse of 'humanistic' and 'universal' tradition. Nonetheless his largely unbiased problemization of racialization and racial confrontation and his insistent and continued concern for a happy race relationship are treated with a considerable amount of self-reflexivity and with unusual "insight, clarity and artistry."

More than Faulkner's interrogation of race-relationships, family fortunes, and the past, the theme that receives Faulkner's recurring and almost persistent attention is the ambience of the Deep South. It may however be argued that the South is more of a setting or atmosphere than a theme, quite like the Wessex of Thomas Hardy or the Ireland of W.B. Yeats: but in as much as what Faulkner writes about is his theme, the South stays well within the ambit of his themes. In any case, Faulkner created a fictional world, located it in the Deep South, called it the Yoknapatawpha county with 'Jefferson' as its capital, and modeled it on the Northern Mississippi region with Oxford as the seat of its university. He inhabited this imagined land with the Native Americans, the African Americans, the European Americans, including several of their landowning and erstwhile rich families with inter-connections resonant of the history and the past of them all. He called it "a cosmos of my own" in which he enacted the drama of the faith and loss of faith in the past with rhetorical flourishes and incessant flow of language (attributes close to Faulkner and the Southerners in General), and of the near impossibility of consensual conclusions (attributes of his modernist sensibility). It may be added that this broad theme of the Deep South also included a more specific theme of the nobility and steadfastness of human beings while facing the worst onslaughts of life, and indicated how mankind endures and attempts to prevail.

The inclusion of the past in the present context and of the present in the past context, the acceptance and repudiation of family fortunes and heritage, the explorations of the self-inflicted curse on a racist society, the attraction-repulsion drives towards a tangled South, the possibility of human nobility and fortitude in the midst of the wasteland of violence, brutality, and depravity are, therefore, several of the major

themes Faulkner writes about. At the same time, as implied earlier, he was too "fecund, various and restless" an artist to confine his pronouncements on human situation to a single theme or concern. What is more, he roundly indicates that in each of his themes there are inherent contradictions and conflicts of human experience. Possibly it is for this reason that some of Faulkner's critics find his work 'unresolved,' 'obscure' and 'meaningless.' What these critics miss out is that he refuses to rush into arriving at facile resolutions or clarity of meanings, and suggests that there is nothing like the 'last word,' or 'final resolution.'

A consideration of the interactions, interrelationships and inter-twining of these themes in Faulkner's major books yields a more concrete realization of what he is trying to say. The degree and extent of their presence and function in any particular book is, of course, a matter of authorial emphasis dictated by the nature and needs of the book in hand. But they do act in conjunction with one another, and often enough integrate and make a unified whole. The decline of the Compson family which has had generals and wealthy planters as ancestors stays, for instance, at the heart of *The Sound and the Fury*. The alcoholic Mr. Compson, the genteel and whining Mrs. Compson, the incestuous Quentin, the transparently idiotic Benjy and the meanly manoeuvring Jason are all suggestive of the tensions and dissensions of a family that is falling apart and going under. At the same time, an affirmative counter-force in the book obtains in the person of the large-hearted and infinitely patient black woman Dilsey who, despite the injustice inflicted on her by men and god, characterizes hope and charity, endurance and naturalness. The book commingles and interfuses the themes of illicit love instead of the warmth of family affections, of decaying and perverse presence of feudal elite, of humanistic values, of amelioristic race-relations, and of glorious past. However, their darker hues and facets assume terrifying proportions in *As I Lay Dying* in which the decline of a family reaches its rock-bottom when all filial obligations are trampled under feet and reduced to shreds. The unbridled sexuality of the family patriarch Anse and the scandalizing vengefulness of the second son Darl turn things utterly chaotic and beyond redemption despite the dutifulness and loyalty of the other two sons, Cash and Jewel. The perverse forcefully sways and unhinges the normative in this tale of over-abundance of the meanest and the wildest in human conduct, of the worst of human lust and malice that can come to pass in a family.

Faulkner's major emphasis, however, gets divided between the individuals and the community in some of his books. In *Light in August*, for instance, he examines how a certain community gets driven "to crucifixion of themselves and one another." Its obsession with self-righteousness, its refusal to forgive human frailty, its stern spirit of persecution leave no space for people like Joe Christmas. Notably, the might of the community in this book is linked up with the strands of not only ruthless and thoughtless patriotism (Fascism) but also with the doomed human plight in the face of strong racial discriminations in the South. Caught in extremely painful self-divisions, Joe refuses to pass as a white (although he very well could) probably because his father may have been a black: but he also refuses to accept his Negro status probably because his father may have been a white. In this state of high-voltage tension he happens to kill Joanna Burden and is subsequently lynched, notwithstanding the kindly and sympathetic characters in the community like Gail Highwater, Lena Grove and Byron Bunch who prefer to extend charity. Further, if *Light in August* portrays the lower depths of a puritanical community obsessed with self-righteousness, *The Hamlet* depicts an altogether different community of rednecks, farmers, and non-slaveholders who are humane, tormented and defrauded. This community is, systematically and cunningly, cheated by the Snopes family, especially Flem, who entertains no rules of fair play. In such books Faulkner integrates strong, persistent, racial discriminations, the Southern codes and modes of conduct, the human cunning and nobility, obsessions and spirit of freedom with the basic issue of what a community can do and, inversely, what can be done to a community.

Not the community but the whole region of Northern Mississippi and its institution of chattel slavery take precedence over every other thing in several books of Faulkner. In such books he critiques the issues involved in the "racialization, racial construction and racial division" in the South, and keeps his distance from certain aspects of the "Southern white consciousness" even as he remains "a part of the general American white consciousness." In *Absalom, Absalom!* for instance, the problem of 'Colour Line' takes a frightfully destructive dimension in that the mansion called 'Sutpen's Hundred' which is raised on the seeds of racial segregation, is driven, despite its phenomenal rise, to a gradual but steady extinction, as if by destiny. The refusal of Thomas Sutpen, and later of his son Henry, to accept the black as human equal turns into their fatal flaw; and notably, the vengeance on the Sutpen family is wrecked by Thomas Sutpen's own son by the othered (mulatto) woman. At the same time and in contrast to the harsh and unpardonable racial positions and taboos and their consequences which dominate the theme of *Absalom, Absalom!* The warm and abiding inter-racial friendship between the white Bayard Sartoris and the black Ringo shines all through the pages of *The Unvanquished*. Also, Bayard defies the Southern tradition and decides not to avenge the murder of his father, for the father (Elder Sartoris) had goaded his rival and killer, Edmond, to the point "where he had to murder or face himself as a coward." In terms of human attributes, if the story of Thomas Sutpen deals with his tremendous grit and determination coupled with an overweening ambition and blinding racial prejudice, that of Bayard Sartoris brings into relief his moral courage and fortitude, and his belief in the sanctity and equality of all human beings. His character and conduct anticipates that of Ike in "The Bear".

We have noticed the presence of human goodness and nobility, impinging in minor or major ways upon the course of events in more than most of the Faulkner books referred to so far. But some of his books are primarily a celebration of the theme of humanism and humanistic values. The *Wild Palms*, consisting of two stories "Old Man" and "The Wild Palms," for instance, points to what humankind, given the courage of conviction, is capable of doing and can do. The convict in "Old Man" who is given a skiff and ordered to find the missing woman and man, spots the woman, eight months' pregnant, and in his attempt to return with her, braves the tumultuous Mississippi floods, confronts alligators, ducks and misdirected gunshots and reaches back. He acquits himself with raw courage and immense endurance and vast funds of human piety. In return, when sentenced to ten additional years "for political reasons," he asks for nothing "but just permission to endure and endure to buy air, to feel sun," and feel the earth under his feet. He remains unperturbed, treasuring his fate, and is happy with it, and therefore truly 'free'. The young couple in "The Wild Palms," forgo the security and respectability of middleclass life, she her household comforts and he his medical profession, and happily endure continued suffering and deprivation. Finally when she dies, following an abortion, he is imprisoned for having performed it. The lovers establish the 'reality' of romantic love, for they don't merely believe in it but "act on their belief." And hence, though tempted to destroy himself the lover, surviving the beloved, treasures the memory of it all, and is happy and contented with it. There is no theorizing or comment in either of these stories; the author doesn't denigrate or eulogize either experience. There is however an implied affirmation of the effort and struggle in doing what these characters do and this affirmation lends meaning to the experience they undergo.

The emphasis on human traits in Faulkner, especially those of human courage and dignity, acquires mellow and more sombre hues in "The Bear," the story prescribed for your study. In this story of the yearly 'rites' of the chase and the final hunt of Old Ben, "the enormous bear with a mutilated paw," Faulkner builds up the character of Sam Fathers, "the taintless and incorruptible" Chickawaw Indian, with masterly strokes. Sam Fathers unobtrusively educates Ike about how to traverse the wilderness and how to hunt. He empathizes with Old Ben who is protective of all little bears in the woods and who never attacks human beings save in self-defence. He alone discerns that they need a much bigger, stronger, and more courageous dog to effectively bay and turn Old Ben. He captures and trains such a dog (the Lion)

patiently and painstakingly over the years. He accepts the basic principles of the wilderness, those of the struggle for survival and the cyclic pattern of life and death, so that at some point of time and age it is all right that Old Ben is killed and he himself dies. He is a man of few words working for Major de Spain, but his supreme skills and quiet dignity draw wide attention and respect. He thus emerges in the story as a pillar of human nobility, endurance, strength, courage and compassion, and is aptly called 'the Chief' of the hunting expedition. This theme of human nobility and fortitude in the story blends with the theme of Ike's initiation, at the threshold of adulthood, into the values of Sam Fathers, and is suggestive of the 'free' man in him trapped by the extremely tight-holding barriers of society.

In our reading of the oeuvre of Faulkner, therefore, racial and hierarchical classifications are constructed and deconstructed; family fortunes and past history alternate between acceptance and repudiation; communities may retain their sanity or go amuck; life may or may not be brutal, violent and destructive; and human spirit may succeed in enduring the worst contingencies with fortitude or wallow in its own aberration and depravity. But capsulizing and subsuming them all is Faulkner's awareness of the antipodal human experiences and antithetical thought-processes. All too often there come up polarities and oppositional dialectics, too hard if not well-nigh impossible to resolve. In this broader context, as Faulkner has himself observed, his core theme is "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself." It is also, in a manner of speaking, the enforcement of Melville's famous dictum: "The Conflict of Convictions spins against the way it drives."

3.1.4 Modes of Writing

Faulkner's detractors have criticized him more for his modes of writing than for his themes and concerns. To them his narrative structures and techniques as well as his use of language obfuscate his meanings when they do not render them altogether incomprehensible. What therefore Faulkner's admirers consider his amazing technical virtuosity and his ingenuity in writing appear to them conspicuously unacceptable weaknesses of the author. A more objective scrutiny, however, indicates that most of the tropes of Faulkner's narrativity are attributes of his artistic strength, although at times he does betray, in a manner of speaking, the weakness of this strength.

Narrative Structures and Narrative Techniques

Faulkner's narrative structures often deviate from the norms of chronological time. The basic premise seems to be that while the human body exists in a certain sequence of time, the human mind operates both within and outside it. In his books, therefore yesterday, today and tomorrow get interfused and look indivisible; and affirm the presentness of the past as much as the pastness of the present in human experience. Take for instance *Go Down, Moses* which has intended to be read as 'a unified novel' by Faulkner who, noticeably, dropped the words "and other stories" from the title in its second and subsequent printings. In dealing with the fortunes of the generations of McCaslin family in general and Ike in particular, the author in this book keeps moving back and forth from the 1850s to the fourth decade of the twentieth century. In fact, he breaks and fragments its chronological time and refashions and reorganizes it after his own manner. Therefore, while the first chapter/story of the book takes place in the 1850s and the second and third are set in 1940, the fourth and fifth go back to the 1880s and the sixth and seventh again occur in 1940. This kind of narrative movement of the events of the distant past, the recent past and the present in Faulkner, with little regard for time-sequence, has been called 'montage structuring' by Edmond Volpe. It indicates that the author essentially views the events as integral constituents of a largely composite whole and of a more inclusive human experience, and not in terms of mere temporal tags. It also makes room for greater lateral spread of his books than for mere linear development, and lets them shine as multi-edged mosaics in fragmented time-schemes. The sequence of events in *Light in August*, for instance is limited to the period of one week and consists of murder of Joanna Burden and the consequent lynching of the murderer, Joe Christmas soon after he is declared

a black. But the book covers a whole range of historical, sociological and psychological motivations and positions of individuals and the community they live in, all of which lend greater resonance and vibrancy to the present action. Likewise, *The Sound and the Fury* concretizes the decision of Quentin Compson to commit suicide, but in doing so it chronicles a wide variety of his experiences, including his childhood memories, parental and familial relationships, societal and racial dichotomies and polarities, and the back and forth thought-processes and conduct of several other characters which bear upon the terrible fate of Quentin in an extended time-frame.

More significant than montage structures which seemingly drift and sprawl but actually expand and enrich the meanings of Faulkner's books, are his distinct narrative techniques. Of them the most widely noticed one is the employment of the 'stream of consciousness'/interior monologue' in his first-person narratives. Broadly speaking both the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue are considered synonymous, suggestive of the 'interiorization' of experience, of 'introspective writing.' They largely derive from the impressionistic tradition according to which "life does not narrate but makes impression on our brains" and disregard all "logic, conventional syntax and at times even punctuations." However, whereas the stream of consciousness records the flow and continuum of impressions, the interior monologue largely addresses these impressions to one's ownself. In the former there is greater self-revelment, in the latter, more of self-communion. Both are, in any case, geared to wielding greater focus on inward, psychological realization of experience rather than its socio-cultural revealment.

Three of the four sections of *The Sound and the Fury* are adaptations of this technique, and the latter book exemplifies its variations and experimentations. The multiple, first-person, interiorized points of view in this novel forcefully reveal the disturbed and disordered impulses and thoughts of Quentin readying himself for suicide, the highly muddled sensations of the idiot boy Benjy through which time past and time present merge and inter-flow in his mind, and the ironic self-communion of Jason often tinged with bitter humour and frustration. Faulkner combines these introspective revealments with occasional use of his own rhetorical voice as a chorus, not as an intrusion. This helps us in getting a fuller perspective on the 'witty but alcoholic lawyer' Mr. Compson, the pre-occupations with the 'faded glories and present indignities' on the part of Mrs. Compson, the patience and nobility of the black Dilsey, 'the magnificently delivered Negro sermon' in vernacular ('Bredden! Look at dem little chillen settin dar'), and so forth. In sum, the impressions of the major first-person narrative voices and the author's rhetorical voice add up to a powerful sense of the decline and fall of a family which once had generals and wealthy planters as ancestors but which now suffers from total absence of familial love and mutual respect and has almost gone to seed. Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, if anything, is all the more daring an experiment in this technique. It concentrates on the thoughts and feelings of one character in each section at a time, and with fifteen of them in the book the story breaks into sixty sections. This lends amazing width and variety to the forward movement of the story and invests the narrative with what Henry James has called "the highest possible degree of saturation." The author gives each member of Addie Bundren's family an opportunity to ponder over his/her relationship with others, especially with Addie; and does not pretend that at the journey's end any of them goes home any the wiser. It too needs be noted that Faulkner's replacement of the deeper-searching four points of view in *The Sound and the Fury* with the wider-ranging and all too many view-points in *As I Lay Dying* clearly reflects his predilection for experimentation within the self-name narrative technique.

Use of Language

Faulkner's use of language has often been criticized by his detractors for what they consider to be its prolixity and complexity as also its ambiguity and obscurity. To them his prose all too often turns 'over-elaborate,' 'intermittently incoherent' and

even 'ungrammatical.' His diction and syntax, they maintain, tends to obfuscate rather than communicate his meanings; and his long sentences are difficult to follow, for their clauses do not develop from the main subject or verb of the sentence but grow out of and proliferate from the varied preceding clauses. It should, of course, be acknowledged that at times Faulkner's sentences run into a number of pages (*The Intruder in the Dust* and "*The Bear*"); or else abandon normal punctuation marks and the prose just 'rolls on'; or else become uncomfortably innovative and use too many parentheses in a single paragraph which complicate rather than clarify or explain his meanings. Also, on occasions, his rhetorical voice turns too sweeping and his narrative, threatens to sink into an 'anti-narrative.'

But this kind of writing in Faulkner, although not an exception, is nonetheless not representative of his stylistic strategies. Far too often his prose is not only appropriately worded but is all along engaging and stimulating. Marked at once by density and intensity, it is rich and resonant, and arrests our attention. The experience he then conveys is evocative and exciting, and not the least turgid or over-elaborate. Consider, for instance, the passage in "*The Bear*," when after weeks of eager wandering in the wilderness to sight Old Ben, after relinquishing his gun and compass and watch, Ike, walking all by himself, notices the impressions of 'the crooked paw' in 'the wet ground,' and then, finally, Old Ben himself:

Then he was the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and it stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

The scene concretizes the way Ike and Old Ben (the bear) come face to face in the myriad, musing, eternal woods. Faulkner's prose, lucid and limpid, sensitively registers how Old Ben looks of a piece with the surrounding wilderness. He doesn't 'emerge' or 'appear' from the woods, he is 'just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling.' Nor does he withdraw or walk into the woods, he just 'fades' and sinks' into them. Faulkner is obviously evolving Old Ben into a strong symbol of the immemorial woods and investing him with larger-than-life, almost epical proportions ('bigger,' 'dimensionless,' and so forth). At the same time, he seasons his narrative stance with a right measure of verisimilitude. Thus Ike notes that Old Ben is "not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected." The passage also draws attention to the way Old Ben finally moves without any uneasy, unseemly haste. The encounter underscores Old Ben's quiet dignity, unstated fearlessness, and vast reserves of naturalness as well as Ike's patience, curiosity, and human piety. Far from being difficult or opaque, it lands forward movement to the story towards a fuller enactment of the dream of chase and hunt on the scale of a Greek tragedy.

In addition, it may be noted, there is often enough simply a spontaneous flow of language in Faulkner. It expands and completes itself according to the ideas arising in the mind of a particular character or out of a situation. It then acquires a 'vocal quality' of a 'compulsive talker' which, Volpe tells us, Faulkner certainly was, although only in the company of friends and close acquaintances. The language on such occasions consists of short, simple sentences, using clear, concrete nouns and pronouns and strong verbs. The turns of expression are naturally geared to the intended effect. Note for instance the following sentences of Major de Spain in "*The Bear*" when he (mistakenly of course) suspects Old Ben for the killing of his colt:

"I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules. I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs but that was all right. We gambled the dogs against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules. It was Old Ben, Sam."

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This spontaneous flow of ideas in Faulkner's diction and syntax is also instinctively coupled with his fidelity to how people speak in the Deep South, and imbues his prose with a quaint inexplicable charm. He, then, reproduces to singular effect although with some deviations from the standard English grammar and spellings, "the slow drawl of the Southern Negro [black], the tone of the red-neck's speech-pattern, and the more refined tones and diction of the educated towns people." He had, we are told, read and enjoyed various things in various writers such as "Keat's aesthetics and A.E. Houseman's pessimism, Beardley's sophistication and Sherwood Anderson's Western regionalism, Balzac's panoramas and Joyce's stream of consciousness, Swinburne's sound effects and Eliot's verbal skills." Several of these devices are interfused and integrated with "the inspiration [he drew] from his own Southern oral tradition."

Other Devices

However even as Faulkner's stylistic and narrative powers eclectically received the influence of diverse and heterogeneous materials and methods, he was far too indigenous a writer, self-absorbed, self-cultivated and self-taught, to follow any of them. Also, his creative and innovative energies were too strong and individualistic to be directly influenced by any writer. In fact his narrative aesthetics was altogether his own: and besides his narrative structures, narrative techniques and use of language, the flash of the bits and pieces of his innovations leap out in the white heat of his imagination in the specific context of the subject of his books. There is, for instance, the emergence of symbolist leitmotif technique in *Sartoris* which transforms a real stallion into 'an aesthetic icon of motion in stasis,' of explosive energy barely under control: "The stallion stood against the yawning cavern of the livery stable door like a motionless bronze flame and along its burnished coat ran at intervals little tremors of paler flame, little tongues of nervousness and pride. "Likewise, there is in *Sanctuary* the cubist caricature of Popeye who looks "like a mask carved into two simultaneous expressions," and who is closely symbolic of the modern mechanical and industrial products. His eyes "looked like rubber knobs," his face "like the face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten," and his tight suit and stiff hat "all angles, like a modernistic lampshade", and this is followed by the damning comment that he was the man "who made money and had nothing he could do with it," a characteristic malaise of much of the modernistic developmental enterprise. Again, there are surrealistic notations of Joe Christmas's fear of female sexuality in *Light in August*:

"In a cave he seemed to see a diminishing row of suavely shaped urns in moonlight, blanched. Each one was cracked and from each crack there issued something liquid, death colored and foul." And then, there is in the same book, the prose-poem of his castration and apotheosis: "The pent black blood... seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket.... soaring into their memories forever and ever."

While these unpremeditated innovations are woven into the texture of Faulkner's prose on the spur of the moment as it were, his regard for the dialectics of language and society manifest's itself quite significantly in his books. In *Light in August* itself, the style acquires a socio-cultural dimension in describing the living patterns of the Calvinists: "The clean, Spartan room... In the windows he clean, darned curtains... The boy sat in a straight chair... an enormous Bible... He wore a clean shirt." In *Sartoris*, his first major book, socio-linguistic communication is reflected in the seemingly amused but essentially sardonic voice of Aunt Jenny: "Who thought of putting niggers into the same uniforms with white men. Mr Vardaman knew

better." In a good number of his books Faulkner thus has successfully attempted to renew and reinvent the language in order to imbue it authentically with its social and cultural ambience.

It may finally be remembered that while commenting on his own mode of writing as well as that of Thomas Wolfe, Faulkner once observed: "We tried to crowd and cram everything, all experience, into each paragraph, to get the whole complete nuance of the moment's experience, of all the recaptured light rays, into each paragraph." His verbal and narrative strategies in crowding and cramming his paragraphs the way he wanted may occasionally have betrayed misplaced zeal and suffered from some kind of excess. But by and large they have led to the enrichment and intensification of whatever experience he meant to portray, so that most of his books dazzle and at times hypnotize us like few other books do. Such a kind of unevenness in writing was but natural for a writer who possessed enormous creative and inventive powers but who didn't choose to be too disciplined as an artist.

3.1.5 The Yoknapatawpha County

William Faulkner's work is closely associated with the American South quite like that of Thomas Hardy is with Wessex, of W.B. Yeats with Ireland, and of Robert Frost with northern New England. These writers obviously use widely different materials and methods: nonetheless their preoccupation with the specificities of their regions and cultures links them together and puts their work in sharp contrast to that of other writers. Also, they have a meeting ground in that all of them deal with "a basically agricultural economy, a life of farms, villages and small towns, an old-fashioned set of values, and a still vital religion with its cult, creed, and basic norms of conduct," which set them apart from the writers of the cities and metropolitan towns. But in noticing the particularities of these regions we may better refrain from conceptualizing on them in terms of the remarks made by various characters in their books and mistaking them as their authors' observations, and worse still, as the central consciousness of the work. A character essentially conveys his/her perception or point-of-view in a certain context/situation which may or may not be reliable, or may be partially so. For instance, Faulkner's complex and ambivalent attitude towards the American South and its style of life with all his antithetical and polyphonic meanings is simply not embodied in any particular character. His position is indeed "a mixture of deep affection and furious disapproval, of abiding loyalties and sharp, specific disagreements," a mixture which it is neither possible nor useful to unmix. The better course, is to focus attention, as far as possible, on the minutest nuances and contours of the entire oeuvre of Faulkner in order to arrive at some kind of collective and composite awareness of his sense of the region.

It may also be noted that Faulkner deals with the provincial society of the American South as "a positive resource- an instrument for developing and refining his [aesthetic] meaning," and not as a subject of sociological discourse. Hence his fictional meaning should not be misconceived as some sociological-historical fact about the South and his 'mythic county' as a place inlaid with a 'factual substratum.' The attempt, for instance, to pick holes in Faulkner's treatment of Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* on factual and legal grounds, seems rather misplaced: and yet this is precisely what Dr. Winthrop Tilley does in his article "The Idiot Boy in Mississippi" published in the *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*. Dr Tilley maintains that the unusual sexual interest displayed by Benjy towards the school girls passing by his house runs counter to the formidable clinical evidence that most idiots are 'comparatively unexcitable' and 'sexually low-g geared,' and that Benjy is therefore a "fabricated literary idiot," literally incredible. He also adds that the gelding of Benjy at Jason's instance in the book also goes against the legal provisions which maintain that "Castration was specifically forbidden in the statute. The underlying assumption in such studies is that if "the fiction is good, the facts must be correct" and if "the facts are incorrect, the fiction is bound to be poor." However, notwithstanding such critiques and comments the fact remains that Faulkner's dramatization of the mental notations of Benjy seem quite "a plausible guess"

and "constitute a convincing imaginative account" of the situation. What is missed out by Dr Tilley is the distinction between the truth of fiction which is embodied in coherence and aesthetic value and the truth of history which is rooted in hard and incontrovertible facts of life. We have, therefore, to guard against such 'sociologizing' of literature and looking for 'excessive literalism' in it. To be sure, Faulkner's books tell us a good deal about the life in north Mississippi and the American south: but the truth implicit in it is the truth of fiction and not of history, and much less of case-studies and sociological-anthropological treatises.

The Yoknapatawpha County, so named in numerous novels of Faulkner, inhabiting the rich which planters and the black former slaves and the poor and not-so-poor whites, embodying the inter-connections between them over several generations, is a whole imagined landscape created by the author. It is of course modelled on the Northern Mississippi region (the Lafayette County) of the American South, with Jefferson as the county seat approximating the real-life Oxford, the seat of the University of Mississippi. In creating it, Faulkner has both transcribed and transmuted the geography, the history, and the cultural configurations of its people including " [Chickasaw] Indians, slaves, plantation owners, Civil War soldiers, bushwhackers, genteel old ladies, veterans, first of the Civil War, then of World War I, and finally of World War II, exploiters, servants, peddlers, preachers, lawyers, doctors, farmers, college students, and many others." He has also captured the lived and felt sense of its wide, sprawling surroundings, "the rich delta land of the hunt," "the sand and brush country," and the "dusty roads, swamps, cemeteries...the great river, sometimes smooth and deep but when in flood, wild, turbulent, and destructive." This creative-exploratory process was at once absorbing and self-fulfilling for Faulkner; and he felt like having 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 also felt like having "created a cosmos of my own." It was with this feeling that during the period of writing *Absalom, Absalom!* He drew up his now famous map of this legend of Yoknapatawpha County and inscribed, in a manner of speaking, his signature on it: "Jefferson Co., Mississippi Area, 2400 Square Miles - Population, Whites, 6298; Negroes 9313, William Faulkner, sole Owner and Proprietor."

Set in this Yoknapatawpha County, Faulkner's books about the white planters and their descendants, about the towns people and woodsmen, about the poor whites and Chickawaw Indians and black slaves manifest close inter-connections. It seems "as if each new book was a chord or segment of a total situation always existing in the author's mind." Obviously then, there are echoes and reverberations of inter-textuality in these books, such as between certain chapters of *Sartoris* and the story "There was a Queen," or between *The Sound and the Fury* and the story "That Evening Sun," between *Sanctuary* and *The Hamlet*, Armstid in *As I Lay Dying* and in *Light in August*, the Indian chief named Doom in "Red Leaves" and "A Justice," and so forth. Such features of inter-textuality in Faulkner's books and of self-reflexivity in his characters, with all their subtle and illuminating variations, additions, alterations, shifts of emphasis, new perceptions, even suggestions of inconsistencies, enlarge and enrich their meanings and lend them greater resonances and richness.

More significantly, each of his work then, "seems to reveal more than it states explicitly and to have a subject bigger than itself." At the same time each of them contributes to the making of what Malcolm Cowley calls the "parable and legend of all the Deep South." His books, in this sense, are "like blocks of marble from the same quarry: they show the veins and faults of the mother rock." They all transmit the unmistakable feeling of the slow-paced and self-contained South, of the violent, valiant and temperamental South, of the proud though derided South, of the South with a collective history, geography and cultural heritage/burden, of the backward-looking, inward-turning, brooding and pre-dominantly agrarian South, of the South which like some irresistible and inscrutable riddle kept Faulkner enthralled and despairing all along his preoccupation with it.

Although the Yoknapatawpha County of the American South constitutes the location, the ambience, and the human resource of more than most novels and short stories of Faulkner, it is probably in *Absalom, Absalom!* That we came across the most extended critique of the socio-historical and cultural scenario of the American South. Early in this book Shreve McCannon, a Canadian room-mate of Quentin Compson at Harvard, says: "Tell me about the South. What is it like there? What do they do there? Why do they live there? Why do they live at all?" Quentin, deeply self-engrossed and after some initial reluctance, tells him the story of the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen, a miniature fictional account of the region. The narrative focusses on the single-minded, blinding ambition of Sutpen to own a big plantation and to found a dynasty with at least one son to inherit it. In his endeavour to realize 'this design' he goes to the West Indies and marries a rich planter's daughter there who bears him a son Charles Bon, but abandons her on learning that she has 'Negro blood'; returns home and swindles the Chickasaws into obtaining a hundred square miles of land to set up the mansion, 'Sutpen's Hundred,' along with big plantation; marries again and begets two children, Henry and Judith, from his second wife, and becomes the biggest cotton planter in Yoknapatawpha. Nemesis begins revealing its hand when Henry comes home from the University of Mississippi with Charles Bon who is subsequently engaged to Judith, but who is ordered from the house as soon as Sutpen recognizes him as his son from his first wife. It thickens with the outbreak of the Civil War in which Sutpen acquits himself with acts of courage, heroism and dignity, but before he returns home, Henry, on his way home with Charles Bon who now insists increasingly on marrying Judith, kills him, not because he is 'half-brother' to her but because he has 'mixed blood.' Sutpen, finally, returns to find his wife dead, his son a fugitive, his slaves dispersed, and his land likely to be seized for debt. His renewed efforts yet to carry out 'the design' fail, and he is reduced to a store-keeper. Doggedly as though, he scandalizes his sister-in-law Rosa Coldfield by proposing to beget a son from her in which case they can eventually marry, seduces a poor white Milly Jones who gives birth to a girl, and is consequently killed by her grandfather. Judith doesn't survive him for long and 'Sutpen's Hundred' is now "haunted rather than inhabited by an ancient mulatto women, Sutpen's daughter by one of the slaves." Later, Henry returns home, but apprehending arrest for the murder of Charles Bon, he sets fire to 'Sutpen's Hundred.' Nemesis falls, thick and fast, and with devastating effect.

The novel is strongly symbolic of and runs parallel to the saga of the South, and weaves itself into 'a tragic fable of Southern history.' Sutpen's ruthless and unscrupulous ways, of course, may not represent the better traditions of the landed southern aristocracy with certain appreciable norms and values and its own code of conduct. He may also look like some "Northern robber baron," "an alien" and even, as Quentin once remarks, "trash, unoriginal" despite his valour and heroism in defending the south in the Civil War. But the core issues in the tangled South are underscored through his character and conduct in the book, e.g., those of the deeply entrenched racial abuse and subjection of the blacks percolated by the generation of whitemen, and their cunning appropriation of the land from its ancient rightful owners, the Chickasaws. We therefore feel that although it was not in Sutpen's character (as rightly argued by Cleanth Brooks), it certainly was 'in his fate' (as maintained by Malcolm Cowley) that Sutpen becomes "emblematic of the South." The defeat of the South in the Civil War seemed to remedy this unconscionable and repressive social order and mitigate the self-inflicted curse on the Southern whites, but Faulkner uses a further and final turn of the screw in delineating this situation. He tends to suggest that the evil is not in the social and cultural systems alone but in human nature itself, and therefore the malady and the curse continue albeit through other means, perfected by the carpet baggers who came in the wake of the Civil War with the Northern armies and by the earlier marginalized but now strong and exploitative other Southerners who began to take over the centre-stage. Thus viewed, the book depicts not only the predicament and destiny of the South but of human conditions at large. In any case the intricate and tormented past and present of the South rouses passionate ambivalence in Faulkner who seems to position himself

rather close to Quentin who towards the end of the book bursts out spontaneously and vehemently: "I don't hate it. I don't! I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it." He only critiques it as one profoundly concerned with its fate.

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Faulkner's abiding preoccupation with the South is also reflected in its varied manifestations by him. Large number of his protagonists, descendants of planters after the Civil War and others alike, find the transition too much to adjust with. They may thus fail because they are too obsessed with the past to face the present (Highwater), or invite too many risks and hazards (young Bayard Sartoris), or destroy themselves with alcohol (Quentin's father), or are too straightforward and therefore manoeuvred and stripped of their power and influence (old Bayard Sartoris), and so forth likewise, the commoners and the poor, most of them well-meaning and admirable, signify some kind of "smoldering rage beneath the surface" of the Southern reality which is "intense, tormented and brutal." In fact, his *Sanctuary* can well be read as a powerful narrative of the rape and corruption of the south by the onslaught of a moral, mechanized, modernist life-style. Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County moves this Southern reality "into the dimension of art" and offers us "the thrill of encountering strong literature."

Finally, the world of this Yoknapatawpha County, as depicted in Faulkner's fiction as a whole, is amazingly and disturbingly rich and intricate. People in this county, including those living in the town of Jefferson, are inextricably connected with "the physical land and the climate." Their experience is located in a particular time of the history of American South, e.g., from around the Civil War onwards. Their relationship to history, their collective memory, and their common unspoken assumptions make for their bonding into a community. At the same time the aspects of "the harsh realism" and "the much-advertised violence" in the midst of this community points to its need to evolve into a "true community" or face extinction. Also, the collision of this community with the modern man and modernity devastates its concrete particularity. Nonetheless, its people are made of strong stuff: and their provinciality in no way forecloses their mirroring the triumphs and defeats of the universal human spirit.

3.2 THE BEAR

3.2.1 The Relevance/Irrelevance of Section Four

"The Bear" which consists of five sections, was published by Faulkner both with and without Section 4. Reworked from two magazine stories, it appeared as a chapter/story of *Go Down, Moses* (1942) in five sections. But when reprinted in his book about wilderness, *Big Woods* in the year 1955, Faulkner himself omitted section 4 of the story. The former version (with all the five sections) is marked by greater richness and resonance, more so when studied in the context of the larger theme of *Go Down, Moses*, i.e. "the relation between the white and the black descendants of old Carothers McCaslin" and by implication of all white and black people. But the latter version (deleting section 4) makes for a more compact and compelling reading and is a landmark American short story about the chase and final hunt of the big bear, Old Ben. The difficult and long fourth section, it seems, lent greater overtones and compositeness to the story which served its purpose well; but it certainly wasn't indispensable, and "The Bear" stayed a gripping tale totally complete in itself without this section.

It is evident that quite some of the major difficulties if not lapses of Faulkner's prose are visited on section 4 of the story whereas the rest of the sections are written in clear prose using concrete nouns and strong verbs. In this section the style turns overelaborate, ambiguous and even eccentric at places, consisting of circuitous thoughts and their articulations, particularly by Ike which is quite a contrast to the limpid and at places hypnotic flow of language in other sections. In fact, section 4 includes a sentence which runs into close to six pages in print with a two-page

parenthesis in the middle, consisting of several paragraphs each of which begins with a small letter, as also a good deal of quoted matter. This sentence is almost the longest in all American fiction, except for the fact that Faulkner himself exceeded its length in a sentence of his story "The Jail." The sentence ("To him it was... finished, unalterable, harmless.") poses quite a challenge to the reader to connect its 'subjects' to the predicates, to retrieve the 'subordinate clauses' and to keep out the intertwining obfuscation and obscurity. However, it needs be added, that the reader who perseveres and prodes through such complexity and prolexity is amply rewarded for his patience. The section helps him in no small measure to discover one of Faulkner's most impressive themes: "The belief in Isaac McCaslin's heart that the land itself has been cursed by slavery, and that the only way for him to escape the curse is to relinquish the land."

The tangled and shifty argument between Isaac and his elder cousin, Edmonds McCaslin, in section 4 over the former's repudiation of his inheritance takes place five years after the events of section 3. It is coupled with various drifts and digressions such as the back and forth movement of narrative, detachable episodes, memories and recalls, the impact of characters long dead and events that happened generations ago, and spells of the stream-of-consciousness; although it is followed up by powerful scene between Ike and his wife towards the end. Two experiences that loom large in Ike's mind during the course of this argument are: that he had his initiation into manhood under the tutelege of Sam Fathers in the wilderness, and that he was shocked and revolted by reading in the old family leaders about the depravity of his grandfather, old Carothers McCaslin and the crime of incest he had committed. Interspersed in the argument are, of course, various strands of the "family history, the history of America, the history of the South and the meaning of participation in the Civil War, the relation of the Negro to the white and of man to nature."

Initially in this section Ike adopts a moral-ethical position and tells McCaslin that he (Ike) doesn't actually own the land for the simple reason that his father didn't own any land to transmit it to him. He also advances the argument further and says that the old Chickasaw Indian chief who first sold the land too didn't really own it, "for in the very act of selling it, the Indian forfeited his claim" to it. But this moral position, Ike later accepts, doesn't hold any legal and societal validity, and subsequently concedes to McCaslin that "his grandfather did have the title to the land." He then adopts a curiously historical-religious approach in that the land was accursed and God brought the white man to it "as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison." Since the whiteman failed to serve His purpose, Ike holds, "God brought about the Civil War," and the defeat of the South in the Civil War was providential. But he refuses to disown his people and insists that God didn't turn his face against the South: he only decided that they suffer for they could "learn nothing save through suffering." Such arguments, wobbly and incoherent, add up to no eloquent defence of Ike's act of repudiation. They may even be dismissed as his fanciful interpretation of the American history, the cursed south, and Providence, but they are strongly suggestive of an honestly troubled mind. Ike has lately come of age, and what he says is intuitive, not a cogent and well thought-out rationale.

The argument also turns on and relates to the (sub) human condition of the blacks who inherit nothing save the deprivations of poverty, the log cabins, the battered and faded overalls, the frayed five-cent straw hats – sort of surviving badges of their past slavery. When Edmonds refers to the "promiscuity and violence and instability" of the blacks, Ike responds by praising their endurance and pity, their fidelity and love of children, both black and white, and the virtues they derive from their "old free fathers a long time free than us." The mention of the word 'free' brings Sam Fathers to Ike's mind, who was 'a free man par excellence' and who showed him 'the way to freedom.' He also recalls his honest bafflement some seven years' ago at Edmonds' question (based on the information given by Sam Fathers) why he had not used the gun when the old bear was well within his shooting range. And in the midst of these stream-of-consciousness associations, to Edmonds' observation that the land is 'cursed,' his reply, presumably because of his decision to divest himself of his

patrimony, is, "I'm free" – free from, the succession to the land and consequently, of the curse. Later, he maintains, "Sam Fathers set me free."

William
Faulkner

Spells of the stream-of-consciousness with their abrupt surfacing and exists, back and forth movement of the narrative sequence which is obviously neither linear nor lateral, frequent absorptions of Ike into memory, notations of recall, and the collages of seemingly detachable episodes in this section, tend to render the reading rather meandering, unfocussed and tortuous. However it is worth noting that more than most of them relate, directly or indirectly, concretely or vaguely, to the central concerns of the section, i.e., the problematic of inheritance, of its renunciation and acceptance. Two episodes stand out particularly vividly as telling commentary on this discourse on inheritance. First that the ambivalences about the share of Fonsisba, in respect of the inheritance left by old Carothers McCaslin to Tamey's Turl, her father, turn out none too easy to resolve. And second that the fond hopes roused about the inheritance of a purportedly silver cup filled with gold pieces and left for Ike by his maternal uncle, Hubert Beauchamp, are revealed to be laughably illusory. For when Ike, at twenty-one, opens the inherited package he discovers only 'a cheap tin filled with worthless paper' of duly signed IOUs by the now dead Hubert Beauchamp. Both the episodes unravel some of the intricacies involved in matters of inheritance, the first in terms of race-relations, and the second in terms of roused expectations of owning some of the ancestral gold where none exists.

The dramatic scene between Ike and his wife towards the close of this section epitomizes how the decisions on inheritance taken with the best of intentions can turn questionable, get messy, and unhinge the most intimate spaces in human relationship. In making his renunciation Ike has been oblivious of 'the needs and desires of his wife' who is not only not prepared to renounce the plantation but also doesn't understand why her husband should want to do so. On impulse she therefore 'locks the door of their rented room,' takes off her clothes, and "calls him to her bed, using the body to extort from being adequate or just. He says to himself: "She is lost. She was always lost;" and a little later thinks that few human beings, especially not women, would understand that renunciation of material things is the road to freedom. One may in all fairness doubt the veracity of such an article of blind faith in Isaac.

It is however interesting to note that Faulkner too in real life, seemed to be on the side of Isaac. Years after the publication of "The Bear", answering questions at the University of Virginia, he commented uncharitably on the conduct of Isaac's wife and called "her ethics those of a prostitute." This was, quite possibly, one more classic example where an author doesn't really make a discriminating critic of his own work. More discriminating and perceptive was the critic, Andrew Lytle, who maintained that her renunciation of her modesty and offer of her naked body in the story is "the measure of her desperation." He argued that the institution of marriage is strengthened as much by the physical location of property as "in the joining of flesh." This powerful scene and all that precedes it relate to the problems involved in taking crucial decisions of life. The reader, confronted with varied episodes, encounters and accounts in varying modes and style, of course, tends to get befuddled and lose the storyline. But in the main, section 4 crams and huddles together the self-divisions and self-revaluations of Isaac vis-à-vis the process of coming of age, of entering into manhood and citizenship.

3.2.2 Theme of Growing up/Initiation

Both 'initiation' and 'growing up' point to a process of acquiring greater awareness of one's ownself and one's surroundings, of how to conduct oneself in the world of 'men and things,' and suggest a movement away from adolescence to manhood, from immaturity to maturity. However, whereas 'growing up' is a more general term, the term 'initiation' is rather loaded with specific meanings, especially by anthropologists. They maintain that the process of initiation denotes 'the rites of passage from childhood or adolescence to maturity' which were practiced by many

primitive tribes and communities, and were accompanied by the enactment of rituals. They also hold that this process was often enough 'painful,' designed to test the adolescent's strength and courage, endurance and loyalty to his tribe, and at the end gave him a feeling of being born again. In fiction, however, 'initiation' is largely seen in a broader perspective of man's education and evolution, and may be 'tentative or uncompleted or decisive.' "The Bear," in fact, manifests some and not all the features of initiation: it is focussed on an adolescent, on his education in the skills of hunting, on his increasing self-awareness and understanding of his surroundings, on a brief 'enactment of ritual' and a feeling of 'rebirth.' But it is not intended to fit the straitjacket of any technical definition of initiation: it rather stays quite close to the broader—based concept of 'growing up.'

When Ike in "The Bear" goes to the big woods at the age of ten, he feels as though he was born again and experiences a close affinity with it as though he was inheriting it. He learns fast, under Sam Fathers' patient, skilful and wise tutelage, about how to cock the gun, to slant it in whichever direction required, to take position, to pull the trigger with precision, and not to be afraid even when scared. He also learns how to walk through the thick and dense wilderness which has "no fixed path" and opens "before his advancement" and closes "behind his progress"; and rapidly acquires the habit of eating coarse food and sleeping in harsh sheetless blankets" as hunters do. However, despite his best efforts, Ike fails to see the old bear, the indomitable 'head bear,' the biggest game in these ancient woods, called Old Ben. His anxiety to see Old Ben, 'the enormous bear with a mutilated paw,' ranging in these immemorial ancient woods, now owned by Major de Spain, becomes all the more pressing when he learns that the animal has already seen him. The patient and enduring Sam, with a familiar but expressionless face 'until it smiled,' tells him the reason:

"It's the gun," Sam said. He stood beside the fence, motionless, the old man, son of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief, in the battered and faded overalls and the frayed five-cent straw hat which had been the badge of the Negro's slavery and was now the regalia of his freedom. The camp - the clearing, the house, the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn and scratched punily land evanescently at the wilderness - faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods. The gun, the boy thought. The gun. "You will have to choose," Sam said.

Of his own volition and 'in humility and peace and without regret' Ike therefore relinquishes 'the gun,' and walks into the green, markless wilderness "as Sam had coached and drilled him." Even so, when unsuccessful for quite some time, he realizes that he was still 'tainted' by the 'silver watch' he was wearing and the 'compass' he was using. The rules of the game are vitally important and have to be observed, and he decides to observe them all. It is soon after relinquishing the watch and the compass that he first notices 'the crooked print' of Old Ben's paws in swampy ground one after the other, and then, finally, the bear:

Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

It is significant to note that though Old Ben had seen Ike earlier when he was without any weapon, it hadn't attacked him. Later, after his first face-to-face encounter, when Ike sees Old Ben while holding a gun, he too doesn't shoot at it. This acceptance of co-existence and this instinctive attitude not to harm each other is suggestive of a

curious bonding between Ike and Old Ben and reflects the first stage/step in Ike's initiation into the life in the midst of the musing, inscrutable woods.

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An increasingly decisive initiation of Ike as a hunter, complete with the attending ritual, begins when he kills his first buck at the age of thirteen and Sam marks his face with its 'hot blood.' It is reinforced when Ike kills his first bear in the next November, and grows into a better woodsman than most others who are much older than himself, and gets to know each territory – 'bayou, ridge, landmark trees and path' – within twentyfive miles of the camp. He is now familiar with those 'game trails that even Sam Fathers had never seen' and unmistakably discerns and distinguishes the footprints of Old Ben from those of other older bears who have equally large footprints. He notices the unimaginable prowess and speed of Old Ben who rushes through the corridors of trees and timber 'as a locomotive would,' and realizes why it would take a dog, as Sam had spoken to him, with extraordinary courage and speed and size to bring him to bay:

If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old make bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater.

This process of Ike's education, yet to be completed, suggests that it is not, at least in sheer physical terms, an initiation from adolescence to youth, and much less to manhood, for he is only thirteen years of age. It is rather an initiation from an early, inexperienced, raw adolescence to a later, more experienced, and mellow one. It is part of his acquisition of the skills, duties and obligations of his vocation. It is a sort of his 'individuation' in Jungian terms, a process of his self-discovery which sets him apart from others.

The day of reckoning, or 'the moment of truth' as Hemingway would have called it, comes in Ike's growth as a hunter and man when in the final chase of Old Ben he is, encouragingly but appropriately, named by Major de Spain to lead the hunt. By now much has sunk into his consciousness and assimilated by it, especially about Sam, Old Ben, Lion, and Boon. He knows that it is not only he but Sam too who would not like to shoot Old Ben himself, although as a committed hunter in the employ of Major de Spain he, painstakingly and persistently, prepares Lion to help accomplishing this task. He also knows that Lion is compulsively and impersonally violent and ruthless where Boon is blindly and foolhardily so, and that both are alike in as much as the eyes of both of them are 'depthless' and free of any "meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness." He also knows that although seemingly 'absolved of mortality' Old Ben too would someday or the other not like to 'last any longer,' and has recently even been stopped and bayed by Lion although to no avail because Boon, who had rushed to the scene, characteristically, misfired at him, even in five attempts.

In this final chase, after some hectic galloping of the hunters' horses, wild running of the dogs led by Lion, and fastest possible crossing of the river, at the time when Ike sights Old Ben, Lion is clinging to his throat, the old bear is raking at its belly with his forepaws, and Boon, flinging himself astride the old bear, fatally strikes him near his throat where his life was. It is at the same time that Sam Fathers falls face down in the trampled mud; he can't speak except a few words 'in the tongue of his old fathers,' and when being taken back, entreats Major de Spain outside his dark little hut: "Let me out, master. Let me go home." The doctor who examines him diagnoses 'exhaustion,' common to old people of his age; and says, "He just quit" but will certainly be 'all right' with rest and nourishment. But Ike knows that he is "going to die." In this poignant, action-packed situation Ike also senses a curious 'togetherness' in the destiny of the dead Old Ben and the dying Sam and Lion. He starkly exposed to the aspects of the perennial and at times fatal struggle for survival in nature, and learns that it needs courage on the part of the involved ones to accept it.

He also notices a certain commonness in the working of the fatality around the three of them which transcends the immediate and the contingent and draws attention to what operates beyond and above and outside the limits of the present. "Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog." Sam has been Ike's spirit's father, has taught him so much with such dignity and skills, and is now passing though some inscrutable, impenetrable experience at this point of life's end. Strong concern and compassion arise in Ike who, much to the consternation and resentment of his cousin McCaslin, insists on staying with Sam while others are packing to return. He may be of little help to Sam, but he would like to be available and around. General Compson, who senses some of this uncontrollable disturbance in Ike, lets him stay and admonishes McCaslin:

"You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you ain't even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing, and fearing too maybe, but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark...."

The process of Ike's growing up/initiation in "The Bear" is finalized with the finesse of controlled art in the concluding section five of the story which takes place two years later. Ike had earlier sensed the co-existence of man and nature in the experience of Sam and his ownself vis-à-vis Old Ben. On this last visit to the big woods the same kind of experience repeats itself when he encounters a six-foot long deadly snake, with its head raised as high as his knee. The creature would not attack him until it is attacked upon; and doesn't. More valuable and comforting is the lesson Ike learns when he reaches the graves of Sam and Lion:

After two winters' blanketings of leaves and flood-waters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves any more at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such: by bearings on trees; and did, almost the first thrust of the hunting knife finding (but only to see if it was still there) the round tin box manufactured for axle-grease and containing now Old Ben's dried mutilated paw, resting above Lion's bones.

Ike notices the ephemerality and transience of human existence vis-à-vis the immemorial and eternal nature. What is more he realizes that human existence is a part of the larger cyclic existence and perpetuity of nature. It is a soothing and elating thought to him that man does partake something of the circularity and immanence of nature, that there is in this sense no death, that Sam is not dead, "not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth," in "myriad yet undiffused" manifestations of nature. This may look like Ike's taking a 'sacramental view of nature,' but it also suggests that "man's attitude towards nature is a function of the health of his own nature."

The towering irony of what follows soon after can hardly be lost on Ike. The frenzied and hysterical Boon is sitting under the sweet Gum Tree, surrounded by scores of frantically leaping and darting squirrels, and hammering the barrel of his dismembered gun with its breech: he shouts at the approaching Ike: "Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They are nine!" Unstated though it is, Ike must have felt, as we do, that man's possessiveness about nature may turn him mad, and his attempt to ruin nature may ruin him. The lesson is not the less important in today's world of fast growing ecological imbalances due to unthinking devastation and destruction of nature by man.

3.2.3 Modes of Writing in "The Bear"

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Of the major voices of hostile criticism against the modes of writing in Faulkner, we may recall Clifton Fadiman who, even in the author's widely acknowledged novel *Absalom, Absalom!* notices "the Anti-Narrative or a set of complex devices used to keep the story from being told." Likewise Wyndham Lewis attempts to have good sport at the expense of Faulkner's style when he finds little more to it than a façade of "ill-selected words," and adds that the 'destiny' or 'doom' behind Faulkner's fiction is "merely a fraudulent device for operating the puppets." Sean O' Faolain too picks holes in the author's use of language and calls it not the "artist's meaningful language" but the "demagogue's careless, rhetorical and often meaningless language." One wonders how justifiable or relevant such uncharitable observations are in the context of "The Bear," a grippingly written story. Does its narrativity really "keep the story from being told?" Does it build-up to a situation of doomed wilderness and fatal destiny of Old Ben and Lion look 'merely a fraudulent device'? And does its language read like 'a demagogue's rhetorical and meaningless language'? Or is it that such generalized, harsh comments are altogether pointless in relation to "The Bear" and deserve instant dismissal?

We may better remind ourselves of Faulkner's own notion that whatever a writer tells determines his mode of writing. What he tells us in "The Bear" is the retrieval of an intense experience of the past through the process of cumulative memory. Since often enough these processes of retrieval do not operate in human mind in any rigid format of time sequence, there is in this story, as indeed in the larger book *Go Down, Moses* which includes it, a sense of fragmented time, a disruption of chronological order, a juxtaposition of the present with the past. Thus the conference at the commissary between Ike and Edmonds on the issue of the former's repudiation of his heritage which actually takes place five years after the events of section 3 in "The Bear," constitutes section 4 while Ike's last visit to the woods which takes place only two years after the events of section 3, is narrated in section 5 of the story.

Faulkner's disregard of the chronological time and his use of what Edmond Volpe calls 'the montage structure' helps foregrounding the urgency and primacy of the issue of tainted heritage, more so in the larger context of *Go Down, Moses*, and probably therefore, gets precedence over the poignant and moving conclusion of the story. Furthermore, the excessively harsh comments made by several critics on section 4 who find its arguments tortuous and confusing and its episodes unrelated and detachable do not seem quite justifiable. The arguments and episodes unrelated and detachable do not seem quite justifiable. The arguments and episodes are of course tangled at places and therefore not easy to follow, more so when coupled with the flow of Ike's stream-of-consciousness; but so is the state of mind of the protagonist at this juncture which the author is attempting to portray. For instance, even while Ike affirms his decision to repudiate the land he legally owns, he also interrogates his ownership right over it and observes: "I can't repudiate it. It was never mine. 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." The section in such situations captures Ike's self-conflicts and self-divisions as much as it narrates his over-riding decision to renounce the patrimony.

Faulkner's devices of recall, of repetition of key phrases/sentences, and of the working of stream-of-consciousness are, in a manner of speaking, metaphorical extensions of the montage structure in "The Bear." There is, for instance, the recall of the 'big Negro' in Section 3 of the story who was once shot at five times by Boon from less than ten feet away, but remained unhurt because Boon was and continues to be "a notoriously bad shot;" or of the half-grown bear who, frightened at the first entry of the train into the woods, climbed a fragile branch and clung to it for thirty six hours going 'without even water'; or of the day when Ike had shot his first buck and the jealous and snarling Ash had insisted on going to shoot a deer or something, but

made a total nuisance of himself in doing so. All these recalls do not diminish but heighten and enrich the contexts in which they flash out. The same, however, may not be said of the stream-of-consciousness passages in section 4 which in fact tend to make it a difficult reading with poor recompense. At the same time, Faulkner's device of the reiteration of key sentences works out tellingly in this story. The sentence – "So he should have hated and feared Lion" – appears three times in section 2 of "The Bear," and makes a finely nuanced incremental effect. It is used for the first time right at the beginning of this section when Ike is fast growing into a skilful woodsman and hunter. It occurs a second time in the middle when he has developed an empathy for the Old Ben although he knows that someday this big bear himself may not want 'to last longer' and Ike himself happens to lead the final hunt. It recurs a third time towards the end of the section when Ike muses about the 'fatality' of it all "like the last act on a set stage." In view of the fact that this section relates Sam's trapping and readying the impersonally malignant and unbelievably strong and courageous Lion to hold and fight the invincible-looking Old Ben, the reiterations of "So he should have hated and feared Lion" signal a muted foreboding of things to come, of the beginning of the end. The subtle force of the device matches the intensity of conception in the story.

For those critics of Faulkner who find his language 'inflated and turgid' and his syntax 'incoherent and confusing,' "The Bear" may be an irrefutable reason to reconsider and review their position. If anything, the language in this story, except for a few passages in section 4, not only meticulously articulates the intended experience but at once expands and limits it, explores and defines it. Consider for instance the following passage towards the end of section 5 which appears soon after Ike notices the graves of Sam and Lion, dead two years ago. What precedes it are Ike's notations of the ephemerality of mortal beings vis-à-vis the immanence of nature. Therefore the graves are now untracably ravaged by two springs' floodwaters and two winters' blanketing of leaves; and he locates them by their bearings in nailed tin-boxes on the adjoining trees. These, Ike reflects, as:

No abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark again in their immutable progression, and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too. Old Ben too; they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled....

From the preceding musings on the transience of living beings in contrast with the permanence of nature, the narrative moves on to Ike's growing realization that Sam and Lion aren't really dead "because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth," and that therefore living beings too do not die. There is a fine-tuned spontaneity in the language and syntax in the direction of the intended experience. Faulkner's rhetorical voice unobtrusively vivifies Ike's feelings that Sam and Lion have now become a part of the immemorial and immortal nature, of its vitality and continuity, of its cyclic pattern and myriad manifestations. The rhythmic steady flow of words recounts some of the multitudinous facets of nature ("leaf and twig ... being myriad, one") and transmutes the passage into an evocative reading. It gets studded with fast-moving, concrete images, reflective of a controlled sweep in the musings of Ike and typical of Faulkner's "creation of new poetic language in fiction." There is a suggestion of the co-existence between man and nature ("no heart to be driven...") towards the end of the passage in despite of the 'challenge' and the 'chase' which reaffirms the core theme of the story. In such passages, Faulkner's prose, at once dense and intense, captures the fuller nuances and contours of his characters and their contexts, and turns the content into an achieved content.

Faulkner's smaller stylistic devices also significantly enhance his meanings. He uses, for instance, verbals in "The Bear" in order to convey how exactly it was with a certain character at a certain point of time. Ash's awkward and alarming euphoria and his self-cogratulatory monologue when he mistakenly assumes that "he had now hunted his dear" are all captured in a string of verbals as under:

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... an old man's garrulous monologue beginning with where he was at the moment then of the woods and of camping in the woods and of eating in camps then of eating then of cooking it and of his wife's cooking...

However, the prioritization of the sequential chronicling of language in the above passage gives way to greater stress on the spatial whenever the occasion demands it. Faulkner's use of verbals then spreads out laterally: and even yields to a thickening and deepening of the emotional bearings of a situation. Note the woodsmen and swamp-dwellers who flock to the camp of Major de Spain to have a look at the hunted Old Ben and the fatally wounded Lion. The narrative points to the quiet awe and wonder of these woodsmen as they recall to one another the earlier hunting adventures and sense in the present event the culmination of a legend in the history of the land:

There were almost a hundred of them squatting and standing in the warm and drowsing sunlight, talking quietly of hunting, of the game and the dogs which ran it, of hounds and bear and deer and men of yesterday vanished from the earth, while from time to time the great blue dog would open his eyes, not as if he were listening to them but as though to look at the woods for a moment before closing his eyes again, to remember the woods or to see that they were still there.

Critics who have faulted Faulkner for lapses and unevenness in his modes of writing, therefore, need to acknowledge that such lapses are least visited on "the Bear," widely rated as one of his better fictions. It may also be borne in mind that he considered all narrative techniques and stylistic devices as some kind of "meagre and fragile thread" with which an author spins "the little surface corners and edges of men's secret and solitary lives." In "The Bear" this thread is spun exquisitely to the greater enjoyment of his readers. Meagre and fragile it may be, but it weaves a rich and resonant story of a bear, a man and a dog which rises up almost to an epic scale. "The Bear" strongly evidences not mere Faulkner's tremendous imaginative stamina but also his masterly modes of writing.

3.2.4 Man and Nature: Affinities and Polarities

Varied manifestations of nature obtain in the works of Faulkner. He depicts it as a background, as reflective of man's state of mind, as a contrast to human condition, as a force to struggle with, as a cyclic phenomenon, as a continuity seen in historical time, and so forth. In "The Bear" he prioritizes both the positive and the hazardous aspects of nature alongside its cyclic pattern and immanence which seek man to 'endure' and 'prevail.' The story tends to suggest that man doesn't merely exist in the midst of nature, he has to strive so that he moves on from mere 'being' to 'becoming' and realizes his potential and defines himself more fully. Man's union with nature, Faulkner implies in the story, is not an 'easy union' but a strenuous and risk-involving companionship. Nature is a kind of workshop for man to evolve and mature the stoic attributes of endurance and courage and the Christian attributes of love and human compassion.

There is of course 'sensitive' apprehension' and 'loving contemplation' of nature in "The Bear" as it is in most other books of Faulkner. It notes, for instance, "those windless Mississippi December days which are a sort of Indian summer's Indian summer," or the "slow drizzle of November rain just above the ice point." We may go backwards in this yearly calendar with Faulkner, and recall "the tranquil sunset of

October hazy with windless wood-smoke," or "the moonless September dusk, the trees.... Squatting like huge fowl," or "the hot still pinewiney silence of the August afternoon," and so forth. We may also note that Faulkner celebrates God's gift of bounteous nature to the South which includes "the woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild winters for men and animals." Nature's support in man's engagement with life's normal activities is simply irrefutable.

Notwithstanding Faulkner's notations of the miraculous freshness of nature "charged with the power of animal innocence" he expects man, as Cleanth Brooks says, "to struggle with nature" for nature "is the necessary theatre of man's activity, the realm in which man must prove himself." It is in this quest that the hunters in "The Bear" annually go to the big, ancient and eternal woods, largely in the pursuit of the game and partly to keep the rendezvous with the indomitable and fearless Old Ben since "they had no actual hope" of slaying it. Although the camp and the woods they stay in, sprawling over an area of over a hundred miles, belong to Major de Spain, this socio-economic hierarchy is instantly dissolved and replaced in the wilderness by a natural one which operates on its own terms regardless of one's birth or race. Accordingly, Sam Fathers, although a Chickasaw Indian who works for Major de Spain, is not only the 'guide' but 'the chief, the prince' in this hunting party, for he epitomizes the courage and skill, endurance and patience of a supreme hunter. Boon Hogganbeck, although he boasts of white ancestry, is essentially a man of blind courage and is a poor if not reprehensible shooter; and therefore a plebeian who stays far below Sam in this class-division. And Ash, uncouth and skillless, and basically accompanying the party as a cook remains at the bottom of this class-system, not because he is black but because he is good-for-nothing when not a nuisance as a hunter. Others including Major de Spain, General Compson, McCaslin Edmonds, and Isaac McCaslin (the protagonist) belong to various points in between this scale. What brings them together, however, is that all of them accept the norms and the code of hunting and subsist on eating whatever they hunt and sleep in coarse, sheetless blankets. This however is not what Edmond Volpe calls the uncovering of 'the natural man' in them nor indicative of what he considers 'an unbridgeable gap' between 'the social man and the buried natural man.' Nor is it suggestive of, as Cleanth Brooks rightly points out, any kind of primitivism in Faulkner nor of his following Rousseau's call for 'return to nature.' It is just a matter of 'disciplined effort' and 'difficult choice' they make of their own volition as hunters.

Of man's activities in the midst of nature it is Sam Fathers, the wisely observant chief, who first notices that in chasing the mighty Old Ben the dogs are mortally afraid. He draws Ike's attention to their abject and hysteric sounds when they race reluctantly to bay and hold the invincible Old Ben; and he repeatedly murmurs, more to himself than to others, that they sorely need a much stronger, bigger and a lot more courageous dog to fight the old bear, the "phantom, epitome, and apotheosis of the old wild life." In this situation, however, Faulkner implies the complete self-sufficiency of nature when Sam comes across such a dog not in 'the fyce' brought by Ike from the town of Jefferson but in the giant dog somehow captured by Sam a little later in the woods themselves, and confined to the crib adjacent to his hut. The dog weighs, as he guesses, some 90 pounds, possesses 'a tremendous chest,' is 'better than thirty inches at the shoulders,' and is always in motion. Such is its undiminishing ferocity and brute courage and quiet determination that it keeps hurling itself, in protest for confinement as it were, against the door of the crib without howling at all, for more than a week, each time falling with a heavy thudding sound, rattling the sturdy structure and clattering the door. Sam doesn't train or tame it in any stereotypical sense of the term: instead he nurtures and rears it to bay and holds and fights the enormous Old Ben who is already a living legend:

Of corncribs broken down and rifled, of shoats and grown pigs and even calves carried bodily into the woods and devoured, and traps and deadfalls overthrown and dogs mangled and slain....

There is a foreboding of the ultimate and of resignation to this ultimate in Sam which may include his death. He gladly accepts to let happen whatever is fated to happen. He acquiesces in this unavoidable and natural course of life with a sense of duty and purpose and with a feeling of peace and love and human compassion. There is a similar foreboding about the fate of Old Ben who may now not "want to last any longer," and would let his life pass and merge into the life of nature. Locked in this deadly struggle, the wild, violent and uncontrollable Lion too is, unconsciously and explosively, heads to be a part of whatever is to happen. The third-person narrator of the story drops half-hints and half-stated suggestions about it:

It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be part of it too or even just to see it too.

These muted observations of the third-person narrator on the increasingly fatal struggle and inevitable death in the midst of nature begin gathering weight when we learn that Lion doesn't ever cry while on the trail and that the other hounds are taking courage in its company and shedding their abjectness and hysteria in running the big bear. Even in its first two pursuits, Lion is able to stop and hold Old Ben: but in the first the hounds wouldn't just go in and Old Ben breaks away and takes to the river, and in the second Boon, as is his wont, misfires repeatedly even from close range and Old Ben again breaks free of them. However, there is no mistaking or lapse in the last stage of the third and final chase when Lion leaps up and keeps holding Old Ben tight by the throat and Old Ben, half erect, begins raking at its belly. This time Boon, as though driven by some overpowering, mad fury, flings himself astride the big bear and thrusts the glinting blade of his knife under his throat, and all the three of them fall:

For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down,... then the bear surged erect raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps towards the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man, dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

This deadly struggle is obviously to be viewed as part of the continuum of nature and the perpetuity of the struggle for survival among those who inhabit it. The three participants in this struggle make for a blend that cannot be unblended. Also, far from making it an occasion for any celebration by the hunters, the narrator reflects strong empathy towards the big bear by lending epic grandeur to his fall/collapse. In fact, the narrator even relates and corresponds it, not accidentally but deliberately, with the fall/collapse of Sam. And when the spent out Sam feels at peace with himself, and sees "further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog," Faulkner's emphasis shifts from the transient and transitory present to the abiding and immanent in nature. Humans and non-humans, he tends to suggest, are all parts of the continuity and eternity of nature, of its grand and imperishable scheme of thing, in which each of them is supposed to partake the ongoing struggle for survival and accept the inevitable death with courage.

In the last section of the story Faulkner plants several iconic images of the onslaught of industrialization and mechanization on nature and the consequent denudation and depredation of the woods, which are suggestive of the polarities between nature and society. Compelled by the changing economic scenario Major de Spain has sold the

timber rights in the woods to a Memphis lumber company. Save a small patch surrounding the camp by the time Ike goes to the woods for the last time. Ike notices with 'grieved amazement' that the log-train now looks three times longer than earlier, and large parts of the woods are littered with, for instance, a new half-completed planning-mill covering two to three acres of land, miles of stacked steel rails, and huge piles of wire corrals and feed troughs for hundreds of miles, and so forth. This dying, altering, receding wilderness looks doomed and its fate sealed. Such a conflict of interest and perception between the natural man and the social man, so to speak, is documented by Faulkner in another story/chapter titled "Delta Autumn" of *Go Down, Moses*. Called uncle Ike in "Delta Autumn" the much older Ike is shocked to observe that the wilderness of the Delta has been violated and its rich land looted, and that the neon lights on its highways, the latest models of the automobiles, and its monstrous looking building are kind of signatures of man's crime against nature.

Nonetheless Faulkner's powerful and deep-seated love of nature has the last say in "The Bear," and he celebrates its timeless continuity and boundless vitality in this story. The wilderness soars high in Ike's imagination – "musing, inattentive, myriad, eternal and green; older than any mill-shed, longer than any spur-line." It doesn't change and is timeless, like "the green of summer and the fire and rain of fall and the iron cold and sometimes even the snow." He visualizes it with reverence, as mother and father, or wife and mistress, with Sam as his "spirit's father":

Summer, and fall, and snow, and wet and sap-rife spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to the old man born of a Negro slave and Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved:... but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife.

Time was when Ike knew too little about the woods and now he knows every nook and corner of it too well. He goes to the graves of Sam and Lion but knows that these must have been wiped out by "flood-waters of two springs" or wrapped up in the blanketing leaves of two winters. He discerns them by their bearings nailed on trees, tin boxes containing Ben's dried mutilated paws or bits of Sam's tobacco. And in the surrounding continuity and vitality of nature, of every twig and leaf of it, he feels that birth and death just do not exist, and that he was walking on.

No abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and ark and dawn again in their immutable progression, and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too. Old Ben too: they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled....

This attitude of Ike may seem rather rhapsodic of nature, but it is struck by one who, with the death of Sam, has incurred his greatest loss in the midst of nature. Faulkner here is no simple follower of Rousseau, and preaches no philosophy of ever, "nor does he mystify it and endow it with powers of healing distraught human spirits. He takes a properly discriminating and realistic but also a bracing view of nature. According to him, man is not to withdraw from nature like an ascetic nor should he invade it like an antagonist. He should love and respect nature and be prepared for a rather uneasy union with it.

3.3 LET US SUM UP

William
Faulkner

What deserves reiteration in this unit is that Faulkner's genius is inward-turning even as it constructs the predicament of not only individuals but of several communities and societies in the Deep South and interrogates the chequered history and heritage of the past. His imaginative stamina is amazingly prodigious and his verbal and narrative strategies, though uneven, are often evocative. "The Bear," except for its controversial section 4, stands out as a gripping tale of several overlapping and inter-connecting themes as well as of a masterly handling of linguistic and narrative techniques. The story richly evidences the vigour, range and artistry of Faulkner as a fictionist.

3.4 GLOSSARY

Oxymoron:	A figure of speech which combines incongruous and apparently contradictory words and meanings for a special effect. As in Lamb's celebrated remark : 'I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief'.
Deconstruction:	a method of critical analysis of philosophical and literary language.
Diction:	choice and use of words.
Syntax:	sentence construction.

3.5 QUESTIONS

1. Attempt a critique of the fluctuations in the critical fortunes of Faulkner right up to the turn of the twentieth century.
2. Discuss the aspects of 'specificity' and 'universality' in Faulkner's imagined world of 'Yoknapatawpha Country.'
3. How does Faulkner integrate the theme of Ike's 'invitation' with that of 'Colour Line' in "The Bear"? Give illustrations in support of your answer.
4. Examine the controversy over the relevance/irrelevance of section 4 in "The Bear" and substantiate it with examples from this story.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Robert Penn Warren (edited), *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1966).
2. Cleanth Brooks, *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*(1966).
3. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (edited), *Faulkner: International Perspectives* (1984)
4. Richard C. Moreland, *Faulkner and Modernism: Rereading and Rewriting*(1990).
5. Philip M. Weinstein, *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner* (1995)

UNIT 4 COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Hemingway and Faulkner
 - 4.1.1 Themes and Concerns
 - 4.1.2 People and Places
 - 4.1.3 Use of Language
 - 4.1.4 Narrative Techniques
- 4.2 *A Clean Well-Lighted Place* and *The Bear*
- 4.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.4 Questions
- 4.5 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit examines the similarities and dissimilarities between Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers, as also between their stories, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear." It takes note of the fairly shared human values in their characters and the limited affinity in their concern about violence. In the main, it studies the widely different materials and methods these two writers employ. In view of their contrasted use of language, it concludes with a view of the critical debate on the right degree of words in an author's statement.

4.1 HEMINGWAY AND FAULKNER

Hemingway and Faulkner were strikingly close contemporaries. They were born within one year of each other (Faulkner in 1897, Hemingway in 1898), and wrote most of their major works in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Also, both of them initially drew from the indigenous tradition of the American short story, and in their early writing reflected the influence of several American writers, especially Sherwood Anderson. However, and quite understandably, as their geniuses matured, their materials and methods came to be distinctly their own, and significantly contributed to the enrichment and diversification of the American short story. As indicated earlier, this unit shall briefly note some of the characteristic features of their craft, and take a comparative view of these two writers.

4.1.1 Themes and Concerns

The predominant theme in Hemingway is the violence at the heart of men and things; and, as several of his critics have noted, it is not so much the fact of violence as of what violence does to people. It is manifested in his novels and short stories, for instance, through the activities of big-game hunting, bullfighting, deep-sea fishing and the war; through suicides attempted or committed; through wounds received or self-inflicted; through pain and shocks, death and destruction triggered by it. Quite often, it subsumes and absorbs Hemingway's other themes of human relationships and love, of human achievements and failures, and remains almost a necessary condition of life in his books. Faulkner's work, however, does not reflect any predominant theme; instead, he writes about several interconnecting and intertwining themes, including those related to violence. The major ones among them are, for instance, the past glory and guilt of the landed aristocracy in the South and the uncertain responses of its inheritors towards it; the dehumanizing modernist mechanization and a deep sense of longing for its alternative; the interrogation and

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denigration of the institution of slavery and of its subsequent avatar of racial discrimination; the attraction-repulsion derives towards the brooding, proud, defeated and derided South; the affirmations of the ancient, lonely, often unappreciated and misconstrued human attributes of courage, fortitude, compassion and dignity; and so forth. Often enough, Faulkner registers his antithetical feelings and self-divisions in his engagement with these themes, and attempts to explore the experience they capsulize rather than force any consensual resolutions on them. Quite probably, for this reason, he used to insist that he wrote about "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself."

4.1.2 People and Places

The sense of people and places in Hemingway and Faulkner, again, has little in common. Characters, as depicted in Hemingway's books look like isolates, served from the context of the family, the community, the society and the country at large. They reflect little sense of "religion, morality, politics, culture or history," and relate to "no past, no tradition, no memories." They are often enough expatriates and rootless people engaged in outdoor activities, and belong nowhere. In fact Hemingway maintains a certain anonymity about wherever he locates his people. Faulkner's people, in contrast, are inextricably entrenched in the specificity and particularity of the family, the community, the society, and the region of Northern Mississippi with interconnections criss-crossing over several generations. They are engrossed in familial and dynastic relationships and their aberrations, and his books generate an interminable process of constructions, deconstructions and critiques of individuals vis-à-vis societal forces and pressures. Of a piece with it, his sense of place is indelibly etched out as 'Yoknapatawpha Country,' slow-paced, self-contained, agrarian; violent, valiant and temperamental; brooding, backward-looking and inward-turning which at once enthralls and despairs the author. However, despite this distinction between the locations and preoccupations of the characters of Hemingway and Faulkner their shared human values bring them together. The noblest of Hemingway's protagonists are supposed to acquit themselves with 'grace under pressure' while those of Faulkner are expected to 'endure' and whenever possible to 'endure and prevail' against all odds. Human dignity and honour, courage and compassion, fortitude and gallantry, and such other attributes are what the characters of both the writers hold closest to their hearts.

4.1.3 Use of Language

In the use of language Hemingway is a conscious and disciplined artist ("the discipline of Flaubert", he used to advocate). In his writings, therefore, he always endeavoured to cut out emotional exaggeration without lapsing into emotional suppression, and tried to keep emotion clean and well-regulated. He wanted to communicate, as he wrote in *Death in the Afternoon*, what really happened in action ... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion." His theory of emotion also adhered to what he called the iceberg principle of writing, reiterated to George Plimpton in his Paris Interview: "I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg." He, therefore, would cut out scores of words to make one word meaningful, and is reported by Philip Young to have revised the last chapter of *A Farewell to Arms* thirty two times before he was done with it. He was for intensity in prose, and abjured both density and rhetoric while Faulkner, on the other hand, was both dense and rhetorical. Faulkner wanted, as he himself observed, to "crowd and cram" his pages with words, and fill them "with highest possible degree of saturation." At the same time, it needs to be added, that his density, far from getting 'inflated and turgid,' grows only to further explore and enrich the experience. Likewise, his rhetoric, far from being 'incoherent and confusing and demagogic,' functions to resonate the contours and nuances of his characters and situations. Not infrequently does his spontaneous flow of words, studded with concrete, fast-moving images, read like "a new poetic

language in fiction." Faulkner's density, although not that of a disciplined artist, makes for intensity, and his rhetoric for a vibrant prose. In sum, the stylistic strategies of Hemingway and the stylistic powers of Faulkner, although far apart, succeeded tellingly in whittling out an engaging and durable prose, notwithstanding the fact that Hemingway's disciplined emotion at times yielded mere emotional numbness and Faulkner's prolixity at times served only the cause of critical confusion.

4.1.4 Narrative Techniques

Major narrative techniques of both Hemingway and Faulkner, markedly related to their contrasted use of language, operate through widely different modes of writing. Hemingway's most prominent techniques of symbolism and irony, in consonance with his iceberg principle of writing, function through the art of implication. Broadly speaking, he implies his 'perceptions of likeness' in terms of symbols and those of 'difference' in terms of irony. His symbols, visible signs of something invisible, are concrete, condensed and telling metaphors for a character, a situation, an event, or even a whole range of experience. His irony involves both the traditional ironic contrasts and latter-day ironic contradictions. Ironic contrasts obtain between the 'appearance' and the 'reality' of things; and ironic contradictions between two ironic dualities of life both true in their own right. Hemingway uses both symbols and irony in concert; and while his ironies signify a 'discord' his symbols signify a 'harmony,' ironies 'complicate' while symbols 'consolidate,' and ironies 'scrutinize' while symbols 'synthesize' the human experience in his books. On the other hand, Faulkner's most distinct technique is the use of the stream-of-consciousness which follows the principle that "life does not narrate but makes impressions on our brains." In the stream-of-consciousness narrative, therefore, there is notation of these impressions exactly as they are made on brains, as a succession of unconnected and heterogenous images and objects, involving little coherence or logic, and oblivious of proper syntax and even punctuations. Further, although it is suggestive of 'introspective writing' carrying 'self-communion' and 'self-revelments,' in Faulkner such revealments and communions reveal an individual's own sense and opinion of others in the family, the community, and the society at large. Also, his use of multiple streams of consciousness considerably checkmates the constraints of the limiting first-person perspective in his books. Divergent themes and concerns, sense of people and place, use of language and techniques in Hemingway and Faulkner demonstrate that the polarities between them far too exceed the similarities.

4.2 A CLEAN WELL-LIGHTED PLACE AND THE BEAR

"A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear" are two different kind of stories. The former deals with the terrible fate of an old man, is completed within the duration of a few hours and the space of less than 4 pages; the latter treats the 'growing up' of an adolescent. *Ike*, spans over more than 10 years and runs into over a 100 pages. The former uses sparse narrative, bits of dialogue, and very few characters; the latter is written in a spontaneous flow of rhetorical narrative and reveals almost a panoramic range of characters. Nothing much happens in the former story; but a great deal of action takes place in the latter. To move to their specific features at some length: thematically "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" unfolds the despairing predicament of an old man of eighty, bereft of wife and children, almost deaf, unsteady on feet who attempted to commit suicide the previous week. He is the lone, last customer at a clean well-lighted café nowhere he stays and drinks until the waiters pull down the shutters. His deprivation, infirmity, handicaps and loneliness are all manifested in the stark nothingness he is now confronted with, which, as Carlos Baker defines, is "something called Nothing which is so huge, terrible, overbearing, inevitable, and omnipresent that, once experienced, it can never be forgotten." In contrast to this

dispiriting theme, "The Bear" is focused on the sombre but bracing 'growing up' of Ike, descendent of the legendary Old Carothers, who, under the tutelage of Sam Fathers in the woods, acquires the hunting skills and the courage and compassion human beings are capable of. Although still an adolescent, he is befittingly named to lead the final, successful chase of old Ben; and later, despite pragmatic objections of otherwise well-disposed McCaslin and others, repudiates his inheritance. In terms of locale, it seems that "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" is deliberately situated in an anonymous place, for such ceaseless assaults of nothingness could have struck any old man at any place in any country: but the story of chase, of the appropriation of land, and of racial discriminations in "The Bear" is naturally embedded in the particularity and peculiarity of the American South and the tangled fabric of its community/society.

Of the characters in the two stories, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" transmits, through the intermittent bits of conversation between the two waiters (one young and the other old) at the café, their traits as well as those of the old man. We note the arrested myopic awareness of the young waiter which clearly betrays his brittle sense of security. He is confident, young, has a wife and a job, and is too self-contained and glued to his present to foresee, much less visualize, that youth implies age, confidence may yield to loss of confidence, wife to absence of wife, and job to loss of job. In contrast to his incomprehension and insensitivity towards the gnawing despair of the old man, the old waiter registers greater awareness and human concern and empathy. He is unhappy at the unseemly haste with which the young waiter forces the old man to leave the café, and articulates his solidarity "with all those who like to stay late at the café. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night." This extremely limited number of characters and scale of their characterization in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" stands far apart from "The Bear" which involves a wide variety of characters from the hunting community and the American South. Of them, Sam Fathers, although he works for Major de Spain, is 'the chief, the prince' who nurtures the untameable Lion (the dog captured by him) with amazing skills and persistence in order to motivate it to hold and bay Old Ben, even as he empathizes a good deal with this legendary head bear. Unobtrusively, he possesses vast reserves of human courage and compassion, of endurance and dignity and humility which Ike learns from him, and grows from a raw, uncomprehending adolescent into a mellowing, understanding youth. Ike also learns from him the acceptance of the struggle for survival in the midst of wilderness with an accent on the principle of co-existence between men and animals. All this stands in sharp contrast with Boon's possessiveness of nature. Boon essentially remains 'violent, insensitive and unreliable,' despite his bravery and fidelity to Major de Spain and McCaslin. Notably, his eyes are "without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else" exactly like, Faulkner tells us, those of Lion. After its own manner, Lion also combines 'unbroken courage' and 'indomitable spirit' with a 'cold and impersonal malignance' and with a 'will to pursue and kill.' The major traits of many others who feature in "The Bear" may likewise be noted. They convincingly evidence much greater range of characters in this story than in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place."

To come to the modes of writing, "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" uses verbal restraint and techniques of implications and indirections while "The Bear" uses verbal profusion and techniques of narrative recall (involving the presentness of the past and the pastness of the present) and occasional flashes of the stream-of-consciousness. The one, apart from its sparse narrative and fewer characters, hardly depicts any event or incident: the other, aside of a large number of characters, includes a surfeit of events and incidents. The one inscribes the utterly terrible, despairing 'nothingness' confronted by an old man, through the use of an unavailing symbol of a clean well-lighted café, and of the ironies involved in the unawareness of the younger waiter and the awareness of the older waiter: the other crams and crowds the narrative and uses recalls and streams-of-consciousness to accomplish the steady maturing of Ike. The one piles intensities and keeps out densities: the other is at once dense and

intense. The two modes of writing, the restrained and the expansive, indeed, relate to the critical war waged on the question of the right degree of statement and best reflected in the correspondence between Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe in the thirties. In his letter to Wolfe in 1937, Fitzgerald wrote:

The novel of selected incidents has this to be said that the great writer like Flaubert has consciously left out the stuff that Bill or Joe (in the case of Zola) will come along and say presently. He will say only the things that he alone sees. So Mme. Bovary becomes eternal while Zola already rocks with age.

Wolfe's reply to this was, however, more perceptive and thoroughgoing. He wrote:

There are no novels of unselected incidents. You couldn't write about the inside of a telephone booth without selecting... You say that the great writer like Flaubert has consciously left out the stuff that Bill or Joe will come along presently and put in. Well, don't forget, Scott, that a great writer is not only a leaver-outer but also a putter-inner, and the Shakespeare and Cervantes and Dostoevsky were great putter-inners – greater putter-inners, in fact, than taker-outers – and will be remembered for what they put in – remembered, I venture to say, as long as Monsieur Flaubert will be remembered for what he left out.

Clearly then there is no point in lionizing one way of writing at the expense of the other. Success of neither of them is inevitable. It depends on its practitioner, on what he makes or fails to make of it, on how well he organizes and how deftly he executes his material and with what powers, depth and artistry. Viewed in such terms, the chilling little masterpiece ("A Clean Well-Lighted Place") of Hemingway is as poignant and compelling as the epical saga of chase and its absorbing aftermath ("The Bear") in Faulkner.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

Apart from their belongingness to the indigenous American short story tradition and the shared human values of their characters, there is little in common between Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers, especially in their modes of writing. About the same may be said of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear."

4.4 QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast Hemingway and Faulkner as short story writers.
2. Attempt a comparative reading of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "The Bear."

4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Donald R. Noble, *Hemingway: A Revaluation* (1998).
2. Evans Harrington and Ann Abadie (ed.), *Faulkner and the Short-Story* (1992).

Text: *The Bear*

THERE WAS A MAN AND A DOG TOO THIS TIME. TWO BEASTS, COUNTING Old Ben, the bear, and two men, counting Boon Hogganbeck, in whom some of the same blood ran which ran in Sam Fathers, even though Boon's was a plebeian strain of it and only Sam and Old Ben and the mongrel Lion were taintless and incorruptible.

He was sixteen. For six years now he had been a man's hunter. For six years now he had heard the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document:—of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any fragment of it, of Indian ruthless enough to pretend that any fragment of it had been his to convey; bigger than Major de Spain and the scrap he pretended to, knowing better; older than old Thomas Sutpen of whom Major de Spain had had it and who knew better; older even than old Ikemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, of whom old Sutpen had it and who knew better in his turn. It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive, and the dogs and the bear and deer juxtaposed and relieved against it, ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter;—the best game of all, the best of all breathing and forever the best of all listening, the voices quiet and weighty and deliberate for retrospection and recollection and exactitude among the concrete trophies—the racked guns and the heads and skins—in the libraries of town houses or the offices of plantation house or (and best of all) in the camps themselves where the intact and still—warm meat yet hung, the men who had slain it sitting before the burning logs on hearths when there were houses and hearths or about the smoky blazing of piled wood in front of stretched tarpaulins when there were not. There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him that those fine fierce instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated and distilled into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring hereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them. Thus it seemed to him on this December morning not only natural but actually fitting that this should have begun with whisky.

He realised later that it had begun long before that. It had already begun on that day when he first wrote his age in two ciphers and his cousin McCaslin brought him for the first time to the camp, the big woods, to earn for himself from the wilderness the name and state of hunter provided he in his turn were humble and enduring enough. He had already inherited then, without ever having seen it, the big old bear with one trap-ruined foot that in an area almost a hundred miles square had earned for himself a name a definite designation like a living man:—the long legend of corn-cribs broken down and rifled, of shoats and grown pigs and even calves carried bodily into the woods and devoured and traps and deadfalls overthrown and dogs mangled and slain and shotgun and even rifle shots delivered at point-blank range yet with no more effect than so many peas blown through a tube by a child—a corridor of wreckage and destruction beginning back before the boy was born, through which sped, not fast but rather with the ruthless and irresistible deliberation of a locomotive, the shaggy tremendous shape. It ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent but just big, too big for the dogs which tried to bay it, for the horses which tried to ride it down, for the men and the bullets they fired into it; too big for the very country which was its constricting scope. It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was

wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;—the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of mortality—old Priam reft of his old wife and outlives all his sons.

Still a child, with three years then two years then one year yet before he too could make one of them, each November he would watch the wagon containing the dogs and the bedding and food and guns and his cousin McCaslin and Tennis's Jim and Sam Fathers too until Sam moved to the camp to live, depart for the Big Bottom, the big woods. To him, they were going not to hunt bear and deer but to keep yearly rendezvous with the bear which they did not even intend to kill. Two weeks later they would return, with no trophy, no skin. He had not expected it. He had not even feared that it might be in the wagon this time with the other skins and heads. He did not even tell himself that in three years or two years or one year more he would be present and that it might even be his gun. He believed that only after he had served his apprenticeship in the woods which would prove him worthy to be a hunter, would he even be permitted to distinguish the crooked print, and that even then for two November weeks she would merely make another minor one, along with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter Ewell and Boon and the dogs which feared to bay it and the shotguns and rules which failed even to bleed it, in the yearly pageant-rite of the old bear's furious immortality.

His day came at last. In the surrey with his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson he saw the wilderness through a slow drizzle of November rain just above the ice point as it seemed to him later he always saw it or at least always remembered it—the tall and endless wall of dense November woods under the dissolving afternoon and the year's death, somber, impenetrable (he could not even discern yet how, at what point they could possibly hope to enter it even though he knew that Sam Fathers was waiting there with the wagon), the surrey moving through the skeleton stalks of cotton and corn in the last of open country, the last trace of man's puny gnawing at the immemorial flank, until, dwarfed by that perspective into an almost ridiculous diminishment, the surrey itself seemed to have ceased to move (this too to be completed later, years later, after he had grown to a man and had seen the sea) as a solitary small boat hangs in lonely immobility, merely tossing up and down, in the infinite waste of the ocean while the water and then the apparently impenetrable land which it nears without appreciable progress, swings slowly and opens the widening inlet which is the anchorage. He entered it. Sam was waiting, wrapped in a quilt on the wagon seat behind the patient and steaming mules. He entered his novitiate to the true wilderness with Sam beside him as he had begun his apprenticeship in miniature to manhood after the rabbits and such with Sam beside him, the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm Negro-rank quilt while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him, opening before his advancement as it closed behind his progress, no fixed path the wagon followed but a channel nonexistent ten years ahead of it and ceasing to exist ten yards after it had passed, the wagon progressing not by its own volition but by attrition of their intact yet fluid circumambience, drowsing, earls, almost lightless.

It seemed to him that at the age of ten he was witnessing his own birth. It was not even strange to him. He had experienced it all before, and not merely in dreams. He saw the camp—a painless six-room bungalow set on piles above the spring high-water—and he knew already hot it was going to look. He helped in the rapid orderly disorder of their establishment in it and even his motions were familiar to him, foreknown. Then for two weeks he ate the coarse, rapid food—the shapeless sour bread, the wild strange meat, venison and bear and turkey and coon which he had never tasted before—which men ate, cooked by men who were hunters first

and cooks afterward; he slept in harsh sheetless blankets as hunters slept. Each morning the gray of dawn found him and Sam Fathers on the stand, the crossing, which had been allotted him. It was the poorest one, the most barren. He had expected that; he had not dared yet to hope even to himself that he would even hear the running dogs this first time. But he did hear them. It was on the third morning—a murmur, sourceless, almost indistinguishable, yet he knew what it was although he had never before heard that many dogs running at once, the murmur swelling into separate and distinct voices until he could call the five dogs which his cousin owned from among the others. “now,” Sam said, “slant your gun up a little and draw back the hammers and then stand still.”

But it was not for him, not yet. The humility was there; he had learned that. And he could learn the patience. He was only ten, only one week. The instant had passed. It seemed to him that he could actually see the deer, the buck, smoke-colored, elongated with speed, vanished, the woods, the gray solitude still ringing even when the voices of the dogs had died away; from far away across the somber woods and the gray half-liquid morning there came two shots. “now let your hammers down,” Sam said.

He did so. “You knew it too,” he said.

“Yes,” Sam said. “I want you to learn how to do when you didn’t shoot. It’s after the chance for the bear or the deer has done already come and gone that men and dogs get killed.”

“Anyway, it wasn’t him,” the boy said, “It wasn’t even a bear. It was just a deer.”

“Yes,” Sam said, “it was just a deer.”

Then one morning, it was in the second week, he heard the dogs again. This time before Sam even spoke he readied the too-long, too-heavy, man size gun as Sam had taught him, even though this time he knew the dogs and the deer were coming less close than ever, hardly within hearing even. They didn’t sound like any running dogs he had ever heard before even. Then he found that Sam, who had taught him first of all to cock the gun and take position where he could see best in all directions and then never to move again, had himself moved up beside him. “There,” he said, “Listen.” The boy listened, to no ringing chorus strong and fast on a free scent but a moiling yapping an octave too high and with something more than indecision and even abjectness in it which he could not yet recognise, reluctant, not even moving very fast, taking a long time to pass out of hearing, leaving even then in the air that echo of thin and almost human hysteria, abject, almost humanly grieving, with this time nothing ahead of it, no sense of a fleeing unseen smoke-colored shape. He could hear Sam breathing at his shoulder. He saw the arched curve of the old man’s inhaling nostrils.

“It’s Old Ben!” he cried, whispering.

Sam didn’t move save for the slow gradual turning of his head as the voices faded on and the faint steady rapid arch and collapse of his nostrils. “Hah,” he said. “Not even running. Walking.”

“But up here!” the boy cried. “Way up here!”

He do it every year,” Sam said. “Once. Ash and Boon say he comes up here to run the other little bears away. Tell them to get to hell out of here and stay out until the hunters are gone. Maybe.” The boy no longer heard anything at all, yet still Sam’s head continued to turn gradually and steadily until the back of it was toward him. Then it turned back and looked down at him—the same face, grave, familiar, expressionless until it smiled, the same old man’s eyes from which as he watched there faded slowly a quality darkly and fiercely lambent, passionate and proud. “He

don't care no more for bears than he does for dogs or men neither. He come to see who's here, who's new in camp this year, whether he can shoot or not, can stay or not. Whether we got the dog yet that can bay and hold him until a man gets thee with a gun. Because he's the head bear. He's the man." It faded, was gone; again they were the eyes as he had known them all his life. "He'll let them follow him to the river. Then he'll send them home. We might as well go too; see how they look when they get back to camp."

The dogs were there first, ten of them huddled back under the kitchen, himself and Sam squatting to peer back into the obscurity where they crouched, quiet, the eyes rolling and luminous, vanishing, and no sound, only that effluvium which the boy could not quite place yet, of something more than dog, stronger than dog and not just animal, just beast even. Because there had been nothing in front of the abject and painful yapping except the solitude, the wilderness, so that when the eleventh hound got back about midafternoon and he and Tennis's Jim held the passive and still trembling bitch while Sam daubed her tattered ear and raked shoulder with turpentine and axle-grease; it was still no living creature but only the wilderness which, leaning for a moment, had patted lightly once her temerity. "Just like a man," Sam said. "Just like folks. Put off as long as she could having to be brave, knowing all the time that sooner or later she would have to be brave once so she could keep on calling herself a dog, and knowing before hand what was going to happen when she done it."

He did not know just when Sam left. He only knew that he was gone. For the next three mornings he rose and ate breakfast and Sam was not waiting for him. He went to his stand alone; he found it without help now and stood in it as Sam had taught him. On the third morning he heard the dogs again, running strong and free on a true scent again, and he readied the gun as he had learned to do and heard the hunt sweep past on since he was not ready yet, had not deserved other yet in just one short period of two weeks as compared to all the long life which he had already dedicated to the wilderness with patience and humility he heard the shot again one shot, the single clapping report of Walter Ewell's rifle. By now he could not only find his sand and then return to camp without guidance, by using the compass his cousin had given him he reached Walter waiting beside the buck and the moiling of dogs over the cast entrails before many of the others except Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim on the horses, even before Uncle Ash arrived with the one-eyed wagon-mule which did not mind the smell of blood or even, so they said, of bear.

It was not Uncle Ash on the mule. It was Sam returned. And Sam was waiting when he finished his dinner and, himself on the one-eyed mule and Sam on the other one of the wagon team, they rode for more than three hours through the rapid shortening sunless afternoon, following no path, no trail even that he could discern, into a section of country he had never seen before. Then he understood why Sam had made him ride the one-eyed mule which would not spook at the smell of blood, of wild animals. The other one, the sound one, stopped short and tried to whirl and bolt even as Sam got down, jerking and wrenching at the rein while Sam held it, coaxing it forward with his voice since he did not dare risk hitching it, drawing it forward while the boy dismounted from the marred one which would stand. Then, standing beside Sam in the thick great gloom of ancient woods and the winter's dying afternoon, he looked quietly down at the rotted log scored and gutted with claw-marks and, in the wet earth beside it, the print of the enormous warped two-toed foot. Now he knew what he had heard in the hounds voices in the woods that morning and what he had smelled when he peered under the kitchen where they huddled. It was in him too a little different because they were brute beast and he was not, but only a little different—an eagerness, passive an objectless, a sense of his own fragility and impotence again the timeless woods, yet without doubt or dread; a flavor like brass in the sudden run of saliva in his mouth, a hard sharp constriction either in his brain or his stomach, he could not tell which and it did not matter; he knew only that for the first time he realised that the bear which had run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain and even old General

Compson before they began to remember in their turn, was a mortal animal and that they had departed for the camp each November with no actual intention of slaying it not because it could not be slain but because so far they had no actual hope of being able to. "it will be tomorrow," he said.

"You mean we will try tomorrow," Sam said, "We aint got the dog yet."

"We've got eleven," he said. "They ran him Monday."

"And you heard them," Sam said. "Saw them too. We aint got the dog yet. It wont take but one. But he aint here. Maybe he aint nowhere. The only other way will be for him to run by accident over someboy that had a gun and knowed how to shoot it."

"that wouldn't be me," the boy said. "It would be Walter or Major or—"

"It might," Sam said. "You watch close tomorrow. Because he's smart. That's how come he has lived this long. If he gets hemmed up and has got to pick out somebody to run over, he will pick out you."

"How?" he said. "How will he know...." He ceased. "You mean he already knows me, that I aint never been to the big bottom before, aint had time to find out yet whether I.." He ceased again, staring at Sam; he said humbly, not even amazed: "it was me he was watching. I don't reckon he did need to come but once."

"You watch tomorrow," Sam said. "I reckon better start back. It 'll be long after dark now before we get to camp."

The next morning they started three hours earlier than they had ever done. Even Uncle Ash went, the cook, who called himself by profession a camp cook, and who did little else save cook for Major de Sapin's hunting and camping parties, yet who had been marked by the wilderness from simple juxtaposition to it until he responded as they all did, even the boy who until two weeks ago had never even seen the wilderness, to a hound's ripped ear and shoulder and the print of a crooked foot in a patch of wet earth. They rode. It was too far to walk: the boy and Sam and Uncle Ash in the wagon with the dogs, his cousin and Major de Spain and General Compson and Boon and Walter and Tennie's Jim riding double on the horses; again the first gray light found him as on that first morning two weeks ago, on the stand where Sam had placed and left him. With the gun which was too big for him, the breech-loader which did not even belong to him but to Major de Spain and which he had fired only once, at a stump on the first day to learn the recoil and how to reload it with the paper shells, he stood against a big gum tree beside a little beyou whose black still water crept without motion out of a cane-brake, across a small clearing and into the cane again, where, invisible, a bird, the big woodpecker called Lord-to-God by Negroes, clattered at a dead trunk. It was a stand like any other stand, dissimilar only in incidentals to the one where he had stood each morning for two weeks; a territory new to him yet no less familiar than that other one which after two weeks he had come to believe he knew a little—the same solitude, the same loneliness through which frail and timorous man had merely passed without altering it, leaving no mark nor scar, which looked exactly, as it must have looked when the first ancestor of Sam Fathers' Chickasaw predecessors crept into it and looked about him, club or stone axe or bone arrow drawn and ready, different only because, squatting at the edge of the kitchen, he had smelled the dogs huddled and cringing beneath it and saw the raked ear and side of the bitch that, as Sam had said, had to be brave once in order to keep on calling herself a dog, and saw yesterday in the earth beside the gutted log, the print of the living foot. He heard no dogs at all. He never did certainly hear them. He only heard the drumming of the woodpecker stop short off, and knew that the bear was looking at him. He never saw it. He did not know whether it was facing him from the cane or behind him. He did not move, holding the useless gun which he

knew now he would never fire at it, now or ever, tasting in his saliva that taint of brass which he had smelled in the huddled dogs when he peered under the kitchen.

Then it was gone. As abruptly as it had stopped, the wood pecker's dry hammering set up again, and after a while he believed he even heard the dogs—a murmur, scarce a sound even, which he had probably been hearing for a time, perhaps a minute or two, before he remarked it, drifting into hearing and then out again, dying away. They came nowhere near him. If it was dogs he heard, he could not have sworn to it; if it was a bear they ran, it was another bear. It was Sam himself who emerged from the cane and crossed the bayou, the injured bitch following at heels as a bird dog is taught to walk. She came and crouched against his leg, trembling. "I didn't see him," he said. "I didn't Sam."

"I know it," Sam said. "He done the looking. You didn't hear him neither, did you?" "No," the boy said. "I—"

"He's smart," Sam said. "Too smart." Again the boy saw in his eyes that quality of dark and brooding lambence as Sam looked down at the bitch trembling faintly and steadily against the boy's leg. From her raked shoulder a few drops of fresh blood clung like bright berries. "Too big. We aint got the dog yet. But maybe some day."

Because there would be a next time, after and after. He was only ten. It seemed to him that he could see them, the two of them shadowy in the limbo from which time emerged and became time; the old bear absolved of mortality and himself who shared a little of it. Because he recognised now what he had smelled in the huddled dogs and tasted in his own saliva, recognised fear as a boy, a youth, recognises the existence of love and passion and experience which is his heritage but not yet his patrimony, from entering by chance the presence or perhaps even merely the bedroom of a woman who has loved and been loved by many men. *So I will have to see him*, he thought, without dread or even hope. *I will have to look at him*. So it was in June of the next summer. They were at the camp again, celebrating Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthdays. Although the one had been born in September and the other in the depth of winter and almost thirty years earlier, each June the two of them and McCaslin and Boon and Walter Ewell (and the boy too from now on) spent two weeks at the camp, fishing and shooting squirrels and turkey and running coons and wildcats with the dogs at night. That is, Boon and the Negroes (and the boy too now) fished and shot squirrels and ran the coons and cats because the proven hunters not only Major de Spain and old General Compson (who spent those two weeks sitting in a rocking chair before a tremendous iron pot of Brunswick stew, stirring and tasting, with Uncle Ash to quarrel with about how he was making it and Tennie's jim to pour whisky into the tin dipper from which he drank it) but even McCaslin and Walter Ewell he were still young enough, scorned such other than shooting the wild gobblers with pistols for wagers or to test their marks manship.

That is, his cousin McCaslin and the others thought he was hunting squirrels. Until the third evening he believed that Sam Fathers though so too. Each morning he would leave the camp right after breakfast. He had his own gun now, a new breech-loader, a Christmas gift; he would own and shoot it for almost seventy years, through two new pairs of barrels and locks and one new stock, until all that remained of the original gun was the silver-inlaid-trigger-guard with his and McCaslin's engraved names and the date in 1878. He found the tree beside the little bayou where he had stood that morning. Using the compass he ranged from that point; he was teaching himself to be better than a fair woodsman without even knowing he was doing it. On the third day he even found the gutted log where he had first seen the print. It was almost completely crumbled now, healing with unbelievable speed, a passionate and almost visible relinquishment, back into the earth from which the tree had grown. He ranged the summer woods now, green with gloom, if anything actually dimmer than they had been in November's gray dissolution, where even at noon the sun fell only in windless dappling upon the earth which never completely dried and which crawled

with snakes—moceasins and watersnakes and rattlers, themselves the color of the dappled gloom so that he would not always see them until they moved; returning to camp later and later and later, first day, second day, passing in the twilight of the third evening the little log pen enclosing the log barn where Sam was putting up the stock for the night. "you aint looked right yet," Sam said.

He stopped. For a moment he didn't answer. Then he said peacefully, in a peaceful rushing burst, as when a boy's miniature dam in a little brook gives way; "All right. Yes. But how? I went to the bayou. I even found that log again. I—"

"I reckon that was all right. Likely he's been watching you. You never saw his foot?"

"I..." the boy said. "I didn't... I never thought..."

"It's the gun," Sam said. He stood beside the fence, motionless, the old man, son of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief, in the battered and faded overalls and the frayed five-cent straw hat which had been the badge of the Negro's slavery and was not the regalia of his freedom. The camp—the clearing, the house the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn had scratched punily and evanescently at the wilderness—faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods. The gun, the boy thought. The gun. "You will have to choose," Sam said.

He left the new morning before light without breakfast, long before Uncle Ash would wake in his quilts on the kitchen floor and start the fire. He had only the compass and a stick for the snakes. He could go almost a mile before he would need to see the compass. He sat on a log, the invisible compass in his hand, while the secret night-sounds, which had ceased at his movements, scurried again and then fell still for good and the owls ceased and gave over to the waking day birds and there was light in the gray wet woods and he could see the compass. He went fast yet still quietly, becoming steadily better and better as a woodsman without yet having time to realise it; he jumped a doe and a fawn, walked them out of the bed, close enough to see them—the crash of undergrowth, the white scut, the fawn scudding along behind her, faster than he had known it could have run. He was hunting right, as Sam had taught him, but that didn't matter now. He had left the gun; by his own will and relinquishment he had accepted not a gambit, not a choice, but a condition in which not only the bear's heretofore inviolable anonymity but all the ancient rules and balances of hunter and hunted had been abrogated. He would not even be afraid, not even in the moment when the fear would take him completely; blood, skin, bowels, bones, memory from the long time before it even became his memory—all save that thin clear quenchless lucidity which alone differed him from this bear and from all the other bears and bucks he would follow during almost seventy years, to which Sam had said: "Be scared. You cant help that. But don't be afraid. Aint nothing in the woods going to hurt you if you don't corner it or it don't smell that you are afraid. A bear or a deer has got to be scared of a coward the same as a brave man has got to be."

By noon he was far beyond the crossing on the little bayou, farther into the new and alien country than he had even been, travelling now not only by the compass but by the old, heavy, biscuit-thick silver watch which had been his father's. He had left the camp nine hours ago; nine hours from now, dark would already have been an hour old. He stopped, for the first time since he had risen from the log when he could see the compass face at last, and looked about, mopping his sweating face on his sleeve. He had already relinquished of his will, because of his need, in humility and peace and without regret, yet apparently that had not been enough, the leaving of the gun was not enough. He stood for a moment—a child alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness. The he relinquished completely to it. It was the watch and the compass. He was still tainted. He removed the linked chain of

the one and the looped thong of the other from his overalls and hung them on a bush and leaned the stick beside them and entered it.

When he realised he was lost, he did as Sam had coached and drilled him: made a cast to cross his back-track. He had not been going very fast for the last two or three hours, and he had gone even less fast since he left the compass and watch on the bush. So he went slower still now, since the tree could not be very far; in fact, he found it before he really expected to and turned and went to it. But there was no bush beneath it, no compass nor watch, so he did next as Sam had coached and drilled him: made this next circle in the opposite direction and much larger, so that the pattern of the two of them would bisect his track somewhere, but crossing no trace nor mark anywhere of his feet or any feet, and now he was going faster though still not panicked, his heart beating a little more rapidly but strong and steady enough, and this time it was not even the tree because there was a down log beside it which he had never seen before and beyond the log a little swamp, a seepage of moisture somewhere between earth and water, and he did what Sam had coached and drilled him as the next and the last, seeing as the sat down on the log the crooked print, the warped indentation in the wet ground which while he looked at it continued to fill with water until it was level full and the water began to overflow and the sides of the print began to dissolve away. Even as he looked up he was the next one, and, moving, the one beyond it; moving, not hurrying, running, but merely keeping pace with them as they appeared before him as though they were being shaped out of thin air just one constant pace short of where he would lose them forever and be lost forever himself, tireless, eager, without doubt or dread, panting a little above the strong rapid little hammer of his heart, emerging suddenly into a little glade and the wilderness coalesced. It rushed, soundless, and solidified—the tree, the bush, the compass and the watch glinting where a ray of sunlight touched them. Then he saw the bear. It did not emerge, appear; it was just there immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot drappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as a big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone it didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins.

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So he should have hated and feared Lion. He was thirteen then. He had killed his buck and Sam Fathers had marked his face with the hot blood, and in the next November he killed a bear. But before that accolade he had become as competent in the woods as many grown men with the same experience. By now he was a better woodsman than most grown men with more. There was no territory within twenty-five miles of the camp that he did not know—bayou, ridge, landmark trees and path; he could have led anyone direct to any spot in it and brought him back. He knew game trails that even Sam Fathers had never seen; in the third fall he found a bucks's bedding-place by himself and unbeknown to his cousin he borrowed Walter Ewell's rifle and lay in wait for the buck at dawn and killed it when it walked back to the bed as Sam had told him how the old Chickasaw fathers did.

By now he knew the old bear's footprint better than he did his own, and not only the crooked one. He could see any one of the three sound prints and distinguish it at once from any other, and not only because of its size. There were other bears within that fifty miles which left tracks almost as large, or at least so near that the one would have appeared larger only by juxtaposition. It was more than that. If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, So long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungended progenitor, was his alma mater.

He could find the crooked print now whenever he wished, ten miles or five miles or sometimes closer than that, to the camp. Twice while on stand during the next three years he heard the dogs strike its trail and once even jump it by chance, the voices high, abject almost human in their hysteria. Once, still-hunting with Walter Ewell's rifle, he saw it cross a long corridor of down timber where a tornado had passed. It rushed through rather than across the tangle of trunks and branches as a locomotive would, faster than he had ever believed it could have moved, almost as fast as a deer even because the deer would have spent most of that distance in the air; he realised then why it would take a dog not only of abnormal courage but size and speed too ever to bring it to bay. He had a little dog at home, a mongrel, of the sort called fyce by Negroes, a ratter, itself not much bigger than a rat and possessing that sort of courage which had long since stopped being bravery and had become foolhardiness. He brought it with him one June and timing them as if they were meeting an appointment with another human being, himself carrying the fyce with a sack over its head and Sam Fathers with a brace of the hounds on a rope leash, they lay downwind of the trail and actually ambushed the bear. They were so close that it turned at bay although he realised later this might have been from surprise and amazement at the shrill and frantic uproar of the fyce, it turned at bay against the trunk of a big cypress, on its hind feet; it seemed to the boy that it would never stop rising, taller and taller, and even the two hounds seemed to have taken a kind of desperate and despairing courage from the fyce. Then he realised that the fyce was actually not going to stop. He flung the gun down and ran. When he overtook and grasped the shrill, frantically pinwheeling little dog, it seemed to him that he was directly under the bear. He could smell it, strong and hot and rank. Sprawling, he looked up where it loomed and towered over him like a thunderclap. I was quite familiar, until he remembered: this was the way he had used to dream about it.

The it was gone. He didn't see it go. He knelt, holding the frantic fyce with both hands, hearing the abased wailing of the two hounds drawing further and further away; until Sam came up, carrying the gun. He laid it quietly down beside the boy and stood looking down at him. "You've done seed him twice now, with a gun in your hands," he said. "This time you couldn't have missed him."

The boy rose. He still held the fyce. Even in his arms it continued to yap frantically, surging and straining toward the fading sound of the hounds like a collection of live-wire springs. The boy was panting a little. "Neither could you," he said. "You had the gun. Why didn't you shoot him?"

Sam didn't seem to have heard. He put out his hand and touched the little dog in the boy's arms which still yapped and strained even though the two hounds were out of hearing now. He's done gone," Sam said. "You can slack off and rest now, until next time." He stroked the little dog until it began to grow quiet under his hand.

"You's almost the one we wants," he said. "you just aint big enough. We aint got that one yet. He will need to be just a little bigger than smart, and a little braver than either." He withdrew his hand from the fyce's head and stood looking into the woods where the bear and the hounds had vanished. "Somebody is going to, some day."

"I know it," the boy said. "That's why it must be one of us. So it wont be until the last day. When even he dont want it to last any longer."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. It was in the fourth summer, the fourth time he had made one in the celebration of Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthday. In the early spring Major de Spain's mare had foaled a horse colt. One evening when Sam brought the horses and mules up to stable them for the night, the colt was nussing and it was all he could do to get the frantic mare into the lot. He had thought at first to let the mare lead him back to where she had become separated from the foal. But she would not do it. She would not even feint toward any particular part of the woods or even in any particular direction. She merely ran as if she

couldn't see, still frantic with terror. She whirled and ran at Sam once, as if to attack him some ultimate desperation, as if she could not for the moment realise that he was a man and along-familiar one. He got her into the lot at last. It was too dark by that time to back-track her, to unravel the erratic course she had doubtless pursued.

He came to the house and told Major de Sapin. It was an animal of course, a big one and the colt was dead now, wherever it was. They all knew that. "It's a panther," General Compson said at once. "The same one. That doe and fawn last March." Sam had sent Major de Spain word of it when Boon Hogganbeck came to the camp on a routine visit to see how the stock had wintered—the doe's throat torn out, and the beast had run down the helpless fawn and killed it too.

"Sam never did say that was a panther," Major de Spain said. Sam said nothing now, standing behind Major de Spain where they sat at supper, inscrutable, as if he were just waiting for them to stop talking so he could go home. He didn't even seem to be looking at anything. "A panther might jump a doe, and he wouldn't have much trouble catching the fawn afterward. But no panther would have jumped that colt with the dam right there with it. It was Old Ben," Major de Spain said. "I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules. I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs, but that was all right. We gambled the gods against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, out of season too. He broke the rules. It was Old Ben, Sam." Still Sam said nothing, standing there until Major de Spain should stop talking. "We'll back-track her tomorrow and see," Major de Spain said.

Sam departed. He would not live in the camp; he had built himself a little hut something like Joe Baker's, only stouter, tighter, on the bayou a quarter-mile away, and a stout log crib where he stored a little corn for the shoat he raised each year. The next morning he was waiting when they waked. He had already found the colt. They did not even wait for breakfast. It was not far, not five hundred yards from the stable—the three-months colt lying on its side, its throat torn out and the entrails and one ham partly eaten. It lay not as if it had been dropped but as if it had been struck and hurled, and no cat-mark, no claw-mark where a panther would have gripped it while finding its throat. They read the tracks where the frantic mare had circled and at last rushed in with that same ultimate desperation with which she had whirled on Sam Fathers yesterday evening, and the long tracks of dead and terrified running and those of the beast which had not even rushed at her when she advanced but had merely walked three or four paces toward her until she broke, and General Compson said, "Good God, what a wolf!"

Still Sam said nothing. The boy watched him while the men knelt measuring the tracks. There was something in Sam's face now. It was neither exultation nor joy nor hope. Later, a man, the boy realised what it had been, and that Sam had known all the time what had made the tracks and what had torn the throat out of the doe in the spring and killed the fawn. It had been foreknowledge in Sam's face that morning. *And he was glad*, he told himself. He was old. *He had no children, no people, none of his blood anywhere above earth that he would ever meet again. And even if he were to, he could not have touched it, spoken to it, because for seven years now he had had to be a Negro. It was almost over now and he was glad.*

They returned to camp and had breakfast and came back with guns and the hounds. Afterward the boy realised that they also should have known then what killed the colt as well as Sam Fathers did. But that was neither the first nor the last time he had seen men rationalise from and even act upon their misconceptions. After Boon, standing astride the colt, had whipped the dogs away from it with his belt, they snuffed at the tracks. One of them a young dog hound without judgment yet, bayed once, and they ran for a few feet on what seemed to be a trail. Then they stopped, looking back at the men, eager enough, not baffled, merely questioning, as if they were asking "Now what?" Then they rushed back to the colt, where Boon, still astride it, slashed at them with the belt.

"I never knew a trail to get cold that quick," General Compson said.

"Maybe a single wolf big enough to kill a colt with the dam right there beside it don't leave scent," Major de Spain said

"Maybe it was a hant," Walter Ewell said. He looked at Tennie's Jim. "Hah, Jim?"

Because the hounds would not run it, Major de Spain had Sam hunt out and find the tracks a hundred yards farther on and they put the dogs on it again and again the young one bayed and not one of them realised then that the hound was not baying like a dog striking game but was merely bellowing like a country dog whose yard has been invaded. General Compson spoke to the boy and Boon and Tennie's jim: to the squirrel hunters. "You boys keep the dogs with you this morning. He's probably hanging around somewhere, waiting to get his breakfast off the colt. You might strike him."

But they did not. The boy remembered how Sam stood watching them as they went into the woods with the leased hounds-the Indian face in which he had never seen anything until it smiled, except that faint arching of the nostrils on that first morning when the hounds had found Old Ben. They took the hounds with them on the next day, though when they reached the place where they hoped to strike a fresh trail, the carcass of the colt was gone. Then on the third morning Sam was waiting again, this time until they had finished breakfast. He said, "Come" He led them to his house, his little hut, to the corn-crib beyond it. He had removed the corn and had made a deadfall of the door, baiting it with the colt's carcass; peering between the logs, they saw an animal almost the color of a gun or pistol barrel, what little time they had to examine its color or shape. It was not crouched nor even standing. It was in motion, in the air, coming toward them—a heavy body crashing with tremendous force against the door so that the thick door jumped and clattered in its frame, the animal, whatever it was, hurling itself against the door again seemingly before it could have touched the floor and got a new purchase to spring from. "Come away," Sam said, "fore he break his neck." Even when they retreated the heavy and measured crashes continued, the stout door jumping and clattering each time, and still no sound from the beast itself-no snarl, no cry.

What in hell's name is it?" Major de Spain said.

"It's a dog," Sam said, his nostrils arching and collapsing faintly and steadily and that faint, fierce milkiess in his eyes again as on that first morning when the hounds had struck the old bear. "It's the dog."

"The dog?" Major de Spain said.

"That's gonter hold Old Ben,"

"Dog the devil," Major de Spain said. "I'd rather have Old Ben himself in my pack than that brute. Shoot him."

"No," Sam said.

"You'll never tame him. How do you ever expect to make an animal like that afraid of you?"

"I dont want him tame," Sam said; again the boy watched his nostrils and the fierce milky light in his eyes. "But I almost rather he be tame than scared, of me or any man or any thing. But he wont be neither, of nothing."

"Then what are you going to do with it?"

"You can watch," Sam said.

Each morning through the second week they would go to Sam's crib. He had removed a few shingles from the roof and had put a rope on the colt's carcass and had drawn it out when the trap fell. Each morning they would watch him lower a pail of water into the crib while the dog hurled itself tirelessly against the door and dropped back and leaped again. It never made any sound and there was nothing frenzied in the act but only a cold and grim indomitable determination. Toward the end of the week it stopped jumping at the door. Yet it had not weakened appreciably and it was not as if it had rationalised the fact that the door was not going to give. It was as if for that time it simply disdained to jump any longer. It was not down. None of them had ever seen it down. It stood, and they could see it now-part mastiff, something of Airedale and something of a dozen other strains probably, better than thirty inches at the shoulders and weighing as they guessed almost ninety pounds, with cold yellow eyes and a tremendous chest and over all that strange color like a blued gun-barrel.

Then the two weeks were up. They prepared to break camp. The boy begged to remain and his cousin let him. He moved into the little hut with Sam Fathers. Each morning he watched Sam lower the pail of water into the crib. By the end the week the dog was down. It would rise and half stagger, half crawl to the water and drink and collapse again. One morning it could not even reach the water, could not raise its forequarters even from the floor. Sam took a short stick and prepared to enter the crib. "Wait," the boy said, "let me get the gun—"

"No," Sam said. "He cant move now. " Nor could it. It lay on its side while Sam touched it, its head and the gaunted body, the dog lying motionless, the yellow eyes open. They were not fierce and there was nothing of petty malevolence in them, but a cold and almost impersonal malignance like some natural force. It was not even looking at Sam nor at the boy peering at it between the logs.

Sam began to feed it again. The first time he had to raise its head so it could lap the broth. That night he left a bowl of broth containing jumps of meat where the dog could reach it. The next morning the bowl was empty and the dog was lying on its belly, its head up, the cold yellow eyes watching the door as Sam entered, no change whatever in the cold yellow eyes and still no sounds from it even when it sprang, its aim and co-ordination still bad from weakness so that Sam had time to strike it down with the stick and leap from the crib and slam the door as the dog, still without having had time to get its feet under it to jump again seemingly, hurled itself against the door as if the two weeks of starving had never been.

At noon that day someone came whooping through the woods from the direction of the camp. It was Boon. He came and looked for a while between the logs, at the tremendous dog lying again on its belly, its head up, the yellow eyes blinking sleep at nothing: the indomitable and unbroken spirit. What we better do," Boon said, "is to let that son of a bitch go and catch Old Ben and run him on the dog." He turned to the boy his weather-reddened and beetling face. "Get your traps together. Cass says for you to come on home. You been in here fooling with that horse-eating varmint long enough."

Boon had a borrowed mule at the camp; the buggy was waiting at the edge of the bottom. He was at home that night. He told McCaslin about it. "Sam's going to starve him again until he can go in and touch him. Then he will feed him again. Then he will starve him again, if he has to."

"But why?" McCaslin said. "What for? Even Sam will never tame that brute."

"We don't want him tame. We want him like he is. We just want him to find out at last that the only way he can get out of that crib and stay out of it is to do what Sam or somebody tells him to do. He's the dog that's going to stop Old Ben and hold him. We've already named him. His name is Lion."

Then November came at last. They returned to the camp. With General Compson and Major de Spain and his cousin and Walter and Boon he stood in the yard among the guns and bedding and boxes of food and watched Sam Fathers and Lion come up the lane from the lot—the Indian, the old man in battered overalls and rubber boots and a worn sheepskin coat and a hat which had belonged to the boy's father; the tremendous dog pacing gravely beside him. The hounds rushed out to meet them and stopped, except the young one which still had but little of judgment. It ran up to Lion, fawning. Lion didn't snap at it. He didn't even pause. He struck it rolling and yelping for five or six feet with a blow of one paw as a bear would have done and came on into the yard and stood, blinking sleepily at nothing, looking at no one, while Boon said, "Jesus, Jesus—Will he let me touch him?"

"You can touch him" Sam said. "He dont care. He dont care about nothing or nobody."

The boy watched that too. He watched it for the next two years from that moment when Boon touched Lion's head and then knelt beside him, feeling the bones and muscles, the power. It was as if Lion were a woman—or perhaps Boon was the woman. That was more like it—the big, grave, sleepy-seeming dog which, as Sam Fathers said, cared about no man and no thing; and the violent insensitive, hard-faced man with his touch remote Indian blood and the mind almost of a child. He watched Boon take over Lion's feeding from Sam and Uncle Ash both. He would see Boon squatting in the cold rain beside the kitchen while Lion ate. Because Lion neither slept nor ate with the other dogs though none of them knew where he did sleep until in the second November, thinking until then that Lion slept in his kennel beside Sam Fathers hut, when the boy's cousin McCaslin said something about it to Sam by sheer chance and Sam told him. And that night the boy and Major de Spain and McCaslin with a lamp entered the back room where Boon slept—the little, tight, airless room rank with the smell of Boon's unwashed body and his wet hunting-clothes—where Boon, snoring on his back, choked and waked and Lion raised his head beside him and looked back at them from his cold, slumbrous yellow eyes.

"Damn it, Boon," McCaslin said. "Get that dog out of here. He's got to run Old Ben tomorrow morning. How in hell do you expect him to smell anything fainter than a skunk after breathing you all night?"

"The way I smell aint hurt my nose none that I ever noticed," Boon said.

"It wouldn't matter if it had," Major de Spain said. "We're not depending on you to trail a bear. Put him outside. Put him outside. Put him under the house with the other dogs."

Boon began to get up. "He'll kill the first one that happens to yawn or sneeze in his face or touches him."

"I reckon not," Major de Spain said. "None of them are going to risk yawning in his face or touching him either, even asleep. Put him outside, I want his nose right tomorrow. Old Ben fooled him last year. I don't think he will do it again."

Boon put on his shoes without lacing them; in his long soiled underwear, his hair still tousled from sleep, he and Lion went out. The others returned to the front room and the poker game where McCaslin's and Major de Spain's hands waited for them on the table. After a while McCaslin said, "Do you want me to go back and look again?"

"No," Major de Spain said. "I call," he said to Walter Ewell. He spoke to McCaslin again. "If you do, don't tell me. I am beginning to see the first sign of my increasing age: I don't like to know that my orders have been disobeyed, even when I knew when I gave them that they would be—A small pair," he said to Walter Ewell.

"How small?" Walter said.

"Very small," Major de Spain said.

And the boy, lying beneath his piled quilts and blankets waiting for sleep, knew likewise that Lion was already back in Boon's bed, for the rest of that night and the next one and during all the night of the next November and the next one. He thought then: *I wonder What Sam thinks. He could have Lion with him, even if Boon is a white man. He could ask Major or McCaslin either. And more than that. It was Sam's hand that touched Lion first and Lion knows it.* Then he became a man and he knew that too. It had been all right. That was the way it should have been. Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian, was his huntsman. Boon should have nursed the dogs.

On the first morning that Lion led the pack after Old ben, seven strangers appeared in the camp. They were swampers: gaunt, malaria-ridden men appearing from nowhere, who ran trap-lines for coons or perhaps farmed little patches of cotton and corn along the edge of the bottom, in clothes but little better than Sam Fathers and nowhere near as good as Tennie's jim's, with worn shotguns and rifles, already squatting patiently in the cold drizzle in the side yard when day broke. They had a spokesman; afterward Sam Fathers told Major de Spain how all during the past summer and fall they had drifted into the camp singly or in pairs and threes, to look quietly at Lion for a while and then go away; "Mawnin, Major. We heerd you was aimin to put that ere blue dawg on that old two-toed bear this mawnin. We figgered we'd come up and watch, if you don't mind. We wont do no shooting, lessen he runs over us."

"You are welcome" Major de Spain said. "You are welcome to shoot. He's more your bear than ours."

"I reckon that aint no lie. I done fed him enough cawn to have a sheer in him. Not to mention a shoat three years ago."

"I reckon I got a sheer too," another said. "Only it aint in the bear." Major de Spain looked at him. He was chewing tobacco. He spat. "Hit was a heifer calf, Nice un too. Last year. When I finally found her, I reckon she looked about like that colt of yourn looked last June."

"Oh," Major de Spain said. "Be welcome. If you see game in front of my dogs, shoot it."

Nobody shot Old Ben that day. No man saw him. The dogs jumped him within a hundred yards of the glade where the boy had seen him that day in the summer of his eleventh year. The boy was less than a quarter-mile away. He heard the jumps but he could distinguish no voice among the dogs that he did not know and therefore would be Lion's, and he thought, believed, that Lion was not among them. Even the fact that they were going much faster than he had ever heard them run behind Old Ben before and that the high thin note of hysteria was missing now from their voices was not enough to disabuse him. He didn't comprehend until that night, when Sam told him that Lion would never cry on a trail. "He gonter growl when he catches Old Ben's throat," Sam said "But he aint gonter never holler, no more than he ever done when he was jumping at that two-inch door. It's that blue dog in him What you call it?"

"Airedale," the boy said.

Lion was there; the jump was just too close to the river. When Boon returned with Lion about eleven that night, he swore that Lion had stopped Old Ben once but that the hounds would not go in and Old Ben broke away and took to the river and swam for miles down it and he and Lion went down one bank for about ten miles and crossed and came up the other but it had begun to get dark before they struck any trail

where Old Ben had come up out of the water, unless he was still in the water when he passed the ford where they crossed. Then he fell to cursing the hounds and ate the supper Uncle Ash had saved for him and went off to bed and after a while the boy opened the door of the little stale room thunderous with snoring and the great grave dog raised its head from Boon's pillow and blinked at him for a moment and lowered its head again.

When the next November came and the last day, the day on which it was not becoming traditional to save for Old Ben, there were more than a dozen strangers waiting. They were not all swampers this time. Some of them were townsmen, from other county seats like Jefferson, who had heard about Lion and Old Ben and had come to watch the great blue dog keep his yearly rendezvous with the old two-toed bear. Some of them didn't even have guns and the hunting-clothes and boots they wore had been on a story shelf yesterday.

This time Lion jumped Old Ben more than five miles from the river and bayed and held him and this time the hounds went in, in a sort of desperate emulation. The boy heard them; he was that near. He heard Boon whooping; he heard the two shots when General Compson delivered both barrels, one containing five buckshot, the other a single ball, into the bear from as close as he could force his almost unmanageable horse. He heard the dogs when the bear broke free again. He was running now; panting, stumbling, his lungs bursting, he reached the place where General Compson had fired and where Old Ben had killed two of the hounds. He saw the blood from General Compson's shots, but he could go no further. He stopped, leaning against a tree for his breathing to ease and his heart to slow, hearing the sound of the dogs as it faded on and died away.

In camp that night—they had as guests five of the still terrified strangers in new hunting coats and boots who had been lost all day until Sam Fathers went out and got them he heard the rest of it: how Lion had stopped and held the bear again but only the one eyed mule which did not mind the smell of wild blood would approach and Boon was riding the mule and Boon had never been known to hit anything. He shot at the bear five times with his pump gun, touching nothing, and Old Ben killed another hound and broke free once more and reached the river and was gone. Again Boon and Lion hunted as far down one bank as they dared Too far; they crossed in the first of dusk and dark overtook them within a mile. And this time Lion found the broken trail, the blood perhaps, in the darkness where Old Ben had come up out of the water, but Boon had him on a rope, luckily, and he got down from the mule and fought Lion hand-to-hand until he got him back to camp. This time Boon didn't even curse. He stood in the door, muddy, spent, his huge gargoyle's face tragic and still amazed. "I missed him," he said. "I was in twenty-five feet of him and I missed him five times."

"But we have drawn blood," Major de Spain said. "General Compson drew blood. We have never done that before."

"But I missed him," Boon said. "I missed him five times. With Lion looking right at me."

"Never mind," Major de Spain said. "It was a damned fine race. And we drew blood. Next year we'll let General Compson or Walter ride Katie, and we'll get him."

Then McCaslin said, "Where is Lion, Boon?"

"I left him at Sam's," Boon said. He was already turning away. I aint fit to sleep with him."

So he should have hated and feared Lion. Yet he did not. It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too.

-3-

It was December. It was the coldest December he had ever remembered. They had been in camp four days over two weeks waiting for the weather to soften so that Lion and Old Ben could run their yearly race. Then they would break camp and go home. Because of these unforeseen additional days which they had had to pass waiting on the weather, with nothing to do but play poker, the whisky had given out and he and Boon were being sent to Memphis with a suitcase and a note from Major de Spain to Mr. Semmes, the distiller, to get more. That is, Major de Spain and McCaslin were sending Boon to get the whisky and sending him to see that Boon got back with it or most of it or at least some of it.

Tennie's Jim waked him at three. He dressed rapidly, shivering, not so much from the cold because a fresh fire already boomed and roared on the hearth, but in that dead winter hour when the blood and the heart are slow and sleep is incomplete. He crossed the gap between house and kitchen, the gap of iron earth beneath the brilliant and rigid night where dawn would not begin for three hours yet, tasting, tongue palate and to the very bottom of his lungs the searing dark, and entered the kitchen, the lamplit warmth where the stove glowed, fogging the windows, and where Boon already sat at the table at breakfast, hunched over his plate, almost in his plate, his working jaws blue with stubble and his face innocent of water and his coarse, horse-mane hair innocent of comb-the quarter Indian, grandson of a Chickasaw squaw, who on occasion resented with his hard and furious fists the intimation of one single drop of alien blood and on others, usually after whisky, affirmed with the same fists and the same fury that his father had been the full-blood Chickasaw and even a chief and that even his mother had been only half white. He was four inches over six feet; he had the mind of a child, the heart of a horse, and little hard shoe-button eyes without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else, in the ugliest face the boy had ever seen. It looked like somebody had found a walnut a little larger than a football and with a machinist's hammer had shaped features into it and then painted it, mostly red: not Indian red but a fine bright ruddy color which whisky might have had something to do with but which was mostly just happy and violent out-of-doors, the wrinkles in it not the residue of the forty years it had survived but from squinting into the sun or into the gloom of cane-brakes where game had run, baked into it by the camp fires before which he had lain trying to sleep on the cold November or December ground while waiting for daylight so he could rise and hunt again, as though time were merely something he walked through as he did through air aging him no more than air did. He was brave, faithful, improvident and unreliable; he had neither profession job nor trade and owned one vice and one virtue: whisky, and that absolute and unquestioning fidelity to Major de Spain and the boy's cousin McCaslin. "Sometimes I'd call ~~them~~ both virtues," Major de Spain said once. "Or both vices." McCaslin said.

He ate his breakfast, hearing the dogs under the kitchen, wakened by the smell of frying meat or perhaps by the feet overhead. He heard Lion once, short and peremptory, as the best hunter in any camp has only to speak once to all save the fools, and none other of Major de Spain's and McCaslin's dogs were Lion's equal in size and strength and perhaps even in courage, but they were not fools; Old Ben had killed them last year.

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Tennie's Jim came in as they finished. The wagon was outside. Ash decided he would drive them over to the log-line where they would flag the outbound log-train and let Tennie's Jim wash the dishes. The boy knew why. It would not be the first time he had listened to old Ash badgering Boon.

It was cold. The wagon wheels banged and clattered on the frozen ground; the sky was fixed and brilliant. He was not shivering, he was shaking, slow and steady and hard, the food he had just eaten still warm and solid inside him while his outside shook slow and steady around it as though his stomach floated loose. "They wont run this morning," he said. "no dog will have any nose today."

"Cep Lion," Ash said. "Lion don't need no nose. All he need is a bear." He had wrapped his feet in trowsacks and he had a quilt from his pallet bed on the kitchen floor drawn over his head and wrapped around him until in the thin brilliant starlight he looked like nothing at all that the boy had ever seen before. "He run a bear through a thousand-acre ice-house. Catch him too. Them other dogs don't matter because they aint going to keep up with Lion nohow, long as he got a bear in front of him."

"What's wrong with the other dogs?" Boon said. "What the hell do you know about it anyway? This is the first time you've had your tail out of that kitchen since we get here except to chop a little wood."

"Aint nothing wrong with them," Ash said. "And long as it's left up to them, aint nothing going to be. I just wish I had knowed all my life how to take care of my health good as them hounds knows."

"Well, they aint going to run this morning," Boon siad. His voice was harsh and positive. "Major promised they wouldn't until me and Ike get back."

"Weather gonter break today. Gonter soft up. Rain by night." Then Ash laughed, chuckled, somewhere inside the quilt which concealed even his face. "Hum up here, mules!" he said, jerking the reins so that the mules leaped forward and snatched the lurching and banging wagon for several feet before they slowed again into their quick, short-paced, rapid plodding. "Sides, I like to know why Major need to wait on you. It's Lion be aiming to use. I aint never heard tell of you bringing no bear nor no other kind of meat into this camp."

Now Boon's going to curse Ash or maybe even hit him, the boy thought. But Boon never did, never had; the boy knew he never would even though four years ago Boon had shot five times with a borrowed pistol at a Negro on the street in Jefferson, with the same result as when he had shot five times at Old Ben last fall. "By God," Boon said. "he aint going to put Lion or no other dog on nothing until I get back tonight. Because he promised me. Whip up them mules and keep them whipped up. Do you want me to freeze to death?"

They reached the log-line and built a fire. After a while the log-train came up out of the woods under the paling east and Boon flagged it. Then in the warm caboose the boy slept again while Boon and the conductor and brakeman talked about Lion and Old Ben as people later would talk about Sullivan and Kilrain and, later still, about Dempsey and Tunney. Dozing, swaying as the springless caboose lurched and clattered, he would hear them still talking about the shoats and calves Old Ben had killed and the cribs he had rifled and the traps and deadfalls he had wrecked and the lead he probably carried under his hide—Old Ben, the two-toed bear in a land where bears with trap-ruined feet had been called Two-Toe or Three-Toe or Cripple-Foot

for fifty years, only Old Ben was an extra bear (the head bear, General Compson called him) and so had earned a name such as a human man could have worn and not been sorry.

They reached Hoke's at sunup. They emerged from the warm caboose in their hunting clothes, the muddy boots and stained khaki and Boon's blue unshaven jowls. But that was all right. Hoke's was a sawmill and commissary and two stores and a loading-chute on a sidetrack from the main line, and all the men in it wore boots and khaki too. Presently the Memphis train came. Boon bought three packages of popcorn-and-molasses and a bottle of beer from the news butch and the boy went to sleep again to the sound of his chewing.

But in Memphis it was not all right. It was as if the high buildings and the hard pavements, the fine carriages and the horse cars and the men in starched collars and neckties made their boots and khaki look a little rougher and a little muddier and made Boon's beard look worse and more unshaven and his face look more and more like he should never have brought it out of the woods at all or at least out of reach of Major de Spain or McCaslin or someone who knew it and could have said, "Don't be afraid. He wont hurt you." He walked through the station, on the slick floor, his face moving as he worked the popcorn out of his teeth with his tongue, his legs sparddled and stiff in the hips as if he were walking on buttered glass, and that blue stubble on his face like the filings from a new gun-barrel. They passed the first saloon. Even through the closed doors the boy could seem to smell the sawdust and the reek of old drink. Boon began to cough. He coughed for something less than a minute. "Damn this cold," he said. "I'd sure like to know where I got it."

"Back there in the station," the boy said.

Boon had started to cough again. He stopped. He looked at the boy. "What?" he said.

"You never had it when we left camp nor on the train either." Boon looked at him, blinking. Then he stopped blinking. He didn't cough again. He said quietly:

'Lend me a dollar. Come on. You've got it. If you ever had one, you've still got it. I don't mean you are tight with you money because you aint. You just don't never seem to ever think of nothing you want. When I was sixteen a dollar bill melted off of me before I even had time to read the name of the bank that issued it." He said quietly: "let me have a dollar ,lkc."

"You promised Major. You promised McCaslin. Not till we get back to camp."

"All right," Boon said in that quiet and patient voice. "What can I do on just one dollar? You aint going to lend me another."

"You're damn right I aint," the boy said, his voice quiet too, cold with rage which was not at Boon, remembering: Boon snoring in a hard chair in the kitchen so he could watch the clock and wake him and McCaslin and drive them the seventeen miles in to Jefferson to catch the train to Memphis; the wild, never-bridled Texas paint pony which he had persuaded McCaslin to let him buy and which he and Boon had bought at auction for four dollars and seventy five cents and fetched home wired between two gentle old mares with pieces of barbed wire and which had never even seen shelled corn before and didn't even know what it was unless the grains were bugs maybe and at last (he was ten and Boon had been ten all his life) Boon said the pony was gentled and with a towsack over its head and four Negroes to hold it they backed it into an old two-wheeled cart and hooked up the gear and he and Boon got up and Boon said, "All right, boys. Let him go" and one of the Negroes—it was Tennie's Jim—snatched the towsack off and leaped for his life and they lost the first wheel against a post of the open gate only at that moment Boon caught him by the

scruff of the neck and flung him into the roadside ditch so he only saw the rest of it in fragments: the other wheels it slammed through the side gate and crossed the back yard and leaped up onto the gallery and scraps of the cart here and there along the road and Boon vanishing rapidly on his stomach in the leaping and spurting dust and still holding the reins until they broke too and two days later they finally caught the pony seven miles away still wearing the hames and the headstall of the bridle around its neck like a duchess with two necklaces at one time. He gave Boon the dollar.

"All right," Boon said. "Come on in out of the cold."

"I aint cold," he said.

"You can have some lemonade."

"I don't want any lemonade."

The door closed behind him. The sun was well up now. It was a brilliant day, though Ash had said it would rain before night. Already it was warmer: they could run tomorrow. He felt the old lift of the heart, as pristine as ever, as on the first day; he would never lose it, no matter how old in hunting and pursuit: the best, the best of all breathing, the humility and the pride. He must stop thinking about it. Already it seemed to him that he was running, back to the station to the tracks themselves: the first train going south; he must stop thinking about it. The street was busy. He watched the big Norman draft horses, the Percherons; the trim carriages from which the men in the fine overcoats and the ladies rosy in furs descended and entered the station. (They were still next door to it but one). Twenty years ago his father had ridden into Memphis as a member of Colonel Sartoris' horse in Forrest's command, up Main street and (the tale told) into the lobby of the Gayoso Hotel where the Yankee officers sat in the leather chairs spitting into the tall bright cuspidors and then out again, scot-free—

The door opened behind him. Boon was wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. "All right," he said. "Let's go tend to it and get the hell out of here."

They went and had the suitcase packed. He never knew where or when Boon got the other bottle. Doubtless Mr. Semmes gave it to him. When they reached Hoke's again at sundown, it was empty. They could get a return train to Hoke's in two hours; they went straight back to the station as Major de Spain and then McCaslin had told Boon to do and then ordered him to do and had sent the boy along to see that he did. Boon took the first drink from his bottle in the washroom. A man in a uniform cap came to tell him he couldn't drink there and looked at Boon's face once and said nothing. The next time he was pouring into his water glass beneath the edge of a table in the restaurant when the manager (she was a woman) did tell him he couldn't drink there and he went back to the washroom. He had been telling the Negro waiter and all the other people in the restaurant who couldn't help but hear him and who had never heard of Lion and didn't want to, about Lion and Old Ben. Then he happened to think of the zoo. He had found out that there was another train to Hoke's at three o'clock train until he came back from the washroom for the third time. Then they would take the first train back to camp, get Lion and come back to the zoo where, he said, the bears were fed on ice cream and lady-fingers and he would match Lion against them all.

So they missed the first train, the one they were supposed to take, but he got Boon onto the three o'clock train and they were all right again, with Boon not even going to the washroom now but drinking in the aisle and talking about Lion and the men he buttonholed no more daring to tell Boon he couldn't drink there than the man in the station had dared.

When they reached Hoke's at sundown, Boon was asleep. The boy waked him at last and got him and the suitcase off the train and he even persuaded him to eat some supper at the sawmill commissary. So he was all right when they got in the caboose of the log-train to go back into the woods; with the sun going down red and the sky already overcast and the ground would not freeze tonight. It was the boy who slept now, sitting behind the ruby stove while the springless caboose jumped and clattered and Boon and the brakeman and the conductor talked about Lion and Old Ben because they knew what Boon was talking about because this was home. "Overcast and already thawing," Boon said. "Lion will get him tomorrow."

It would have to be Lion, or somebody. It would not be Boon. He had never hit anything bigger than a squirrel that anybody ever knew except the Negro woman that day when he was shooting at the Negro man. He was a big Negro and not ten feet away but Boon shot five times with the pistol he had borrowed from Major de Spain's Negro coachman and the Negro he was shooting at outed with a dollar-and-a-half mail-order pistol and would have burned Boon down with it only it never went off, it just went snick-snicksnicksnicksnick five times and Boon still blasting away and he broke a plate-glass window that cost McCaslin forty-five dollars and hit a Negro woman who happened to be passing in the leg only Major de Spain paid for that, he and McCaslin cut cards, the plate-glass window against the Negro woman's leg. And the first day on stand this year, the first morning in camp, the buck ran right over Boon; he heard Boon's old pump gun go whow, whow, whow, whow, whow, and then his voice: "God damn, here he comes! Head him! Head him!" and when he got there the buck's tracks and the five exploded shells were not twenty paces apart.

There were five guests in camp that night, from Jefferson: Mr. Bayard Sartoris and his son and General Compson's son and two others. And the next morning he looked out the window, into the gray thin drizzle of daybreak which Ash had predicted, and there they were, standing and squatting beneath the thin rain, almost two dozen of them who had fed Old Ben corn and shoats and even calves for ten years, in their worn hats and hunting coats and overalls which any town Negro would have thrown away or burned and only the rubber boots strong and sound, and the worn and blueless guns and some even without guns. While they ate breakfast a dozen more arrived, mounted and on foot: loggers from the camp thirteen miles below and sawmill men from Hoke's and the only gun among them that one which the log-train conductor carried: so that when they went into the woods this morning Major de Spain led a party almost as strong, excepting that some of them were not armed, as some he had led in the last darkening days of '64 and '65. The little yard would not hold them. They overflowed it, into the lane where Major de Spain sat his mare while Ash in his dirty apron thrust the greasy cartridges into his carbine and passed it up to him and the great grave blue dog stood at his stirrup not as a dog stands but as a horse stands, blinking his sleepy topaz eyes at nothing, deaf even to the yelling of the hounds which Boon and Tennie's Jim held on leash.

"We'll put General Compson on Katie this morning," Major de Spain said. "He drew blood last year; if he'd had a mule then that would have stood, he would have—"

"No," General Compson said. "I'm too old to go helling through the woods on a mule or a horse or anything else any more. Besides, I had my chance last year and missed it. I'm going on a stand this morning. I'm going to let that boy ride Katie."

"No, wait," McCaslin said. "Ike's got the rest of his life to hunt bears in. Let somebody else—"

"No", General Compson said. "I want Ike to ride Katie. He's already a better woodsman than you or me either and in another ten years he'll be as good as Walter."

At first he couldn't believe it, not until Major de Spain spoke to him. Then he was up, on the one-eyed mule which would not spook at wild blood, looking down at the

dog motionless at Major de Spain's stirrup, looking in the gray streaming light bigger than a calf, bigger than he knew it actually was—the big head, the chest almost as big as his own, the blue hide beneath which the muscles flinched or quivered to no touch since the heart which drove blood to them loved no man and no thing, standing as a horse stands yet different from a horse which infers only weight and speed while Lion inferred not only courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to pursue and kill, but endurance, the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake and slay. Then the dog looked at him. It moved its head and looked at him across the trivial uproar of the hounds, out of the yellow eyes as depthless as Boon's as free as Boon's of meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness. They were just cold and sleepy. Then it blinked, and he knew it was not looking at him and never had been, without even bothering to turn its head away.

That morning he heard the first cry. Lion had already vanished while Sam and Tennie's Jim were putting saddles on the mule and horse which had drawn the wagon and he watched the hounds as they crossed and cast, snuffing and whimpering, until they too disappeared. Then he and Major de Spain and Sam and Tennie's Jim rode after them and heard the first cry out of the wet and thawing woods not two hundred yards ahead, high, with that abject, almost human quality he had come to know, and the other hounds joining in until the gloomed woods rang and clamored. They rode then. It seemed to him that he could actually see the big blue dog boring on, silent, and the bear too: the thick, locomotive-like shape which he had seen that day four years ago crossing the blow-down, crashing on ahead of the dogs faster than he had believed it could have moved, drawing away even from the running mules. He heard a shotgun, once. The woods had opened, they were going fast, the clamor faint and fading on ahead; they passed the man who had fired—a swamper, a pointing arm, a gaunt face, the small black orifice of his yelling studded with rotten teeth.

He heard the changed note in the hounds' uproar and two hundred yards ahead he saw them. The bear had turned. He saw Lion drive in without pausing and saw the bear strike him aside and lunge into the yelling hounds and kill one of them almost in its tracks and whirl and run again. Then they were in a streaming tide of dogs. He heard Major de Spain and Tennie's Jim shouting and the pistol sound of Tennie's Jim's leather thong as he tried to turn them. Then he and Sam Fathers were riding alone. One of the hounds had kept on with Lion though. He recognised its voice. It was the young hound which even a year ago had had no judgment and which, by the lights of the other hounds anyway, still had none. *Maybe that's what courage is*, he thought. "Right", Sam said behind him. "Right. We got to turn him from the river if we can."

Now they were in cane: a brake. He knew the path through it as well as Sam did. They came out of the undergrowth and struck the entrance almost exactly. It would traverse the brake and come out onto a high open ridge above the river. He heard the flat clap of Walter Ewell's rifle, then two more. "No," Sam said. "I can hear the hound. Go on."

They emerged from the narrow roofless tunnel of snapping and hissing cane, still galloping, onto the open ridge below which the thick yellow river, reflectionless in the gray and streaming light, seemed not to move. Now he could hear the hound too. It was not running. The cry was a high frantic yapping and Boon was running along the edge of the bluff, his old gun leaping and jouncing against his back on its sling made of a piece of cotton plowline. He whirled and ran up to them, wild-faced, and flung himself onto the mule behind the boy. "That damn-boat!" he cried. "It's on the other side! He went straight across! Lion was too close to him! That little hound too! Lion was so close I couldn't shoot! Go on!" he cried, beating his heels into the mule's flanks. "Go on!"

They plunged down the bank, slipping and sliding in the thawed earth, crashing through the willows and into the water. He felt no shock, no cold, he on one side of

the swimming mule, grasping the pommel with one hand and holding his gun above the water with the other, Boon opposite him. Sam was behind them somewhere, and then the river, the water about them, was full of dogs. They swam faster than the mules; they were scrabbling up the bank before the mules touched bottom. Major de Spain was whooping from the bank they had just left and, looking back, he was Tennie's jim and the horse as they went into the water.

Now the woods ahead of them and the rain-heavy air were one uproar. It rang and clamored; it echoed and broke against the bank behind them and reformed and clamored and rang until it seemed to the boy that all the hounds which had ever bayed game in this land were yelling down at him. He got his leg over the mule as it came up out of the water. Boon didn't try to mount again. He grasped one stirrup as they went up the bank and crashed through the undergrowth which fringed the bluff and saw the bear on its hind feet, its back against a tree while the bellowing hounds swirled around it and once more Lion drove in, leaping clear of the ground.

This time the bear didn't strike him down. I caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike, and they both went down. He was off the mule now. He drew back both hammers of the gun but he could see nothing but moiling spotted houndbodies until the bear surged up again. Boon was yelling something, he could not tell what; he could see Lion still clinging to the bear's throat and he saw the bear, half erect, strike one of the hounds with one paw and hurl it five or six feet and then, rising and rising as though it would never stop, stand erect again and begin to rake at Lion's belly with its forepaws. Then Boon was running. The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his hand and watched him leap among the hounds, hurdling them, kicking hem aside as he ran, and fling himself astride the bear as he had hurled himself onto the mule, his legs locked around the bear's belly, his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell.

It fell just once. For an instant they almost resembled a piece of statuary: the clinging dog, the bear, the man astride its back, working and probing the buried blade. Then they went down, pulled over backward by Boon's weight. Boon underneath. It was the bear's back which reappeared first but at once Boon was astride it again. He had never released the knife and again the boy saw the almost infinitesimal movement of his arm and shoulder as he probed and sought; then the bear surged erect, raising with it the man and the dog too, and turned and still carrying the man and the dog it took two or three steps toward the woods on its hind feet as a man would have walked and crashed down. It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once.

He and Tennie's Jim ran forward. Boon was kneeling at the bear's head. His left ear was shredded, his left coat sleeve was completely gone, his right boot had been ripped from knee to instep; the bright blood thinned in the thin rain down his leg and hand and arm and down the side of his face which was no longer wild but: was quite calm. Together they prized Lion's jaws from the bear's throat. "Easy, goddamn it." Boon said. "Cant you see his guts are all out of him?" He began to remove his coat. He spoke to Tennie's Jim in that calm voice; "Bring the boat up. It's about a hundred yards down the bank there. I saw it." Tennie's Jim rose and went away. Then, and he could not remember if it had been a call or an exclamation from Tennie's Jim or if he had glanced up by chance, he saw Tennie's Jim stooping and saw Sam: Fathers lying motionless on his face in the trampled mud.

The mule had not thrown him. He remembered that Sam was down too even before Boon began to run. There was no mark on him whatever and when he and Boon turned him over, his eyes were open and he said something in that tongue which he and Joe Baker had used to speak together. But he couldn't move. Tennie's Jim brought the skiff up; they could hear him shouting to Major de Spain across the river. Boon wrapped Lion in his hunting coat and carried him down to the skiff and they carried Sam down and returned and hitched the bear to the one-eyed mule's saddle-bow with Tennie's Jim's leash-thong and dragged him down to the skiff and got him

into it and left Tennie's Jim to swim the horse and the two mules back across. Major de Spain caught the bow of the skiff as Boon jumped out and past him before it touched the bank. He looked at Old Ben and said quietly: "Well." Then he walked into the water and leaned down and touched Sam and Sam looked up at him and said something in that old tongue he and Joe Baker spoke. "You don't know what happened?" Major de Spain said.

"No, sir," the boy said. "It wasn't the mule. It wasn't anything. He was off the mule when Boon ran in on the bear. Then we looked up and he was lying on the ground." Boon was shouting at Tennie's Jim, still in the middle of the river.

"Come on, goddamn it!" he said. "Bring me that mule!"

"What do you want with a mule?" Major de Spain said.

Boon didn't even look at him. "I'm going to Hoke's to get the doctor," he said in that calm voice, his face quite calm beneath the steady thinning of the bright blood.

"You need a doctor yourself," Major de Spain said. "Tennie's Jim—"

"Damn that," Boon said. He turned on Major de Spain. His face was still calm, only his voice was a pitch higher. "Cant you see his goddamn guts are all out of him?"

"Boon! Major de Spain said. They looked at one another. Boon was a good head taller than Major de Spain; even the boy was taller now than Major de Spain.

"I've got to get the doctor," Boon said. "His goddamn guts-----"

"All right," Major de Spain said. Tennie's Jim came up out of the water. The horse and the sound mule had already scented Old Ben; they surged and plunged all the way up to the top of the bluff, dragging Tennie's Jim with them, before he could stop them and tie them and come back. Major de Spain unlooped the leather thong of his compass from his buttonhole and gave it to Tennie's Jim. "Go straight to Hoke's," he said. "Bring Doctor Crawford back with you. Tell him there are two men to be looked at. Take my mare, Can you find the road from here?"

"Yes, sir," Tennie's Jim said.

"All right," Major de Spain said, "Go on." He turned to the boy. "Take the mules and the horse and go back and get the wagon. We'll go on down the river in the boat to Coon bridge. Meet us there. Can you find it again?"

"Yes, sir," the boy said.

"All right. Get started."

He went back to the wagon. He realised then how far they had run. It was already afternoon when he put the mules into the traces and tied the horse's lead-rope to the tail-gate. He reached Coon bridge at dusk. The skiff was already there. Before he could see it and almost before he could see the water he had to leap from the tilting wagon, still holding the reins, and work around to where he could grasp the bit and then the ear of the plunging sound mule and dig his heels and hold it until Boon came up the bank. The rope of the led horse had already snapped and it had already disappeared up the road toward camp. They turned the wagon around and took the mules out and he led the sound mule a hundred yards up the road and tied it. Boon had already brought Lion up to the wagon and Sam was sitting up in the skiff now and when they raised him he tried to walk, up the bank and to the wagon and he tried to climb into the wagon but Boon did not wait; he picked Sam up bodily and set him on the seat. Then they hitched Old Ben to the one-eyed mule's saddle again and dragged him up the bank and set two skid-roles into the open tail-gate and got him into the wagon and he went and got the sound mule and Boon fought it into the traces, striking it across its hard hollow-sounding face it into the traces, striking it across its hard hollow-sounding face until it came into position and stood trembling. Then the rain came down, as though it had off all day waiting on them.

They returned to camp through it, through the streaming and sightless dark, hearing long before they saw any light the horn and the spaced shots to guide them. When they came to Sam's dark little hut he tried to stand up. He spoke again in the tongue of the old father: then he said clearly: "Let me out. Let me out."

"He hasn't got any fire," Major said. "Go on!" he said sharply.

But Sam was struggling now, trying to stand up. "Let me out, master," he said. "Let me go home."

So he stopped the wagon and Boon got down and lifted Sam out. He did not wait to let Sam try to walk this time. He carried him into the hut and Major de Spain got light on a paper spill from the buried embers on the hearth and lit the lamp and Boon put Sam on his bunk and drew off his boots and Major de Spain covered him and the boy was not there, he was holding the mules, the sound one which was trying again to bolt since when the wagon stopped Old Ben's scent drifted forward again along the streaming blackness of air, but Sam's eyes were probably open again on that profound look which saw further than them or the hut, further than the death of a bear and the dying of a dog. Then they went on, toward the long wailing of the horn and the shots which seemed each to linger intact somewhere in the thick streaming air until the next spaced report joined and blended with it, to the lighted house, the bright streaming windows, the quiet faces as Boon entered, bloody and quite calm, carrying the bundled coat. He laid Lion, blood coat and all, on his stale sheetless pallet bed which not even Ash, as deft in the house as a woman, could ever make smooth.

The sawmill doctor from Hoke's was already there. Boon would not let the doctor touch him until he had seen to Lion. He wouldn't risk giving Lion chloroform. He put the entrails back and sewed him up without it while Major de Spain held his head and Boon his feet. But he never tried to move. He lay there, the yellow eyes open upon nothing while the quiet men in the new hunting clothes and in the old ones crowded into the little airless room rank with the smell of Boon's body and garments, and watched. Then the doctor cleaned and disinfected Boon's face and arm and leg and bandaged them and, the boy in front with a lantern and the doctor and McCaslin and Major de Spain and General Compson following, they went to Sam Father's hut. Tennie's Jim had built up the fire: he squatted before it, dozing. Sam had not moved since Boon had put him in the bunk and Major de Spain had covered him with the blankets, yet he opened his eyes and looked from one to another of the faces and when McCaslin touched his shoulder and said, "Sam. The doctor wants to look at you," he even drew his hands out of the blanket and began to fumble at his shirt buttons until McCaslin said, "Wait. We'll do it," They undressed him. He lay there—the copper-brown, almost hair-less body, the old man's body, the old man, the wild man not even one generation from the woods, childless, kinless, peopleless—motionless, his eyes open but no longer looking at any of them, while the doctor examined him and drew the blankets up and put the stethoscope back into his bag and snapped the bag and only the boy knew that Sam too was going to die.

"Exhaustion," the doctor said. "Shock maybe. A man his age swimming rivers in December. He'll be all right. Just make him stay in bed for a day or two. Will there be somebody here with him?"

"There will be somebody here," Major de Spain said.

They went back to the house, to the rank little room where Boon still sat on the pallet bed with Lion's head under his hand while the men, the ones who had hunted behind Lion and the ones who had never seen him before today, came quietly in to look at him and went away. Then it was dawn and they all went out into the yard to look at Old Ben, with his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his worn teeth and his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his skin which were the old bullets (there were fifty-two of them, buckshot rifle and ball) and the single almost invisible slit under his left shoulder where Boon's blade had finally found his life. Then Ash began to beat on the bottom of the dish-pan with a heavy spoon to call them to breakfast and it was the first time he could remember hearing no sound from the dogs under the kitchen while they were eating. It was as if the old bear, even dead there in the year, was a more potent terror still than they could face without Lion between them.

The rain had stopped during the night. By midmorning the thin sun appeared, rapidly burning away mist and cloud, warming the air and the earth; it would be one of those windless Mississippi December days which are a sort of Indian summer's Indian summer. They moved Lion out to the front gallery, into the sun. It was Boon's idea. "Goddamn it," he said, "he never did want to stay in the house until I made him. You know that." He took a crowbar and loosened the floor boards under his pallet bed so it could be raised, mattress and all, without disturbing Lion's position, and they carried him out to the gallery and put him down facing the woods. Then he and the doctor and McCaskin and Major de Spain went to Sam's hut. This time Sam didn't open his eyes and his breathing was so quiet, so peaceful that they could hardly see that he breathed. The doctor didn't even take out his stethoscope nor even touch him. "He's all right," the doctor said. "He didn't even catch cold. He just quit."

"Quit?" McCaslin said.

"Yes. Old people do that sometimes. Then they get a good night's sleep or maybe it's just a drink of whisky, and they change their minds."

They returned to the house. And then they began to arrive—the swamp-dwellers, the gaunt men who ran trap-lines and lived on quinine and coons and river water, the farmers of little corn-and cotton-patches along the bottom's edge whose fields and cribs and pig-pens the old bear had rifled, the loggers from the camp and the sawmill men from Hoke's and the town men from further away than that, whose hounds the old bear had slain and traps and dead-falls he had wrecked and whose lead he carried. They came up mounted and on foot and in wagons, to enter the yard and look at him and then go on to the front where Lion lay, filling the little yard and overflowing it until there were almost a hundred of them squatting and standing in the warm and drowsing sunlight, talking quietly of hunting, of the game and the dogs which ran it, of hounds and bear and deer and men of yesterday vanished from the earth, while from time to time the great blue dog would open his eyes, not as if he were listening to them but as though to look at the woods or to see that they were still there. He died at sundown.

Major de Spain broke camp that night. They carried Lion into the woods, or Boon carried him that is, wrapped in a quilt from his bed, just as he had refused to let anyone else touch Lion yesterday until the doctor got there; Boon carrying Lion, and the boy and General Compson and Walter and still almost fifty of them following with lanterns and lighted pine-knots—men from Hoke's and even further, who would have to ride out of the bottom in the dark, and swamper and trappers who would have to walk even, scattering toward the little hidden huts where they lived. And Boon would let nobody else dig the grave either and lay Lion in it and cover him and then General Compson stood at the head of it while the blaze and smoke of the pine-knots streamed away among the winter branches and spoke as he would have spoken over a man. Then they returned to camp. Major de Spain and McCaslin and Ash had rolled and tied all the bedding. The mules were hitched to the wagon and pointed out of the bottom and the wagon was already loaded and the stove in the kitchen was cold and the table was set with scraps of cold food and bread and only the coffee was hot when the boy ran into the kitchen where Major de Spain and McCaslin had already eaten. "What?" he cried. "What? I'm not going."

"Yes," McCaslin said. "Were going out tonight. Major wants to get on back home."

"No!" he said. "I'm going to stay."

"You've got to be back in school Monday. You've already missed a week more than I intended. It will take you from now until Monday to catch up. Sam's all right. You heard Doctor Crawford. I'm going to leave Boon and Tennie's Jim both to stay with him until he feels like getting up."

He was panting. The others had come in. He looked rapidly and almost frantically around at the other faces. Boon had a fresh bottle. He upended it and started the cork by striking the bottom of the bottle with the heel of his hand and drew the cork with his teeth and spat it out and drank. "You're damn right you're going back to school," Boon said. "Or I'll burn the tail off you myself if Cass don't, whether you are sixteen

or sixty. Where in hell do you expect to get without education? Where would Cass be? Where in hell would I be if I hadn't never went to school?"

He looked at McCaslin again. He could feel his breath coming shorter and shorter and shallower and shallower, as if there were not enough air in the kitchen for that many to breathe. "This is just Thursday. I'll come home Sunday night on one of the horses. I'll come home Sunday, then. I'll make up the time I lost studying Sunday night.

McCaslin," he said, without even despair.

"No, I tell you," McCaslin said. "Sit down here and eat your supper. We're going out to-----"

"Hold up, Cass," General Compson said. The boy did not know General Compson had moved until he put his hand on his shoulder. "What is it, bud?" he said.

"I've got to stay," he said. "I've got to."

"All right," General Compson said. "You can stay. If missing an extra week of school is going to throw you so far behind you'll have to sweat to find out what some hired pedagogue put between the covers of a book, you better quit altogether—And you shut up, Cass," he said, though McCaslin had not spoken. "You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear non of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark; maybe by God that's the why and the wherefore of farms and banks—I reckon you still aint going to tell what it is?"

But still he could not. "I've got to stay," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "There's plenty of grub left. And you'll come home Sunday, like you promised McCaslin? Not Sunday night: Sunday."

"Yes, sir," he said.

"All right," General Compson said. "Sit down and eat, boys," he said. "Let's get started. It's going to be cold before we get home."

They ate. The wagon was already loaded and ready to depart; all they had to do was to get into it. Boon would drive them out to the road, to the farmer's stable where the surrey had been left. He stood beside the wagon, in silhouette on the sky, turbaned like a Paythan and taller than any there, the bottle tilted. Then he flung the bottle from his lips without even lowering it, spinning and glinting in the faint starlight, empty. "Them that's going," he said, "get in the goddamn wagon. Them that aint, get out of the goddamn way." The others got in. Boon mounted to the seat beside General Compson and the wagon moved, on into the obscurity until the boy could no longer see it, even the moving density of it amid the greater night. But he could still hear it, for a long while: the slow, deliberate banging of the wooden frame as it lurched from rut to rut. And he could hear Boon even when he could no longer hear the wagon. He was singing, harsh, tuneless, loud.

That was Thursday. On Saturday morning Tennie's Jim left on McCaslin's woods-horse which had not been out of the bottom one time now in six years, and late that afternoon rode through the gate on the spent horse and on to the commissary where McCaslin was rationing the tenants and the wage-hands for the coming week, and this time McCaslin forestalled any necessity or risk of having to wait while Major de Spain's surrey was being horsed and harnessed. He took their own, and with Tennie's Jim already asleep in the back seat he drove in to Jefferson and waited while Major de Spain changed to boots and put on his overcoat, and they drove the thirty miles in the dark of that night and at daybreak on Sunday morning they swapped to the waiting mare and mule and as the sun rose they rode out of the jungle and onto the low ridge where Boon's spade-marks still showed and beyond the grave the platform of freshly cut saplings bound between four posts and the blanket-wrapped bundle upon the platform and Boon and the boy squatting between the platform and the grave until Boon, the bandage removed, ripped, from his head so that the long scoriations of Old Ben's claws resembled crusted tar in the sunlight, sprang up and threw down upon them with the old gun with which he had never been known to hit

anything although McCaslin was already off the mule, kicked both feet free of the irons and vaulted down before the mule had stopped, walking toward Boon.

"Stand back," Boon said. "By God, you wont touch him. Stand back, McCaslin." Still McCaslin came on, fast yet without haste.

"Cass!" Major de Spain said. Then he said "Boon! You, Boon!" and he was down too and the boy rose too, quickly, and still McCaslin came on not fast but steady and walked up to the grave and reached his hand steadily out, quickly up to the grave and reached his hand steadily out, quickly yet still not fast, and took hold the gun by the middle so that he and Boon faced one another across Lion's grave, both holding the gun, Boon's spent indomitable amazed and frantic face almost a head higher than McCaslin's beneath to heave as though there were not enough air in all the woods, in all the wilderness, for all of them, for him and anyone else, even for him alone.

"Turn it loose, Boon," McCaslin said.

"You damn little spindling—" Boon said. "Don't you know I can take it away from you? Don't you know I can tie it around your neck like a damn cravat?"

"Yes," McCaslin said, "Turn it loose, Boon."

"This is the way he wanted it. He told us. He told us exactly how to do it. And by God you aint going to move him. So we did it like he said, and I been sitting here ever since to keep the damn wildcats and varmints away form him and by God—" Then McCaslin had the gun, down-slanted while he pumped the slide, the five shells snicking out of it so fast that the last one was almost out before the first one touched the ground and McCaslin dropped the gun behind him without once having taken his eyes from Boon's.

"Did you kill him, Boon?" He said. Then Boon moved. He turned, he moved like he was still drunk and then for a moment blind too, one hand out as he blundered toward the big tree and seemed to stop walking before he reached the tree so that he plunged, fell toward it, flinging up both hands and catching himself against the tree and turning until his back was against it, backing with the tree's trunk his wild spent scoriated face and the tremendous heave and collapse of his chest, McCaslin following, facing him again, never once having moved his eyes from Boon's eyes. "Did you kill him, Boon?"

"No!" Boon said. "No!"

"Tell the truth," McCaslin said. "I would have done it if he had asked me to." Then the boy moved. He was between them, facing McCaslin; the water felt as if it had burst and sprung not from his eyes alone but from his whole face, like sweat.

"Leave him alone!" he cried. "Goddamn it! Leave him alone!"

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then he was twenty-one. He could say it, himself and his cousin juxtaposed not against the wilderness but against the tamed land which was to have been his heritage, the land which old Carothers McCaslin his grandfather had bought with white man's money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it, and tamed and ordered or believed he had tamed and ordered it for the reason that the human beings he held in bondage and in the power of life and death had removed the forest from it and in their sweat scratched the surface of it to a depth of perhaps fourteen inches in order to grow something out of it which had not been there before and which could be translated back into the money he who believed he had bought it had had to pay to get it and hold it and a reasonable profit too: and for which reason old Carothers McCaslin, knowing better, could raise his children, his descendants and heirs, to believe the land was his to hold and bequeath since the strong and ruthless man has a cynical foreknowledge of his own vanity and pride and strength and a contempt for all his get: just as, knowing better, Major de Spain and his fragment of that wilderness which was bigger and older than any recorded deed: just as, knowing better, old Thomas Sutpen, from whom Major de Spain had had his fragment for money: just as Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, from who Thomas Sutpen had had the fragment for money or rum or whatever it was, knew in his turn that not even a fragment of it had been his to relinquish or sell.

not against the 'wilderness but against' the land, not in pursuit and lust but in relinquishment, and in the commissary as it should have been, not the heart perhaps but certainly the solar-plexus of the repudiated and relinquished: the square, galleried, wooden building squatting like a portent above the fields whose laborers it still held in thrall '65 or no and placarded over with advertisements for snuff and cures for chills and Salves and potions manufactured and sold by white men to bleach the pigment and straighten the hair of Negroes that they might resemble the very race which for two hundred years had held them in bondage and from which for another hundred years not even a bloody civil war would have set them completely free himself and his cousin amid the old smells of cheese and salt meat and kerosene and harness, the ranked shelves of tobacco and overalls and bottled medicine and thread and plow-bolts, the barrels and kegs of flour and meal and molasses and nails, the wall pegs dependant with plowlines and plow-collars and hames and trace-chains, and the desk and the shelf above it on which rested the ledgers in which McCaslin recorded the slow outward trickle of food and supplies and equipment which returned each fall as cotton made and ginned and sold (two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on), and the older ledgers clumsy and archaic in size and shape, on the yellowed pages of which were recorded in the faded hand of his father Theophilus and his uncle Amodeus during the two decades before the Civil War, the manumission in title at least of Carothers McCaslin's slaves:

'Relinquish', McCaslin said. 'Relinquish. You, the direct male descendant of him who saw the opportunity and took it, bought the land, took the land, got the land no matter how, held it to bequeath, no matter how, out of the old grant, the first patent, when it was a wilderness of wild beasts and wilder men, and cleared it, translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride and to perpetuate but the only and last descendant in the male line and in the third generation, while I am not only four generations from old Carothers, I derived through a woman and the very McCaslin in my name is mine only by sufferance and courtesy and my grandmother's pride in what that man accomplished whose legacy and monument you think you can repudiate' and he

'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.'

'Bought nothing?' and he

'Bought nothing. Because He told in the Book how He created the earth, made it and looked at it and said it was all right, and then He made man. He made the earth first and peopled it with dumb creatures, and then He created man to be His overseer on the earth and to hold suzerainty over the earth and the animals on it in His name, not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood, and all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread. And I know what you are going to say,' he said, 'That nevertheless Grandfather-' and McCaslin

'__did own it. And not the first. Not alone and not the first since, as your Authority states, man was dispossessed of Eden. Nor yet the second and still not alone, on down through the tedious and shabby chronicle of His chosen sprung from Abraham, and of the sons of them who dispossessed Abraham, and of the five hundred years during which half the known world and all it contained was chattel and revokeless thrall to this commissary store and those ledgers yonder during your grandfather's life, and the next thousand years while men fought over the fragments of that collapse until at last even the fragments were exhausted and men snarled over the gnawed bones of the old world's worthless evening until an accidental egg discovered to them a new

hemisphere. So let me say it: That nevertheless and notwithstanding old Carothers did own it. Bought it, got it, no matter; kept it, held it, no matter, bequathed it: else why do you stand here relinquishing and repudiating? Held it, kept it for fifty year, until you could condoned-or did He? looked down and saw-or did He? Or at least did nothing: saw, and could not, or did not see; saw, and would not, or perhaps He would not see-perverse, impotent, or blind: which?' and he

'Dispossessed.' And McCaslin

'What?' and he

'Dispossessed. Not impotent: He didn't condone; not blind, because he watched it. And let me say it. Dispossessed of Eden. Dispossessed of Canaan, and those who dispossessed him dispossessed him dispossessed, and the five hundred years of absentee landlords in the Roman bagnios, and the thousand years of wild men from the northern woods who dispossessed them and devoured their ravished substance ravished in turn again and then snarled in what you call the old world's worthless twilight over the old world's gnawed bones, blasphemous in His name until He used a simple egg to discover to them a new world where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another. And Grandfather did own the land nevertheless and notwithstanding because He permitted it, not impotent and not condoning and not blind because He ordered and watched it. He saw the land already accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's father old Issetibbeha and old Issetibbeha's fathers too held it, already tainted even before any white man owned it by what Grandfather and his kind, his fathers, had brought into the new land which He had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance, on condition of pity and humility and sufferance and endurance, from that old world's corrupt and worthless twilight as though in the sailfuls of the old world's tainted wind which drove the ships_' and McCaslin

'Ah'.

'_ and no hope for the land anywhere so long as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's descendants held it in unbroken succession. Maybe He saw that only by voiding the land for a time of Ikkemotubbe's blood and substituting for it another blood, could He accomplish His purpose. Maybe He knew already what that other blood would be, maybe it was more than justice that only the white man's blood was available and capable to raise the white man's curse, more than vengeance when_' and McCaslin

'Ah.'

'_ when He used the blood which had brought in the evil to destroy the evil as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison. Maybe He chose Grandfather out of all of them He might have picked. Maybe He knew that Grandfather himself would not serve His purpose because Grandfather was born too soon too, but that Grandfather would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free_' and McCaslin

'The sons of Ham. You who quote the Book: the sons of Ham.' And he

'There are some things He said in the Book, and some things reported of Him that He did not say. And I know what you will say now: That if truth is one thing to me and another thing to you, how will we choose which is truth? You don't need to choose. The heart already knows. He didn't have His Book written to be read by what must elect and choose, but by the heart, not by the wise of the earth because maybe they don't need it or maybe the wise no longer have any heart, but by the doomed and lowly of the earth who have nothing else to read with but the heart. Because the men who wrote His Book for Him were writing about truth and there is only one truth and it covers all things that touch the heart.' and McCaslin

'So these men who transcribed His Book for Him were sometime liars.' And he

'Yes. Because they were human men. They were trying to write down the heart's truth out of the heart's driving complexity, for all the complex and troubled hearts which beat after them. What they were trying to tell, what He wanted said, was too simple. Those for whom they transcribed His words could not have believed them. It had to be expounded in the everyday terms which they were familiar with and could comprehend, not only those who listened but those who told it too, because if they

who were that near to Him as to have been elected from among all who breathed and spoke language to transcribe and relay His words, could comprehend truth only through the complexity of passion and lust and hate and fear which drives the heart, what distance back to truth must they traverse whom truth could only reach by word-of-mouth?' and McCaslin

'I might answer that, since you have taken to proving our points and disproving mine by the same text, I don't know. But I don't say that, because you have answered yourself: No time at all if, as you say, the heart knows truth, since although you admitted three generations from Old Carothers to you, there were not three. There were not even completely two. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy. And they not the first and not alone. A thousand other Bucks and Buddies in less than two generations and sometimes less than one in this land which so you claim God created and man himself cursed and tainted. Not to mention 1865.' And he

'Yes. More men than Father and Uncle Buddy,' not even glancing toward the shelf above the desk, nor did McCaslin. They did not need to. To him it was as though the ledgers in their scarred cracked leather bindings were being lifted down one by one in their fading sequence and spread open on the desk or perhaps upon some apocryphal Bench or even Altar or perhaps before the Throne Itself for a last persual and contemplation and refreshment of the Allknowledgeable before the yellowed pages and the brown thin ink in which was recorded the injustice and a little at least of its amelioration and restitution faded forever into the anonymous communal original dust

the yellowed pages scrawled in fading ink by the hand first of his grandfather and then of his father and uncle, bachelors up to the past fifty and then sixty, the one who ran the plantation and the farming of it and the other who did the housework and the cooking and continued to do it even after his twin married and the boy himself was born

the two brothers who as soon as their father was buried moved out of the tremendously-conceived, the almost barnlike edifice which he had not even completed, into a one-room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it, refusing to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle, and domiciled all the slaves in the big house some of the windows of which were still merely boarded up with odds and ends of plank or with the skins of bear and deer nailed over the empty frames: each sundown the brother who superintended the farming would parade the Negroes as a first sergeant dismisses a company, and herd them willynilly, man woman and child, without question protest or recourse, into the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo, as if even old Carothers McCaslin had paused aghast at the concrete indication of his own vanity's boundless conceiving: he would call his mental roll and heard them in and with a hand-wrought nail as long as a flenching-knife and suspended from a short deer-hide thong attached to the door-jamb for that purpose, he would nail to the door of that house which lacked half its windows and had no hinged back door at all so that presently and for fifty years afterward when the boy himself was big to hear and remember it, there was in the land a sort of folk-tale: of the countryside all night long full of skulking McCaslin slaves dodging the moonlight roads and the Patrol-riders to visit other plantations, and of the unspoken gentlemen's agreement between the two white men and the two dozen black ones that, after the white man had counted them and driven the home-made nail into the front door at sundown, neither of the white men would go around behind the house and look at the back door, provided that all the Negroes were behind the front one when the brother who drove it drew out the nail again at day-break

the twins who were identical even in their handwriting, unless you had specimens side by side to compare. and even when both hands appeared on the same page (as often happened, as if, long since past any oral intercourse, they had used the diurnally advancing pages to conduct the unavoidable business of the compulsion which had traversed all the waste wilderness of North Mississippi in 1880 and '40 and singled them out to drive) they both looked as though they had been written by the same perfectly normal ten-year-old boy, even to the spelling, except that the spelling did

not improve as one by one the slaves which Carothers McCaslin had inherited and purchased—Roscius and Phoebe and Thucydides and Eunice and their descendants, and Sam Fathers and his mother for both of whom he had swapped an underbred trotting gelding to old Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief from who he had likewise bought the land, and Tennie Beauchamp whom the twin Amodeus had won from a neighbour in a poker-game, and the anomaly calling itself Percival Brownlee which the twin Theophilus had purchased, neither he nor his brother ever knew why apparently, from Bedford Forrest while he was still only a slave-dealer and not yet a general (It was a single page, not long and covering less than a year, not seven months in fact, begun in the hand which the boy had learned to distinguish as that of his father:

Percavil Brownly 26yr Old. Cleark @ Bookepper. Bought from N.B.Forest at Cold Water 3 Mar 1856 \$265. dollars

And beneath that, in the same hand:

5 mar 1856 No bookkeeper any way Cant read. Can write his name but I already put that down My self says he can Plough but don't look like it to Me. Sent to Field to day Mar 5 1856

and the same hand:

6 Mar 1856 Cant plough either Says he aims to be a Precher so may be he can lead live stock to Crick to Drink

and this time it was the other, the hand which he now recognised as his uncle's when he could see them both on the same page:

Mar 23th 1856 Cant do that either Except one at a Time Get shut of him

Then the first again:

24 Mar 1856 Who in hell would buy him

then the second:

19th of Apr 1856 Nobody You put yourself out of Market at Cold Water two months ago I never said sell him Free him

The first:

22 Apr 1856 Ill get it out of him

the second:

Jun 13th 1856 How \$1 per 265\$ 265 yrs Wholl sign his Free paper

Then the first again:

1 Oct 1856 Mule josephine Broke Leg @ shot Wrong stall wrong niger wrong everything \$100 dollars

and the same:

2 Oct 1856 Freed Debit McCaslin @ McCaslin \$265. Dollars

then the second again:

Oct 3th Debit Theophilus McCaslin Niger 265\$ Mule 100\$ 365\$ He hasnt gone yet Father should be here

then the first:

3 Oct 1356 Son of a bitch wont leave What would father done the second:

the second:

29th of Oct 1856 Renamed him

the first:

31 Oct 1856 Renamed him what

the second:

Chrstms 1856 Spintrius

took substance and even a sort of shadowy life with their passions and complexities too as page followed page and year year; all there, not only the general and condoned injustice and its slow amortization but the specific tragedy which had not been condoned and could never be amortized, the new page and the new ledger, the hand which he could now recognise at first glance as his father's:

*Father dide Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Callina 1772
Missippuy 1837. Dide and burid 27 June 1837
Ruskus, rased by Grandfather in Callina Don't know how old.
Freed 27 June 1837 Don't want to leave. Dide and Burid 12 Jan
1841
Fibby Roskus Wife, bought by grandfather in Callina says Fifty
Freed 27 June 1837 Don't want to leave. Dide and burd 1 Aug
1849
Thucydus Roskus @ Fibby Son born in Callina 1779. Refused
10acre peace fathers Will 28 June 1837 Refused Cash offer \$200.
Dolars from A. @ T. McCaslin 28 Jun 1837 Wants to stay and
Work it out*

And beneath this and covering the next five pages and almost that many years, the slow, day-by-day accrument of the wages allowed him and the food and clothing-the molasses and meat and meal, the cheap durable shirts and jeans and shoes and now and then a coat against rain and cold - charged against the slowly yet steadily mounting sum of balance (and it would seem to the boy that he could actually see the black man, the slave whom which the black man could never be free so long as memory lasted, entering the commissary, asking permission perhaps of the white man's son to see the ledger-page which he could not even read, not even asking for the white man's word, which he would have had to accept for the reason that there was absolutely no way under the sun for him to test it, as to how the account stood, how much longer before he could go and never return, even if only as far as Jefferson seventeen miles away) on to the double pen-stroke closing the final entry:

*3 Nov 1841 By Cash to Thucydus McCaslin \$200. dolars Set Up
blacksmith in J. Dec 1841 Dide and Burid in J. 17 feb 1854
Eunice Bought by Father in New Orleans 1807 \$650. dolars.
Marrid to Thucydus 1809 Drownd in Crick Cristmas Day 1832*

And then the other hand appeared, the first time he had seen it in the ledger to distinguish it as his uncle's, the cook and housekeeper whom even McCaslin, who had known him and the boy's father for sixteen years before the boy was born, remembered as sitting all day long in the rocking chair from which he cooked the food, before the kitchen fire on which he cooked it:

June 21th 1833 Drownd herself

And the first:

*23 Jun 1833 Who in hell heard of a niger drowning him
self*

and the second, unhurried, with a complete finality; the two identical entries might have been made with a rubber stamp save of the date:

Aug 13th 1833 Drownd herself

And he thought *But why? But why?* He was sixteen then. It was neither the first time he had been alone in the commissary nor the first time he had taken down the old ledgers familiar on their shelf above the desk ever since he could remember. As a child and even after nine and ten and eleven, when he had learned to read, he would look up at the scarred and cracked backs and ends but with no particular desire to open them, and though he intended to examine them someday because he realised that they probably contained a chronological and much more comprehensive though doubtless tedious record than he would never get from any other source, not alone of his own flesh and blood but of all his people, not only the whites but the black one too, who were as much a part of his ancestry as his white progenitors, and of the land which they had all held and used in common without regard to color or titular ownership, it would only be on some idle day when he was old and perhaps even bored a little since what the old books contained would be after all these years fixed immutably, finished, unalterable, harmless. Then he was sixteen. He knew what he was going to find before he found it. He got the commissary key from McCaslin's room after midnight while McCaslin was asleep and with the commissary door shut and locked behind him and the forgotten lantern stinking anew the rank dead icy air, he leaned above the yellowed page and thought not *Why drowned herself*, but thinking what he believed his father had thought when he found his brother's first comment: *Why did Uncle Buddy think she had drowned herself?* finding, beginning to find on the next succeeding page what he knew he would find, only this was still not it because he already knew this:

*Tomasina called Tomy Daughter of Thucydus @ Eunice Born
1810 dide in Child bed June 1883 and Burd. Yr stars fell*

nor the next:

*Turl Son of Thucydus @ Eunice Tomy born Jun 1883 yr stars
Fell Fathers will*

And nothing more, no tedious recording filling this page of wages day by day and food and clothing charged against them, no entry of his death and burial because he had outlived his white half-brothers and the books which McCaslin kept did not include obituaries: just *Fathers will* and he had seen that too: old Carothers' bold cramped hand far less legible than his sons' even and not much better in spelling, who while capitalising almost every noun and verb, made no effort to punctuate or construct whatever, just as he made no effort either to explain or obfuscate the thousand-dollar legacy to the son of an unmarried slave-girl, to be paid only at the child's coming-of-age, bearing the consequence of the act of which there was still no definite incontrovertible proof that he acknowledged, not out of his own substance but penalising his sons with it, charging them a cash forfeit on the accident of their own paternity; not even a bribe for silence toward his own fame since his fame would suffer only after he was no longer present to defend it, flinging almost contemptuously, as he might a cast-off hat or pair of shoes, the thousand dollars which could have had no more reality to him under those conditions than it would

have to the Negro, the slave who would not even see it until he came of age, twenty-one years too late to begin to learn what money was. *So I reckon that was cheaper than saying My son to a nigger he thought. Even if My son wasn't but just two words. But there must have been love he thought. Some sort of love. Even what he would have called love: not just an afternoon's or a night's spitton.* There was the old man, within five years of his life's end, long a widower and, since his sons were not only bachelors but were approaching middle age, lonely in the house and doubtless even bored since his plantation was established now and functioning and there was enough-money now, too much of it probably for a man whose vices even apparently remained below his means: there was the girl, husbandless and young, only twenty-three when the child was born: perhaps he had sent for her at first out of loneliness, to have a young voice and movement in the house, summoned her, bade her mother send her each morning to sweep the floors and make the beds and the mother acquiescing since that was probably already understood, already planned: the only child of a couple who were not field hands and who held themselves something above the other slaves not alone for that reason but because the husband and his father, and the white man himself had travelled three hundred miles and better to New Orleans in a day when men travelled by horseback or steamboat, and bought the girl's mother as a wife for

and that was all. The old frail pages seemed to turn of their own accord even while he thought *His own daughter His own daughter. No No Not even him back to that one* where the white man (not even a widower then) who never went anywhere any more than his sons in their time ever did and who did not need another slave, had gone all the way to the New Orleans and bought one. And Tomey's Terrel was still alive when the boy was ten years old and he knew from his own observation and memory that there had already been some white in Tomey's Terrel's blood before his father gave him the rest of it; and looking down at the yellowed page spread beneath the yellow glow of the lantern smoking and stinking in that rank chill midnight room fifty years later, he seemed to see her actually walking into the icy creek on that Christman day six months before her daughter's and her lover's (Her first lover's he thought, Her first) child was born, solitary, inflexible, griefless, ceremonial, in formal and succinct repudiation of grief and despair who had already had to repudiate belief and hope

that was all. He would never need look at the ledgers again nor did he; the yellowed pages in their fading and implacable succession were as much a part of his consciousness and would remain so forever, as the fact of his own nativity:

Tennie Beauchamp 21yrs Won by Amodeus McCaslin from
Hubert Beauchamp Esqre Possible Strait against three Treys in
Sigt Not called 1851 Marrid to Tomys Turl 1859

and no date of freedom because her freedom, as well as that of her first surviving child, derived not from Buck and Buddy McCaslin in the commissary but from a stranger in Washington and no date of death and burial, not only because McCaslin kept no obituaries in his books, but because in this year 1883 she was still alive and would remain so to see a grandson by her last surviving child:

*Amodeus McCaslin Beauchamp Son of tomys Turl @ Tennie
Beauchamp 1859 dide 1859*

Then his uncle's entire, because his father was now a member of the cavalry command of that man whose name as slave-dealer he could not even spell: and not even a page and not even a full line:

Dauter Tomes Turl and tenny 1862

and not even a line and not even a sex and no cause given though the boy could guess it because McCaslin was thirteen then and he remembered how there was not always enough to eat in more places than Vicksburg:

Child of tomes Turl and Tenny 1863

And the same hand again and this one lived, as though Tennie's perseverance and the fading and diluted ghost of old Carothers' ruthlessness had at last conquered even starvation: and clearer, fuller, more carefully written and spelled than the boy had yet seen it, as if the old man, who should have been a woman to begin with, trying to run what was left of the plantation in his brother's absence in the intervals of cooking and caring for himself and the fourteen-year-old orphan, had taken as an omen for renewed hope the fact that this nameless inheritor of slaves was at least remaining alive long enough to receive a name:

*James Thucydus Beauchamp Son of Tomes Turl and Tenny
Beauchamp Born 29th december 1864 and both Well Wanted
To call him Theophilus but Tride Amodeus McCaslin and Callina
McCaslin and both dide so Disswaded Them Born at
Two clock A.m, both Well*

But no more, nothing; it would be another two years yet before the boy, almost a man now, would return from the abortive trip into Tennessee with the still-intact third of old Carothers' legacy to his Negro son and his descendants, which as the three surviving children established at last one by one their apparent intention of surviving, their white half-uncles had increased to a thousand dollars each, conditions permitting, as they came of age, and completed the page himself as far as it would even be completed when that day was long passed beyond which a man born in 1864 (or 1867 either, when he himself saw light) could have expected or himself hoped or even wanted to be still alive; his own hand now, queerly enough resembling neither his father's nor his uncle's nor even McCaslin's, but like that of his grandfather's save for the spelling:

*Vanished sometime on night of his twenty-first birthday Dec
29 1885. Traced by Isaac McCaslin to Jackson Tenn. And there
lost. His third of legacy \$1000.00 returned to McCaslin Edmonds
Trustee this day Jan 12, 1886*

But not yet: that would be two years yet, and now his father's again, whose old commander was now quit of soldiering and slave-trading both; once more in the ledger and then not again and more illegible than ever, almost indecipherable at all from the rheumatism which now crippled him and almost completely innocent now even of any sort of spelling as well as punctuation, as if the four years during which he had followed the sword of the only man ever breathing who ever sold him a Negro, let alone beat him in a trade, had convinced him not only of the vanity of faith and hope but of orthography too:

Miss sophonsiba b dtr t t @ 1869

But not of belief and will because it was there, written, as McCaslin had told him, with the left hand, but there in the ledger one time more and then not again, for the boy himself was a year old, and when Lucas was born-six years later, his father and uncle had been dead inside the same twelve-months almost five years; his own hand again, who was there and saw it, 1886, she was just seventeen, two years younger than himself, and he was in the commissary when McCaslin entered out of the first of dusk and said, 'He wants to marry Fonsiba,' like that: and he looked past McCaslin and saw the man, the stranger, taller than McCaslin and wearing better clothes than McCaslin and most of the other white men the boy knew habitually wore, who entered the room like a white man and stood in it like a white man, as though he had let McCaslin precede him into it not because McCaslin's skin was white but simply because McCaslin lived there and knew the way, and who talked like a white man too, looking at him past McCaslin's shoulder rapidly and keenly once and then no more, without further interest, as a mature and contained white man not impatient but just pressed for time might have looked. 'Marry Fonsiba?' he cried. 'Marry Fonsiba?'

and then no more either, just watching and listening while McCaslin and the Negro talked:

'To live in Arkansas, I believe you said'.

'Yes. I have property there, A farm.'

'Property? A farm? You own it?'

'Yes'.

'You dont say Sir, do you?'

'To my elders, yes'

'I see. You are from the North.'

'Yes. Since a Child.'

'Then your father was a slave.'

'Yes. Once.'

'Then how do you own a farm in Arkansas?'

'I have a grant. It was my father's. From the United States. For military service

'I see,' McCaslin said. 'The Yankee army.'

The United States army,' the stranger said; and then himself again, crying it at McCaslin's back:

'Call aunt Tennie! I'll go get her! I'll-' But McCaslin was not even including him; the stranger did not even glance back toward his voice, the two of them speaking to one another again as if he were not even there:

'Since you seem to have it all settled,' McCaslin said, 'why have you bothered to consult my authority at all?'

'I don't,' the stranger said. 'I acknowledge your authority only so far as you admit your responsibility toward her as a female member of the family of which you are the head. I don't ask your permission. I—'

'That will do!' McCaslin said. But the stranger did not falter. It was neither as if he were ignoring McCaslin nor as if he had failed to hear him. It was as though he were making, not at all an excuse and not exactly a justification, but simply a statement which the situation absolutely required and demanded should be made in McCaslin's hearing whether McCaslin listened to it or not. It was as if he were talking to himself, for himself to hear the words spoken aloud. They faced one another, not close yet at slightly less than foils' distance, erect, their voices not raised, not impactive, just succinct:

'—I inform you, notify you in advance as chief of her family. No man of honor could do less. Besides, you have, in your way, according to your lights and upbringing—' 'That's enough, I said,' McCaslin said. 'Be off this place by full dark. Go'. But for another moment the other did not move, contemplating McCaslin with that detached and heatless look, as if he were watching reflected in McCaslin's pupils the tiny image of the figure he was sustaining.

'Yes', he said 'After all, this is your house. And in your fashion you have... But no matter. You are right. This is enough.' He turned back toward the door; he paused again but only for a second, already moving while he spoke: 'Be easy. I will be good to her'. Then he was gone.

'But how did she ever know him?' the buy cried. 'I never even heard of him before! And Fonsiba, that's never been off this place except to go to church since she was born—'

'Ha', McCaslin said. 'Even their parents dont know until too late how seventeen-year-old girls ever met the men who marry them too, if they are lucky'. And the next morning they were both gone, Fonsiba too. McCaslin never saw her again, nor did he, because the woman he found at last five months later was no one he had ever known. He carried a third of the three-thousand-dollar fund in gold in a money-belt, as when he had vainly traced Tennie's Jim into Tennessee a year ago. They—the man—had left an address of some sort with Tennie, and three months later a letter came, written by the man although McCaslin's wife Alice had taught Fonsiba to read and write too a little. But it bore a different postmark from the address the man had left with Tennie, and he travelled by rail as far as he could and then by contracted stage and

then by a hired livery rig and then by rail again for a distance: an experienced traveller by now and an experienced bloodhound too and a successful one this time because he would have to be; as the slow interminable empty muddy December miles crawled and crawled and night followed night in hotels, in roadside taverns of rough logs and containing little else but a bar, and in the cabins of strangers and the hay of lonely barns, in none of which he dared undress because of his secret golden girdle like that of a disguised one of the Magi travelling incognito and not even hope to draw him but only determination and desperation, he would tell himself: *I will have to find her. I will have to. We have already lost one of them. I will have to find her this time.* He did. Hunched in the slow and icy rain, on a spent hired horse splashed to the chest and higher, he saw it—a single log edifice with a clay chimney which seemed in process of being flattened by the rain to a nameless and valueless rubble of dissolution in that roadless and even pathless waste of unfenced fallow and wilderness jungle—no barn, no stable, not so much as a hen-coop: just a log cabin built by hand and no clever hand either, a meagre pile of clumsily-cut fire-wood sufficient for about one day and not even a gaunt hound to come bellowing out from under the house when he rode up—a farm only in embryo, perhaps a good farm, maybe even a plantation someday, but not now, not for years yet and only then with labor, hard and enduring and unflagging work and sacrifice; he shoved open the crazy kitchen door in its awry frame and entered an icy gloom where not even a fire for cooking burned and after another moment saw, crouched into the wall's angle behind a crude table, the coffee-colored face which he had known all his life but knew no more, the body which had been born within a hundred yards of the room that he was born in and in which some of his own blood ran but which was now completely inheritor of generation after generation to whom an unannounced white man on a horse was a white man's hired Patroller wearing a pistol sometimes and a blacksnake whip always; he entered the next room, the only other room the cabin owned, and found, sitting there in the only chair in the house, before that miserable fire for which there was not wood sufficient to last twenty-four hours, in the same ministerial clothing in which he had entered the commissary five months ago and a pair of gold-framed spectacles which, when he looked up and then rose to his feet, the boy saw did not even contain lenses, reading a book in the midst of that desolation, that muddy waste fenceless and even pathless and without even a walled shed for stock to stand beneath: and over all, permeant, clinging to the man's very clothing and exuding from his skin itself, that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpet-bagger followers of victorious armies. 'Don't you see?' he cried, 'Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us who derive from it, whom it ever suckled, white and black both, lie under the curse? Granted that my people brought the curse onto the land: maybe for that reason their descendants alone can—not resist it, not combat it—maybe just endure and outlast it until the curse is lifted. Then your peoples' turn will come because we have forfeited ours. But not now, Not yet. Don't you see?'

The other stood now, the unfrayed garments still ministerial even if not quite so fine, the book closed upon one finger to keep the place, the lensless spectacles held like a music master's wand in the other workless hand while the owner of it spoke his measured and sonorous imbecility of the boundless folly and the baseless hope: 'You're wrong. The curse you whites brought into this land has been lifted. It has been voided and discharged. We are seeing a new ear, an era dedicated, as our founders intended it, to freedom, liberty and equality for all, to which this country will be the new Canaan—' 'Freedom from what? From work? Canaan?' He jerked his arm, comprehensive, almost violent: whereupon it all seemed to stand there about them, intact and complete and visible in the drafty, damp, heatless, Negro-stale, Negro-rank sorry room—the empty fields without plow or seed to work them, fenceless against the stock which did not exist within or without the walled stable which likewise was not there. 'What corner of Canaan is this?'

'You are seeing it at a bad time. This is winter. No man farms this time of year.'

'I see. And of course her need for food and clothing will stand still while the land lies fallow.'

'I have a pension,' the other said. He said it as a man might say *I have grace or I own a gold mine*. 'I have my father's pension too. It will arrive on the first of the month. What day is this?'

'The eleventh,' he said. 'Twenty days more. And until then?'

'I have a few groceries in the house from my credit account with the merchant in Midnight who banks my pension check for me. I have executed to him a power of attorney to handle it for me as a matter of mutual—'

'I see. And if the groceries don't last the twenty days?'

'I still have one more hog.'

'Where?'

'Outside,' the other said. 'It is customary in this country to allow stock to range free during the winter for food. It comes up from time to time. But no matter if it doesn't; I can probably trace its footprints when the need—'

'Yes!' he cried. 'Because no matter: you still have the pension check. And the man in Midnight will cash it and pay himself out of it for what you have already eaten and if there is any left over, it is yours. And the hog will be eaten by then or you still can't catch it, and then what will you do?'

'It will be almost spring then, the other said. 'I am planning in the spring—'

'It will be January, he said. 'And then February. And then more than half of March—' and when he stopped again in the kitchen she had not moved, she did not even seem to breathe or to be alive except her eyes watching him; when he took a step toward her it was still not movement because she could have retreated no further: only the tremendous fathomless ink-colored eyes in the narrow, thin, too thin coffee-colored face watching him without alarm, without recognition, without hope.

'Fonsiba', he said. 'Fonsiba. Are you all right?'

'I'm free,' she said. Midnight was a tavern, a livery stable, a big store (that would be where the pension check banked itself as a matter of mutual elimination of bother and fret, he thought) and a little one, a saloon and a blacksmith shop. But there was a bank there too. The president (the owner, for all practical purposes) of it was a translated Mississippian who had been one of the Forrest's men too: and his body lightened of the golden belt for the first time since he left home eight days ago. with pencil and paper he multiplied three dollars by twelve months and divided it into one thousand dollars; it would stretch that way over almost twenty-eight years and for twenty-eight years at least she would not starve, the banker promising to send the three dollars himself by a trusty messenger on the fifteenth of each month and put it into her actual hand, and he returned home and that was all because in 1874 his father and his uncle were both dead and the old ledgers never again came down from the shelf above the desk to which his father had returned them for the last time that day in 1869. But he could have completed it:

Lucas Quintus Carothers McCaslin Beauchamp. Last surviving son and child of Tomey's Terrel and Tennie Beauchamp March 17, 1874

except that there was no need: not *Lucius Quintus @c @c @c*, but *Lucas Quintus*, not refusing to be called Lucius, because he simply eliminated that word from the name; not denying, declining the name itself, because he used three quarters of it; but simply taking the name and changing, altering it, making it no longer the white man's but his own, by himself composed, himself selfprogenitive and nominate, by himself ancestored, as, for all the old ledgers recorded to the contrary, old Carothers himself was

and that was all: 1874 the boy; 1888 the man, repudiated denied and free; 1895 and husband but no father, unwidowed but without a wife, and found long since that no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were; married then and living in Jefferson in the little new jerrybuilt bungalow which his wife's father had given them: and one morning Lucas stood suddenly in the doorway of the room where he was reading the Memphis paper and he looked at the paper's dateline and thought *It's*

his birthday. He's twenty-one today and Lucas said: 'Whar's the rest of that money old Carothers left? And McCaslin

'More men than that one Buck and Buddy to fumble-heed that truth so mazed for them that spoke it and so confused for them that heard yet still there was 1865:' and he

'But not enough. Not enough of even Father and Uncle Buddy to fumble-heed in even three generations not even three generations fathered by Grandfather not even if there had been nowhere beneath His sight any but Grandfather and so He would not even have needed to elect and choose. But he tried and I know what you will say. That having Himself created them He could have known no more of hope than He could have pride and grief but He didn't hope He just waited because He had made them: not just because He had set them alive and in motion but because He had already worried with them so long: because He had seen how in individual cases they were capable of anything any height or depth remembered in mazed incomprehension out of heaven where hell was created too and so He must admit them or else admit His equal somewhere and so be no longer God and therefore must accept responsibility for what He himself had done in order to live with Himself in His lonely and paramount heaven. And He probably knew it was vain but He had created them and knew them capable of all things because He had shaped them out of the primal Absolute which contained all and had watched them since in their individual exaltation and baseness and they themselves not knowing why nor how nor even when: until at last He saw that they were all Grandfather all of them and that even from them the elected and chosen the best the very best He could expect (not hope mind: not hope) would be Bucks and Buddies and not even enough of them and in the third generation not even Bucks and Buddies but—'and McCaslin

'Ah:' and he

'Yes. If He could see Father and Uncle Buddy in Grandfather He must have seen me too. —an Isaac into a later life than Abraham's and repudiating immolation: fatherless and therefore safe declining the altar because maybe this time the exasperated Hand might not supply the kid-' and McCaslin

'Escape:' and he

'All right. Escape—Until one day He said what you told Fonsiba's husband that afternoon here in this room: *This will do. This is enough*: not in exasperation or rage or even just sick to death as you were sick that day: just *This is enough* and looked about for one last time. for one time more since He had created them. upon this land this South for which He had done so much with woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild summers for men and animals and saw no hope anywhere and looked beyond it where hope should have been. where to East North and West lay illimitable that whole hopeful continent dedicated as a refuge and sanctuary of liberty and freedom from what you called the old world's worthless evening and saw the rich descendants of slavers, females of both sexes, to whom the black they shrieked of was another specimen another example like the Brazilian macaw brought home in a cage by a traveller. passing resolutions about horror and outrage in warm and air-proof halls: and the thundering cannonade of politicians earning votes and the medicine-shows of pulpiteers earning Chautauqua fees. to whom the outrage and the injustice were as much abstractions as Tariff or Silver or Immortality and who employed the very shackles of its servitude and the sorry rags of its regalia as they did the other beer and banners and mottoes redfire and brimstone and sleight-of-hand and musical handsaws: and the whirling wheels which manufactured for a profit the pristine replacements of the shackles and shoddy garments as they wore out and spun the cotton and made the gins which ginned it and the cars and ships which hauled it, and the commissions for selling it: and He could have repudiated them since they were his creation now and forever more throughout all their generations until not only that old world from which He had rescued them but this new one too which He had revealed and led them to as a sanctuary and refuge were become the same worthless tideless rock cooling in the last crimson evening except that out of all that empty sound and bootless fury one silence. among that loud and moiling all of them just one simple horror and outrage and was crude enough to

act upon that, illiterate and had no words for talking or perhaps was just busy and had no time to, one out of them all who did not bother Him with cajolery and adjuration then pleading then threat and had not even bothered to inform Him in advance what he was about so that a lesser than he might have even missed the simple act of lifting the long ancestral musket down from the deerhorns above the door, whereupon He said *My name is Brown too* and the other *So is mine* and He *Then mine or yours cant be because I am against it* and the other, *So am I* and He triumphantly *Then where are you going with that gun?* and the other told him in one sentence one word and He: amazed: Who knew neither hope nor pride nor grief *But your Association, your Committee, your officers. Where are your Minutes, your Motions, your Parliamentary Procedures?* And the other *I aint against them. They are all right I reckon for them that have the time. I am just against the weak because they are niggers being held in bondage by the strong just because they are white.* So He turned once more to this land which He still intended to save because He had so much for it—and McCaslin

'What?' and he

—to these people He was still committed to because they were his creations—' and McCaslin

'Turned back to us? His face to us?' and he

'—whose wives and daughters at least made soups and jellies for them when they were sick and carried the trays through the mud and the winter too into the stinking cabins and sat in the stinking cabins and kept fires going until crises came and passed but that was not enough: and when they were very sick had them carried into the big house itself into the company room itself maybe and nursed them there which the white man would have done too for any other of his cattle that was sick but at least the man who hired one from a livery wouldn't have and still that was not enough: so that He said and not in grief than either Who had made them and so could know no more of grief than He could of pride or hope: *Apparently they can learn nothing save through suffering, remember nothing save when underlined in blood—*' and McCaslin 'Ashby on an afternoon's ride, to call on some remote maiden cousins of his mother or maybe just acquaintances of hers, comes by chance upon a minor engagement of outposts and dismounts and with his crimson-lined cloak for target leads a handful of troops he never saw before against an entrenched position of backwoods-trained riflemen. Lee's battle-order, wrapped maybe about a handful of cigars and doubtless thrown away when the last cigar was smoked, found by a Yankee Intelligence officer on the floor of a Saloon behind the Yankee lines after Lee had already divided his forces before Sharpsburg. Jackson on the Plank Road, already rolled up the flank which Hooker believed could not be turned and, waiting only for night to pass to continue the brutal and incessant slogging which would fling that whole wing back into Hooker's lap where he sat on a front gallery in Chancellorsville drinking rum toddies and telegraphing Lincoln that he had defeated Lee, is shot from among a whole covey of minor officers and in the blind night by one of his own patrols, leaving as next by seniority Stuart that gallant man born apparently already horsed and sabred and already knowing all there was to know about war except the slogging and brutal stupidity of it: and that same Stuart off raiding Pennsylvania hen-roosts when Lee should have known of all of Meade just where Hancock was on Cemetery Ridge: and Longstreet too at Gettysburg and that Longstreet shot out of Saddle by his own men in the dark by mistake just as Jackson was. His face to us? His face to us?' and he

'How else have made them fight? Who else but Jacksons and Stuarts and Ashbys and Morgans and Forrests? —the farmers of the central and middle-west, holding land by the acre instead of the tens or maybe even the hundreds, farming it themselves and to no single crop of cotton or tobacco or cane, owning no slaves and needing and wanting none and already looking toward the Pacific coast, not always as long as two generations there and having stopped where they did stop only through the fortuitous mischance that an ox died or a wagon-axle broke. And the New England mechanics who didn't even own land and measured all things by the weight of water and the cost of turning wheels and the narrow fringe of traders and ship-owners still looking backward across the Atlantic and attached to the continent only by their counting-

houses. And those who should have had the alertness to see: the wildcat manipulators of mythical wilderness townsites; and the astuteness to rationalise: the bankers who held the mortgages on the land which the first were only waiting to abandon and on the railroads and steamboats to carry them still further west, and on the factories and the wheels and the rented tenements those who ran them lived in; and leisure and scope to comprehend and fear in time and even anticipate: the Boston-bred (even when not born in Boston) spinster descendants of long lines of similarly-bred and likewise spinster aunts and uncles whose hands knew no callus except that of the indicting pen, to whom the wilderness itself began at the top of tide and who looked, if at anything other than Beacon Hill, only toward heaven-not to mention all the loud rabble of the camp-followers of pioneers: the bellowing politicians, the mellifluous choiring of self-styled men of God, the—and McCaslin

'Here, here. Wait a minute.' and he

'Let me talk now. I'm trying to explain to the head of my family something which I have got to do which I don't quite understand myself, not in justification of it but to explain it if I can. I could say I don't know why I must do it but that I do know I have got to because I have got myself to have to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in. But you are the head of my family. More, I knew a long time ago that I would never have to miss my father, even if you are just finding out that you have missed your son. —the drawers of bills and the shavers of notes and the schoolmasters and the self-ordained to teach and lead and all that horde of the semi-literate with a white shirt but no change for it, with one eye on themselves and watching each other with the other one. Who else could have made them fight: could have struck them so aghast with fear and dread as to turn shoulder to shoulder and face one way and even stop talking for a while and even after two years of it keep them still so wrung with terror that some among them would seriously propose moving their very capital into a foreign country lest it be ravaged and pillaged by a people whose entire white male population would have little more than filled any one of their larger cities: except Jackson in the Valley and three separate armies trying to catch him and none of them ever knowing whether they were just retreating from a battle or just running into one and Stuart riding his whole command entirely around the biggest single armed force this continent ever saw in order to see what it looked like from behind and Morgan leading a cavalry charge against a stranded man-of-war. Who else could have declared a war against a power with ten times the area and a hundred times the men and a thousand times the resources, except men who could believe that all necessary to conduct a successful war was not acumen nor shrewdness nor politics nor diplomacy nor money nor even integrity and simple arithmetic but just love of land and courage—'

'And an unblemished and gallant ancestry and the ability to ride a horse,' McCaslin said. 'Don't leave that out.' It was evening now, the tranquil sunset of October mazy with windless woodsmoke. The cotton was long since picked and ginned, and all day now the wagons loaded with gathered corn moved between field and crib, processional across the enduring land. 'Well, maybe that's what He wanted. At least, that's what He got'. This time there was no yellowed procession of fading and harmless ledger-pages. This was chronicled in a harsher book and McCaslin, fourteen and fifteen and sixteen, had seen it and the boy himself had inherited it as Noah's grandchildren had inherited the Flood although they had not been there to see the deluge: that dark corrupt and bloody time while three separate peoples had tried to adjust not only to one another but to the new land which they had created and inherited too and must live in for the reason that those who had lost it were no less free to quit it than those who had gained it were: —those 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 endure it and who misused it not as children would nor yet because they had been so long in bondage and then so suddenly freed, but misused it as human beings always misuse freedom, so that he thought *Apparently there is a wisdom beyond even that learned through suffering necessary for a man to distinguish between liberty and license*; those who had fought for four years and lost to preserve a condition under which that franchisement was anomaly and paradox, not because they were opposed to freedom as freedom but for the old

reasons for which man (not the generals and politicians but man) had always fought and died in wars: to preserve a status quo or to establish a better future one to endure for his children; and lastly, as if that were not enough for bitterness and hatred and fear, that third race even more alien to the people whom they resembled in pigment and in whom even the same blood ran, than to the people whom they did not, —that race threefold in one and alien even among themselves save for a single fierce will for rapine and pillage, composed of the sons of middleaged Quartermaster lieutenants and Army sutlers and contractors in military blankets and shoes and transport mules, who followed the battles they themselves had not helped to gain, sanctioned and protected even if not blessed, and left their bones and in another generation would be engaged in a fierce economic competition of small sloven farms with the black men they were supposed to have freed and the white descendants of fathers who had owned no slaves anyway whom they were supposed to have disinherited and in the third generation would be back once more in the little lost country seats as barbers and garage mechanics and deputy sheriffs and mill and gin-hands and power-plant firemen, leading, first in mufti then later in an actual formalised regalia of hooded sheets and passwords and fiery christian symbols, lynching mobs against the race their ancestors had come to save: and of all that other nameless horde of speculators in human misery, manipulators of money and politics and land, who follow catastrophe and are their own protection as grasshoppers are and need no blessing and sweat no plow or axe-helve and batten and vanish and leave no bones, just as they derived apparently from no ancestry, no mortal flesh, no act even of passion or even of lust: and the Jew who came without protection too since after two thousand years he had got out of the habit of being or needing it, and solitary, without even the solidarity of the locusts and in this a sort of courage since he had come thinking not in terms of simple pillage but in terms of his great-grand-children, seeking yet some place to establish them to endure even though forever alien: and unblessed: a pariah about the face of the Western earth which twenty centuries later was still taking revenge on him for the fairy tale with which he had conquered it. McCaslin had actually seen it, and the boy even at almost eighty would never be able to distinguish certainly between what he had seen and what had been told him: a lightless and gutted and empty land where women crouched with the huddled children behind locked doors and men armed in sheets and masks rode the silent roads and the bodies of white and black both, victims not so much of hate as of desperation and despair, swung from lonely limbs: and men shot dead in polling-booths with the still wet pen in one hand and the unblotted ballot in the other: and a United States marshal in Jefferson who signed his official papers with a crude cross, an ex-slave called Sickymo, not at all because his ex-owner was a doctor and apothecary but because, still a slave, he would steal his master's grain alcohol and dilute it with water and peddle it in pint bottles from a cache beneath the roots of a big sycamore tree behind the drug store, who had attained his high office because his half-white sister was the concubine of the Federal A.P.M.: and this time McCaslin did not even say Look but merely lifted one hand, not even pointing, not even specifically toward the shelf of ledgers but toward the desk, toward the corner where it sat beside the scuffed patch on the floor where two decades of heavy shoes had stood while the white man at the desk added and multiplied and subtracted. And again he did not need to look because he had seen this himself and, twenty-three years after the Surrender and twenty-four after the Proclamation, was still watching it: the ledgers, new ones now and filled rapidly, succeeding one another rapidly and containing more names than old Carothers or even his father and Uncle Buddy had ever dreamed of; new names and new faces to go with them, among which the old names and faces that even his father and uncle would have recognised, were lost, vanished—Tomey's Terrel dead, and even the tragic and miscast Percival Brownlee, who couldn't keep books and couldn't farm either, found his true niche at last, reappeared in 1862 during the boy's father's absence and had apparently been living on the plantation for at least a month before his uncle found out about it, conducting impromptu revival meetings among Negroes, preaching and leading the singing also in his high sweet true soprano voice and disappeared again on foot and at top speed, not behind but ahead of a body of raiding Federal horse and reappeared for the third and last time in the entourage of a

travelling Army paymaster, the two of them passing through Jefferson in a surrey at the exact moment when the boy's father (it was 1866) also happened to be crossing the Square, the surrey and its occupants traversing rapidly that quiet and bucolic scene and even in that fleeting moment and to others beside the boy's father giving an illusion of flight and illicit holiday like a man on an excursion during his wife's absence with his wife's personal maid until Brownlee glanced up and saw his late co-master and gave him one defiant female glance and then broke again, leaped from the surrey and disappeared this time for good and it was only by chance that McCaslin, twenty years later, heard of him again, an old man now and quite fat, as the well-to-do proprietor of a select New Orleans brothel; and Tennie's Jim gone, nobody knew where, and Fonsiba in Arkansas with her three dollars each month and the scholar-husband with his lensless spectacles and frock coat and his plans for the spring; and only Lucas was left, the baby, the last save himself of old Carothers' doomed and fatal blood which in the male derivation seemed to destroy all it touched, and even he was repudiating and at least hoping to escape it; —Lucas, the boy of fourteen whose name would not even appear for six years yet among those rapid pages in the bindings new and dustless too since McCaslin lifted them down daily now to write into them the continuation of that record which two hundred years had not been enough to complete and another hundred would not be enough a discharge; that chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation—that slow trickle of molasses and meal and meat, of shoes and straw hats and overalls, of plowlines and collars and heel-bolts and buckheads and clevises, which returned each fall as cotton—the two threads frail as truth and impalpable as equators yet cable-strong to bind for life them who made the cotton to the land their sweat fell on: and he

'Yes. Binding them for a while yet, a little while yet. Through and beyond that life and maybe through and beyond the life of that life's sons and maybe even through and beyond that of the sons of those sons. But not always, because they will endure. They will outlast us because they are—' it was not a pause, barely a falter even, possibly appreciable only to himself, as if he couldn't speak even to McCaslin, even to explain his repudiation, that which to him too, even in the act of escaping (and maybe this was the reality and the truth of his need to escape) and heresy: so that even in escaping he was taking with him more of that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon, because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her, because she was of an inferior race, and then bequeath a thousand dollars to the infant because he would be dead then and wouldn't have to pay it, than even he had feared. 'Yes. He didn't want to. He had to. Because they will endure. They are better than we are. Stronger than we are. Their vices are vices aped from white men or that white men and bondage have taught them: improvidence and intemperance and evasion-not laziness: evasion: of what white men had set them to, not for their aggrandisement or even comfort but his own—' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on: Promiscuity. Violence. Instability and lack of control. Inability to distinguish between mine and thine—' and he
How distinguish, when for two hundred years mine did not even exist for them?' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on. And their virtues—' and he

'Yes. Their own. Endurance—' and McCaslin

'So have mules:' and he

'—and pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children—' and McCaslin

'So have dogs:' and he

'—whether their own or not or black or not. And more: what they got not only not from white people but not even despite white people because they had it already from the old free fathers a longer time free than us because we have never been free—' and

it was in McCaslin's eyes too, he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes and it was there, that summer twilight seven years ago, almost a week after they had returned from the camp before he discovered that Sam Fathers had told McCaslin: an old bear, fierce and ruthless not just to stay alive but ruthless with the fierce pride of liberty and freedom jealous and proud enough of liberty and freedom to see it threatened not with fear nor even alarm but almost with joy, seeming deliberately to put it into jeopardy in order to savor it and keep his old strong bones and flesh supple and quick to defend and preserve it; an old man, son of a Negro slave and an Indian king, inheritor on the one hand of the long chronicle of a people who had learned humility through suffering and learned pride through the endurance which survived the suffering, and on the other side the chronicle of a people even longer in the land than the first, yet who now existed there only in the solitary brotherhood of an old and childless Negro's alien blood and the wild and invincible spirit of an old bear; a boy who wished to learn humility and pride in order to become skillful and worthy in the woods but found himself becoming so skillful so fast that he feared he would never become worthy because he had not learned humility and pride though he had tried, until one day an old man who could not have defined either led him as though by the hand to where an old bear and a little mongrel dog showed him that, by possessing one thing other, he would possess them both; and a little dog, nameless and mongrel and many-fathered, grown yet weighing less than six pounds, who couldn't be dangerous because there was nothing anywhere much smaller, not fierce because that would have been called just noise, not humble because it was already too near the ground to genuflect, and not proud because it would not have been close enough for anyone to discern what was casting that shadow and which didn't even know it was not going to heaven since they had already decided it had no immortal soul, so that all it could be was brave even though they would probably call that too just noise. *'And you didn't shoot,' McCaslin said. 'How close were you?'*

'I don't know,' he said. 'There was a big wood tick just inside his offhind leg. I saw that. But I didn't have the gun then.'

'But you didn't shoot when you had the gun,' McCaslin said. 'Why?' But McCaslin didn't wait, rising and crossing the room, across the pelt of the bear he had killed two years ago and the bigger one McCaslin had killed before he was born, to the bookcase beneath the mounted head of his first buck, and returned with the book and sat down again and opened it. 'Listen,' he said. He read the five stanzas aloud and closed the book on his finger and looked up. 'All right,' he said. 'Listen,' and read again, but only one stanza this time and closed the book and laid it on the table. 'She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,' McCaslin said: 'Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair.'

'He's talking about a girl,' he said.

'He had to talk about something,' McCaslin said. Then he said, 'He was talking about truth. Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things which touch the heart-honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love. Do you see now?' He didn't know. Somehow it had seemed simpler than that, simpler than somebody talking in a book about a young man and a girl he would never need to grieve over because he could never approach any nearer and would never have to get any further away. He had heard about an old bear and finally got big enough to hunt it and he hunted it four years and at last met it with a gun in his hands and he didn't shoot.

Because A little dog—But he could have shot long before the fyce covered the twenty yards to where the bear waited, and Sam Fathers could have shot at any time during the interminable minute while Old Ben stood on his hind legs over them....

He ceased. McCaslin watched him, still speaking, the voice, the words as quiet as the twilight itself was: 'Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth. Do you see now?' and he could still hear them, intact in the twilight as in that one seven years ago, no louder still because they did not need to be because they would endure: and he had only to look at McCaslin's eyes beyond the thin and bitter smiling, the faint lip-lift which would have had to be called smiling; —his kinsman, his father almost, who had been born too late into the old time and too soon for the new, the two of them juxtaposed and alien now to each other against their

ravaged patrimony, the dark and ravaged fatherland still prone and panting from its etherless operation:

The Bear

'Habet then. -So this land is, indubitably, of an by itself cursed:' and he 'Cursed:' and again McCaslin merely lifted one hand, not even speaking and even toward the ledgers: so that, as the stereopticon condenses into one instantaneous field the myriad minutia of its scope, so did that slight and rapid gesture establish in the small cramped and cluttered twilit room not only the ledgers but the whole plantation in its mazed and intricate entirety—the land, the fields and what they represented in terms of cotton ginned and sold, the men and women whom they fed and clothed and even paid a little cash money at Christmas-time in return for the labor which planted and raised and picked and ginned the cotton, the machinery and mules and gear with which they raised it and their cost and upkeep and replacement—that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at time downright savagery not only to the human beings but the valuable animals too, yet solvent and efficient and more than that: not only still intact but enlarged, increased; brought still intact by McCaslin, himself little more than a child then, through and out of the debacle of chaos of twenty years ago where hardly one in ten survived, and enlarged and increased and would continue so, solvent and efficient and intact and still increasing so long as McCaslin and his McCaslin successors lasted, even though their surnames might not even be Edmonds then: and he: 'Habet too. Because that's it: not the land, but us. Not only the blood, but the name too; not only its color but its designation: Edmonds, white, but, a female line, could have no other but the name his father bore; Beauchamp, the elder line and the male one, but black, could have had any name he liked and no man would have cared, except the name his father bore who had no name—' and McCaslin. 'And since I know too what you know I will say now, once more let me say it: And one other, and in the third generation too, and the male, the eldest, the direct and sole and white and still McCaslin ever, father to son to son—' and he 'I am free:' and this time McCaslin did not even gesture, no inference of fading pages, no postulation of the stereoptic whole, but the frail and iron thread strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony both to join him with the lusts and passions, the hopes and dreams and griefs, of bones whose names while still fleshed and capable even old Carothers' grandfather had never heard: and he: 'And of that too:' and McCaslin

'Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him as you say Buck and Buddy were from theirs. And it took Him a bear and an old man and four years just for you. And it took you fourteen years to reach that point and about that many, may be more, for Old Ben, and more than seventy for Sam Fathers. And you are just one. How long then? How Long?' and he 'It will be long. I have never said otherwise. But it will be all right because they will endure—' and McCaslin.

'And anyway, you will be free. —No, not now nor ever, we from them nor they from us. So I repudiate too. I would deny even if I knew it were true. I would have to. Even you can see that I could do no else. I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been. And more than me. More than me, just as there were more than Buck and Buddy in what you called His first plan which failed:' and he 'And more than me:' and McCaslin

'No. Not even you. Because mark. You said how on that instant when Ikkemutebbe realised that he could sell the land to Grandfather, it ceased forever to have been his. All right, go on: Then it belonged to Sam Fathers, old Ikkemutubbe's son. And who inherited from Sam Fathers, if not you? co-heir perhaps with Boon, if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?' and he

'Yes. Sam Fathers set me free.' And Isaac McCaslin, not yet Uncle Ike, a long time yet before he would be uncle to half a county and still father to none, living in one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boardinghouse where petit juries were domiciled during court terms and itinerant horse- and mule-traders stayed, with his kit of brand-new carpenter's tools and the shotgun McCaslin had given him with his name engraved in silver and old General Compson's compass (and, when the

General died, his silver-mounted horn too) and the iron cot and mattress and the blankets which he would take each fall into the woods for more than sixty years and the bright tin coffee-pot

there had been a legacy, from his Uncle Hubert Beauchamp, his godfather, that bluff burly roaring childlike man from whom Uncle Buddy had won Tomey's Terrel's wife Tennie in the poker-game in 1859—'possible strait against three Treys in sight Not called'—: no pale sentence or paragraph scrawled in cringing fear of death by a weak and trembling hand as a last desperate sop flung backward at retribution, but a Legacy, a Thing, possessing weight to the hand and bulk to the eye and even audible: a silver cup filled with gold pieces and wrapped in burlap and sealed with his godfather's ring in the hot wax, which (intact still) even before his Uncle Hubert's death and long before his own majority, when it would be his, had become not only a legend but one of the family lares. After his father's and his Uncle Hubert's sister's marriage they move back into the big house, the tremendous cavern which old Carothers had started and never finished, cleared the remaining Negroes out of it and with his mother's dowry completed it, at least the rest of the windows and doors and moved into it, all of them save Uncle Buddy who declined to leave the cabin he and his twin had built, the move being the bride's notion and more than just a notion and none ever to know if she really wanted to live in the big house or if she knew before hand that Uncle Buddy would refuse to move: and two weeks after his birth in 1867, the first time he and his mother came down stairs, one night and the silver cup sitting on the cleared dining-room table beneath the bright lamp and while the cleared dining-room table beneath the bright lamp and while his mother and his father and McCaslin and Tennie (his nurse: carrying him) — all of them again but Uncle Buddy—watched, his Uncle Hubert rang one by one into the cup the bright and glinting mintage and wrapped it into the burlap envelope and heated the wax and sealed it and carried it back home with him where he lived alone now without even his sister either to hold him down as McCaslin said or to try to raise him up as Uncle Buddy said, and (dark times then in Mississippi) Uncle Buddy said most of the niggers gone and the ones that didn't go even Hub Beauchamp could not have wanted: but the dogs remained and Uncle Buddy said Beauchamp fiddled while Nero fox-hunted

they would go and see it there; at last his mother would prevail and they would depart in the surrey, once more all save Uncle Buddy and McCaslin to keep Uncle Buddy company until one winter Uncle Buddy began to fail and from then on it was himself, beginning to remember now, and his mother and Tennie and Tomey's Terrel to drive: the twenty-two miles into the next county, the twin gateposts on one of which McCaslin could remember the half-grown boy blowing a fox-horn at breakfast dinner and supper-time and jumping down to open to any passer who happened to hear it but where there were no gates at all now, the shabby and over-grown entrance to what his mother still insisted that people call Warwick because her brother was if truth but triumphed and justice but prevailed the rightful earl of it, the paintless house which outwardly did not change but which on the inside seemed each time larger because he was too little to realise then that there was less and less in it of the fine furnishings, the rosewood and mahogany and walnut which for him had never existed anywhere anyway save in his mother's tearful lamentations and the occasional piece small enough to be roped somehow onto the rear or the top of the carriage on their return (And he remembered this, he had seen it: an instant, a flash, his mother's soprano 'Even my dress! Even my dress!' loud and outraged in the barren unswept hall; a face young and female and even lighter in color than Tomey's Terrel's for an instant in a closing door; a swirl, a glimpse of the silk gown and the flick and glint of an ear-ring: an apparition rapid and tawdry and illicit yet somehow even to the child, the infant still almost, breathless and exciting and evocative: as though, like two limpid and pellucid streams meeting, the child which he still was had made serene and absolute and perfect rapport and contact through that glimpsed nameless illicit hybrid female flesh with the boy which had existed at that stage of juvialable and immortal adolescence in his uncle for almost sixty years; the dress, the face, the ear-rings gone in that same aghast flash and his uncle's voice: 'She's my cook! She's my new cook! I had to have a cook, didn't I?' then the uncle himself, the face alarmed and aghast

too yet still innocently and somehow even indomitably of a boy, they retreating in their turn now, back to the front gallery, and his uncle again, pained and still amazed, in a sort of desperate resurgence if not of courage at least of self-assertion: 'That's why! That's why! My mother's house! Defiled! Defiled!' and his uncle: 'Damn it, Sibbey, at least give her time to pack her grip:' then over, finished, the loud uproar and all, himself and Tennie and he remembered Tennie's inscrutable face at the broken shutterless window of the bare room which had once been the parlor which they watched, hurrying down the lane at a stumbling trot, the routed compounder of his uncle's uxory: the back, the nameless face which he had seen only for a moment, the once-hooped dress ballooning and flapping below a man's overcoat, the worn heavy carpet-bag jouncing and banging against her knee, routed and in retreat true enough and in the empty lane solitary young-looking and forlorn yet withal still exciting and evocative and wearing still the silken banner captured inside the very citadel of respectability, and unforgettable).

the cup, the sealed inscrutable burlap, sitting on the shelf in the locked closet, Uncle Hubert unlocking the door and lifting it down and passing it from hand to hand: his mother, his father, McCaslin and even Tennie, insisting that each take it in turn and heft it for weight and shake it again to prove the sound, Uncle Hubert himself standing spraddled before the cold unswept hearth in which the very bricks themselves were crumbling into a litter of soot and dust and mortar and the droppings of chimney-sweeps, still roaring and still innocent and still indomitable: and for a long time he believed nobody but himself had noticed that his uncle now put the cup only into his hands, unlocked the door and lifted it down and put it into his hands and stood over him until he had shaken it obediently until it sounded then took it from him and locked it back into the closet before anyone else could have offered to touch it, and even later, when competent not only to remember but to rationalise, he could not say what it was or even if it had been anything because the parcel was still heavy and still rattled, not even when, Uncle Buddy dead and his father, at last and after almost seventy-five years in bed after the sun rose, said: 'Go get that damn cup. Bring that damn Hub Beauchamp too if you have to:' because it still rattled though his uncle no longer put it even into his hands now but carried it himself from one to the other, his mother, McCaslin, Tennie, shaking it before each in turn, saying: 'Hear it? Hear it?' his face still innocent, not quite baffled but only amazed and not very amazed and still indomitable: and, his father and Uncle Buddy both gone now, one day without reason or any warning the almost completely empty house in which his uncle and Tennie's ancient and quarrelsome great-grandfather (who claimed to have seen Lafayette and McCaslin said in another ten years would be remembering God) lived, cooked and slept in one single room, burst into peaceful conflagration, a tranquil instantaneous sourceless unanimity of combustion, walls floors and roof: at sunup it stood where his uncle's father had built it sixty years ago, at sun-down the four blackened and smokeless chimneys rose from a light white powder of ashes and a few charred ends of planks which did not even appear to have been very hot: and out of the last of evening, the last one of the twenty-two miles, on the old white mare which was the last of that stable which McCaslin remembered, the two old men riding double up to the sister's door, the one wearing his fox-horn on its braided deerhide thong and the other carrying the burlap parcel wrapped in a shirt, the tawny wax-daubed shapeless lump sitting again and on an almost identical shelf and his uncle holding the half-opened door now, his hand not only on the knob but one foot against it and the key waiting in the other hand, the face urgent and still not baffled but still and even indomitably not very amazed and himself standing in the half-opened door looking quietly up at the burlap shape become almost three times its original height and a good half less than its original thickness and turning away and he would remember not his mother's look this time nor yet Tennie's inscrutable expression but McCaslin's dark and aquiline face grave insufferable and bemused: then one night they waked him and fetched him still half-asleep into the lamp light, the smell of medicine which was familiar by now in that room and the smell of something else which he had not smelled before and knew at once and would never forget, the pillow, the worn and ravaged face from which looked out still the boy innocent and immortal and amazed and urgent, looking at him and trying to tell him

until McCaslin moved and leaned over the bed and drew from the top of the nightshirt the big iron key on the greasy cord which suspended it, the eyes saying Yes Yes Yes now, and cut the cord and unlocked the closet and brought the parcel to the bed, the eyes still trying to tell him even when he took the parcel so that was still not it, the hands still clinging to the parcel even while relinquishing it, the eyes more urgent than ever trying to tell him but they never did; and he was ten and his mother was dead too and McCaslin said, 'You are almost halfway now. You might as well open it.' and he: 'No. He said twenty-one.' and he was twenty-one and McCaslin shifted the bright lamp to the center of the cleared dining-room table and set the parcel beside it and laid his open knife beside the parcel and stood back with that expression of old grave intolerant and repudiating and he lifted it, the burlap hump which fifteen years ago had changed its shape completely overnight, which shaken gave forth a thin weightless not-quite-musical curiously muffled clatter, the bright knife-blade hunting amid the mazed intricacy of string, the knobby gouts of wax bearing his uncle's Beauchamp seal rattling onto the table's polished top and, standing amid the collapse of burlap folds, the unstained tin coffee-pot still brand new, the handful of copper coins and now he knew what had given them the muffled sound: a collection of minutely-folded scraps of paper sufficient almost for a rat's nest, of good linen bond, of the crude ruled paper such as Negroes use, of raggedly-torn ledger-pages and the margins of newspapers and once the paper label from a new pair of overalls, all dated and all signed, beginning with the first one not six months after they had watched him seal the silver cup into the burlap on the same table in this same room by the light even of this same lamp almost twenty-one years ago:

*I owe my Nephew Isaac Beauchamp McCaslin five (5) pieces
Gold which I.O.U. constitutes My note of hand with Interest at
5 percent.*

Hubert Fitz-Hubert Beauchamp

At Warwick 27 Nov 1867

and he: 'Anyway he called it Warwick:' once at least, even if no more. But there was more:

*Isaac 24 Dec 1867 I.O.U. 2 pieces Gold H.Fh. B.I.O.U. Isaac
1 piece Gold 1 Jan 1868 H.Fh.B*

then five again then three then one then one then a long time and what dream, what dreamed splendid recoup, not of any injury or betrayal of trust because it had been merely a loan: nay, a partnership:

*I.O.U. Beauchamp McCaslin or his heirs twenty-five (25)
Pieces Gold This & All preceeding constituting My notes of
Hand at twenty (20) percentum compounded annually. This
Date of 19th January 1873*

Beauchamp

no location save that in time and signed by the single not name but word as the old proud earl himself might have scrawled Nevile: and that made forty-three and he could not remember himself of course but the legend had it at fifty, which balanced: one: then one: then one: then one and then the last three and then the last chit, dated after he came to live in the house with them and written in the shaky hand not of a beaten old man because he had never been beaten to know it but of a tired old man maybe and even at that tired only on the outside and still indomitable, the simplicity of the last one the simplicity not of resignation but merely of amazement, like a simple comment or remark, and not very much of that:

One silver cup. Hubert Beauchamp

and McCaslin: 'So you have plenty of coppers anyway. But they are still not old enough yet to be either rarities or heirlooms. So you will have to take the money:' except that he didn't hear McCaslin, standing quietly beside the table and looking

peacefully at the coffee-pot and the pot sitting one night later on the mantel above what was not even a fireplace in the little cramped icelike room in Jefferson as McCaslin tossed the folded banknotes onto the bed and, still standing (there was nowhere to sit save on the bed) did not even remove his hat and overcoat: and he

'As a loan. From you. This one:' and McCaslin

'You cant. I have no money that I can lend to you. And you will have to go to the bank and get it next month because I wont bring it to you:' and he could not hear McCaslin now either, looking peacefully at McCaslin. His kinsman, his father almost yet no kin now as, at the last, even fathers and sons are no kin: and he

'It's seventeen miles, horseback and in the cold. We could both sleep here:' and McCaslin

'Why should I sleep here in my house when you wont sleep yonder in yours?' and gone, and he looking at the bright rustless unstained tin and thinking and not for the first time how much it takes to compound a man (Isaac McCaslin for instance) and of the devious intricate choosing yet unerring path that man's (Isaac McCaslin's for instance) spirit takes among all that mass to make him at last what he is to be, not only to the astonishment of them (the ones who sired the McCaslin who sired his father and Uncle Buddy and their sister, and the ones who sired the Beauchamp who sired his Uncle Hubert and his Uncle Hubert's sister) who believed they had shaped him, but to Isaac McCaslin too

as a loan and used it though he would not have had to: Major de Spain offered him a room in his house as long as he wanted it and asked nor would ever ask any question, and old General Compson more than that, to take him into his own room, to sleep in half of his own bed and more than Major de Spain because he told him baldly why: 'You sleep with me and before this winter is out, I'll know the reason. You'll tell me. Because I don't believe you just quit. It looks like you just quit but I have watched you in the woods too much and I don't believe you just quit even if it does look damn like it:' using it as a loan, paid his board and rent for a month and bought the tools, not simply because he was good with his hands because he had intended to use his hands and it could have been with horses, and not in mere static and hopeful emulation of the Nazarene as the young gambler buys a spotted shirt because the old gambler won in one yesterday, but (without the arrogance of false humility and without the false humbleness of pride, who intended to earn his bread, didn't especially want to earn it but had to earn it and for more than just bread) because if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends. He had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin even though Isaac McCaslin's ends, although simple enough in their apparent motivation, were and would be always incomprehensible to him, and his life, invincible enough in its needs, if he could have helped himself, not being the Nazarene, he would not have chosen it: and paid it back. He had forgotten the thirty dollars which McCaslin would put into the bank in his name each month, fetched it in to him and flung it onto the bed that first one time but no more; he had a partner now or rather he was the partner: a blasphemous profane clever old dipsomaniac who had built blockade-runners in Charleston in '62 and '3 and had been a ship's carpenter since and appeared in Jefferson two years ago nobody knew from where nor why and spent a good part of his time since recovering from delirium tremens in the jail; they had put a new roof on the stable of the bank's president and (the old man in jail again still celebrating that job) he went to the bank to collect for it and the president said, 'I should borrow from you instead of paying you:' and it had been seven months now and he remembered for the first time, two-hundred-and-ten dollars, and this was the first job of any size and when he left the bank the account stood at two-twenty, two-forty to balance, only twenty dollars more to go, then it did balance though by then the total had increased to three hundred and thirty and he said, 'I will transfer it now:' and the president said, 'I can't do that. McCaslin told me not to. Haven't you got another initial you could use and open another account?' but that was all right, the

coins the silver and the bills as they accumulated knotted into a handkerchief and the coffee-pot wrapped in an old shirt as when Tennie's great-grandfather had fetched it from Warwick eighteen years ago, in the bottom of the iron-bound trunk which old Carothers had brought from Carolina and his landlady said, 'Not even a lock! And you don't even lock your door, not even when you level!' and himself looking at her as peacefully as he had looked at McCaslin that first night in this same room, no kin to him at all yet more than kin as those who serve you even for pay are your kin and those who injure you are more than brother or wife and had the wife now, got the old man out of jail and fetched him to the rented room and sobered him by superior strength, did not even remove his own shoes for twenty-four hours, got him up and got food into him and they built the barn this time from the grouped up and he married her: an only child, a small girl yet curiously bigger than she seemed at first, solider perhaps, with dark eyes and a passionate heart-shaped face, who had time even on that farm to watch most of the day while he sawed timbers to the old man's measurements: and she: 'Papa told me about you. That farm is really yours, isn't it?' and he

'And McCaslin's:' and she

'Was there a will leaving half of it to him?' and he

'There didn't need to be a will. His grandmother was my father's sister. We were the same as brothers:' and she

'You are the same as second cousins and that's all you ever will be. But I don't suppose it matters:' and they were married, they were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable, living in a rented room still but for just a little while and that room wall-less and topless and floorless in glory for him to leave each morning and return to at night; her father already owned the lot in town and furnished the material and he and his partner would build it, her dowry from one: her wedding-present from three, she not to know it until the bungalow was finished and ready to be moved into and he never know who told her, not her father and not his partner and not even in drink though for a while he believed that, himself coming home from work and just time to wash and rest a moment before going down to supper, entering no rented cubicle since it would still partake of glory even after they would have grown old and lost it: and he saw her face then, just before she spoke: 'Sit down:' the two of them sitting on the bed's edge, not even touching yet, her face strained and terrible, her voice a passionate and expiring whisper of immeasurable promise: 'I love you. You know I love you. When are we going to move?' and he

'I didn't—I didn't know—Who told you—' the hot fierce palm clapped over his mouth, crushing his lips into his teeth, the fierce curve of fingers digging into his cheek and only the palm slackened off enough for him to answer:

'The farm. Our farm. Your farm:' and he

'I—' then the hand again, finger and palm, the whole enveloping weight of her although she still was not touching him save the hand, the voice: 'No!No!' and the fingers themselves seeming to follow through the cheek the impulse to speech as it died in his mouth then the whisper, the breath again, of love and of incredible promise, the palm slackening again to let him answer:

'When?' and he

'I—' then she was gone, the hand too, standing, her back to him and her head bent, the voice so calm now that for an instant it seemed no voice of hers that he ever remembered: 'Stand up and turn your back and shut your eyes:' and repeated before he understood and stood himself with his eyes shut and heard the bell right for supper below stairs and the calm voice again: 'Lock the door:' and he did so and leaned his forehead against the cold wood, his eyes closed, hearing his heart and the sound he had begun to hear before he moved until it ceased and the bell rang again below stairs and he knew it was for them this time and he heard the bed and turned and he had never seen her naked before, he had asked her to once, and why: that he wanted to see her looking at him naked because he loved her but after that he never mentioned it

again, even turning his face when she put the nightgown on over her dress to undress at night and putting the dress on over the gown to remove it in the morning and she would not let him get into bed beside her until the lamp was out and even in the heat of summer she would draw the sheet up over them both before she would let him turn to her: and the landlady came up the stairs up the hall and rapped on the door and then called their names but she didn't move, lying still on the bed outside the covers, her face turned away on the pillow, listening to nothing, thinking of nothing, not of him anyway he thought then the landlady went away and she said, 'Take off your clothes:' her head still turned away, looking at nothing, thinking of nothing, waiting for nothing, not even him, her hand moving as though with volition and vision of its own, catching his wrist at the exact moment when he paused beside the bed so that he never paused but merely changed the direction of moving, downward now, the hand drawing him and she moved at last, shifted, a movement one single complete inherent not practiced and one time older than man, looking at him now, drawing him still downward with the one hand down and down and he neither saw nor felt it shift, palm flat against his chest now and holding him away with the same apparent lack of any effort or any need for strength, and not looking at him now, she didn't need to, the chaste woman, the wife, already looked upon all the mean who ever rutted and now her whole body had changed, altered, he had never seen it but once and now it was not even the one he had seen but composite of all woman-flesh since man that ever of its own will reclined or its back and opened, and out of it somewhere, without any movement of lips even, the dying and invincible whisper: 'Promise:' and he 'Promise?'

'The farm.' He moved. He had moved, the hand shifting from his chest once more to his wrist, grasping it, the arm still lax and only the light increasing pressure of the fingers as though arm and hand were a piece of wire cable with one looped end, only the hand tightening as he pulled against it. 'No', he said. 'No:' and she was not looking at him still but not like the other but still the hand: 'No, I tell you. I wont. I cant. Never:' and still the hand and he said, for the last time, he tried to speak clearly and he knew it was still gently and he thought, *She already knows more than I with all the man-listening in camps where there was nothing to read ever even heard of. They are born already bored with what a boy approaches only at fourteen and fifteen with blundering and aghast trembling:* 'I cant. Not ever. Remember:' and still the steady and invincible hand and he said Yes and he thought, *She is lost. She was born lost. We were all born lost* then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes, it was like nothing he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man-talking until after a no-time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a movement one time more older than man she turned and freed herself and on their wedding night she had cried and he thought she was crying now at first, into the tossed and wadded pillow, the voice coming from somewhere between the pillow and the cachinnation: 'And that's all. That's all from me. If this dont get you that son you talk about, it wont be mine:' lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing.

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He went back to the camp one more time before the lumber company moved in and began to cut the timber. Major de Spain himself never saw it again. But he made them welcome to use the house and hunt the land whenever they liked, and in the winter following the last hunt when Sam Fathers and Lion died, General Compson and Walter Ewell invented a plan to incorporate themselves, the old group, into a club and lease the camp and the hunting privileges of the woods—an invention doubtless of the somewhat childish old General but actually worthy of Boon Hanganbeek himself. Even the boy, listening, recognised it for the subterfuge it was: to change the leopard's spots when they could not alter the leopard, a baseless and illusory hope to which even McCaslin seemed to subscribe for a while, that once they had persuaded Major de Spain to return to the camp he might revoke himself, which even the boy knew he would not do. And he did not. The boy never knew what occurred when Major de Spain declined. He was not present when the subject was broached

and McCaslin never told him. But when June came and the time for the double birthday celebration there was no mention of it and when November came no one spoke of using Major de Spain's house and he never knew whether or not Major de Spain knew they were going on the hunt though without doubt old Ash probably told him: he and McCaslin and General Compson (and that one was the General's last hunt too) and Walter and Boon and Tennie's Jim and old Ash loaded two wagons and drove two days and almost forty miles beyond any country the boy had ever seen before and lived in tents for the two weeks. And the next spring they heard (not from Major de Spain) that he had sold the timber-rights to a Memphis lumber company and in June the boy came to town with McCaslin one Saturday and went to Major de Spain's office—the big, airy, book-lined second-storey room with windows at one end opening upon the shabby hinder purlieus of stores and at the other a door giving onto the railed balcony above the Square, with its curtained alcove where sat a cedar water-bucket and a sugar-bowl and spoon and tumbler and a wicker-covered demijohn of whisky, and the bamboo-and-paper punkah swinging back and forth above the desk while old Ash in a tilted chair beside the entrance pulled the cord.

"Of course," Major de Spain said. "Ash will probably like to get off in the woods himself for a while, where he won't have to eat Daisy's cooking. Complain about it, anyway. Are you going to take anybody with you?"

"No sir," he said. "I thought that maybe Boon—" For six months now Boon had been town-marshal at Hoke's; Major de Spain had compounded with the lumber company—or perhaps compromised was closer, since it was the lumber company who had decided that Boon might be better as a town-marshal than head of a logging gang.

"Yes," Major de Spain said. "I'll wire him today. He can meet you at Hoke's. I'll send Ash on by the train and they can take some food in and all you will have to do will be to mount your horse and ride over."

"Yes sir," he said. "Thank you." And he heard his voice again. He didn't know he was going to say it yet he did know, he had known it all the time: "Maybe if you..." His voice died. It was stopped, he never knew how because Major de Spain did not speak and it was not until his voice ceased that Major de Spain moved, turned back to the desk and the papers spread on it and even that without moving because he was sitting at the desk with a paper in his hand when the boy entered, the boy standing there looking down at the short plumpish gray-haired man in sober fine broadcloth and an immaculate glazed shirt whom he was used to seeing in boots and muddy corduroy, unshaven, sitting the shaggy powerful long-hocked mare with the worn Winchester carbine across the saddle-bow and the great blue dog standing motionless as bronze at the stirrup, the two of them in that last year and to the boy anyway coming to resemble one another somehow as two people competent for love or for business who have been in love or in business together for a long time sometimes do. Major de Spain did not look up again.

"No. I will be too busy. But good luck to you. If you have it, you might bring me a young squirrel."

"Yes sir," he said. "I will."

He rode his mare, the three-year-old filly he had bred and raised and broken himself. He left home a little after midnight and six hours later, without even having sweated her, he rode into Hoke's, the tiny log-line junction which he had always thought of as Major de Spain's property too although Major de Spain had merely sold the company (and that many years ago) the land on which the sidetracks and loading-platforms and the commissary store stood, and looked about in shocked and grieved amazement even though he had had forewarning and had believed himself prepared: a new planing-mill already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness and of piled cross-ties sharp with creosote, and wire corrals and feeding-troughs for two hundred mules at least and the tents for the men who drove them; so that he arranged for the care and stabling of his mare as rapidly as he could and did not look any more, mounted into the log-train caboose with his gun and climbed into

the cupola and looked no more save toward the wall of wilderness ahead within which he would be able to hide himself from it once more anyway.

The Bear

Then the little locomotion shrieked and began to move: a rapid churning of exhaust, a lethargic deliberate clashing of slack couplings traveling backward along the train, the exhaust changing to the deep slow clapping bites of power as the caboose too began to move and from the cupola he watched the train's head complete the first and only curve in the entire line's length and vanish into the wilderness, dragging its length of train behind it so that it resembled a small dingy harmless snake vanishing into weeds, drawing him with it too until soon it ran once more at its maximum clattering speed between the twin walls of unaxed wilderness as of old. It had been harmless once. Not five years ago Walter Ewell had shot a six-point buck from this same moving caboose, and there was the story of the half-grown bear: the train's first trip in to the cutting thirty miles away, the bear between the rails, its rear end elevated like that of a playing puppy while it dug to see what sort of ants or bugs they might contain or perhaps just to examine the curious symmetrical squared barkless logs which had appeared apparently from nowhere in one endless mathematical line overnight, still digging until the driver on the braked engine not fifty feet away blew the whistle at it, whereupon it broke frantically and took the first tree it came to: an ash sapling not much bigger than a man's thigh and climbed as high as it could and clung there, its head ducked between its arms as a man (a woman perhaps) might have done while the brakeman threw chunks of ballast at it, and when the engine returned three hours later with the first load of outbound logs the bear was halfway down the tree and once more scrambled back up as high as it could and clung again while the train passed and was still there when the engine went in again in the afternoon and still there when it came back out at dusk; and Boon had been in Hoke's with the wagon after a barrel of flour that noon when the train-crew told about it and Boon and Ash, both twenty years younger then, sat under the tree all that night to keep anybody from shooting it and the next morning major de Spain had the log-train held at Hoke's and just before sundown on the second day, with not only Boon and Ash but Major de Spain and General Compson and Walter and McCaslin, twelve then, watching it came down the tree after almost thirty-six hours without even water and McCaslin told him how for a minute they thought it was going to stop right there at the barrow-pit where they were standing and drink, how it looked at the water and paused and looked at them and at the water again, but did not, gone, running, as bears run, the two sets of feet, front and back, tracking two separate though parallel courses.

It had been harmless then. They would hear the passing log-train sometimes from the camp; sometimes, because nobody bothered to listen for it or not. They would hear it going in, running light and fast, the light clatter of the trucks, the exhaust of the diminutive locomotive and its shrill peanut-parcher whistle flung for one petty moment and absorbed by the brooding and inattentive wilderness without even an echo. They would hear it going out, loaded, not quite so fast now yet giving its frantic and toylike illusion of crawling speed, not whistling now to conserve steam, flinging its bitten laboring miniature puffing into the immemorial woodsface with frantic and bootless vainglory, empty and noisy and puerile, carrying to no destination or purpose sticks which left nowhere any scar or stump as the child's toy loads and transports and un-loads its dead sand and rushes back for more, tireless and unceasing and rapid yet never quite so fast as the Hand which plays with it moves the toy burden back to load the toy again. But it was different now. It was the same train, engine cars and caboose, even the same engine men brakeman and conductor to whom Boon, drunk then sober then drunk again then fairly sober once more all in the space of fourteen hours, had bragged that day two years ago about what they were going to do to Old Ben tomorrow, running with its same illusion of frantic rapidity between the same twin walls of impenetrable and impervious woods, passing the old landmarks, the old game crossings over which he had trailed bucks wounded and not wounded and more than once seen them, anything but wounded, break out of the woods, up and across the embankment which bore the rails and ties then down and into the woods again as the earth-bound supposedly move but crossing as arrows travel, groundless, elongated, three times its actual length and even paler, different in

color, as if there were a point between immobility and absolute motion where even mass chemically altered, changing without pain or agony not only in bulk and shape but in color too, approaching the color of wind, yet this time it was as though the train (and not only the train but himself, not only his vision which had seen it and his memory which remembered it but his clothes too, as garments carry back into the clean edgeless blowing of air the lingering effluvium of a sick-room or of death) had brought with it into the doomed wilderness even before the actual axe the shadow and portent of the new mill not even finished yet and the rails and ties which were not even laid; and he knew now what he had known as soon as he saw Hoke's this morning but had not yet thought into words: why Major de Spain had not come back, and that after this time he himself, who had had to see it one time other, would return no more.

Now they were near. He knew it before the engine-driver whistled to warn him. Then he saw Ash and the wagon, the reins without doubt wrapped once more about the brake-lever as within the boy's own memory Major de Spain had been forbidding him for eight years to do, the train slowing, the slackened couplings jolting and clashing again from car to car, the caboose slowing past the wagon as he swung down with his gun, the conductor leaning out above him to signal the engine, the caboose still slowing, creeping, although the engine's exhaust was already slatting in mounting tempo against the unechoing wilderness, the crashing of draw-bars once more travelling backward along the train, the caboose picking up speed at last. Then it was gone. It had not been. He could no longer hear it. The wilderness soared, musing, inattentive, myriad, eternal, green; older than any mill-shed, longer than any spurline. "Mr. Boon here yet?" he said.

"He beat me in," Ash said. "Had the wagon loaded and ready for me at Hoke's yistiddy when I got there and setting on the front steps at camp last night when I got in. He already been in the woods since for daylight this morning. Said he gwine up to the Gum Tree and for you to hunt up that way and meet him." He knew where that was: a single big sweet-gum just outside the woods, in an old clearing; if you crept up to it very quietly this time of year and then ran suddenly into the clearing, sometimes you caught as many as a dozen squirrels in it, trapped, since there was no other tree near they could jump to. So he didn't get into the wagon at all.

"I will," he said.

"I figured you would," Ash said, "I fotch you a box of shells." He passed the shells down and began to unwrap the lines from the brake-pole.

"How many times up to now do you reckon Major has told you not to do that?" the boy said.

"Do which?" Ash said. Then he said: "And tell boon Hoggan-beck dinner gonter be on the table in a hour and if yawl want any to come on and eat it."

"In an hour?" he said. "It aint nine o'clock yet." He drew out his watch and extended it face-toward Ash. "Look." Ash didn't even look at the watch.

"That's town time. You aint in town now. You in the woods."

"Look at the sun then."

"Nemmine the sun too," Ash said. "If you and Boon Hogganbeck want any dinner, you better come on in and get it when I tole you. I aim to get done in that kitchen because I got my wood to chop. And watch your feet. They're crawling."

"I will," he said.

Then he was in the woods, not alone but solitary; the solitude closed about him, green with summer. They did not change, and, timeless, would not, anymore than would the green of summer and the fire and rain of fall and the iron cold and sometimes even snow

the day, the morning when he killed the buck and Sam marked his face with its hot blood, they returned to camp and he remembered old Ash's blinking and disgruntled and even outraged dis-belief until at last McCaslin had had to affirm the fact that he had really killed it: and that night Ash sat snarling and unapproachable behind the stove so that Tennie's Jim had to serve the supper and waked them with breakfast already on the table the next morning and it was only half-past one oclock and at last out of Major de Spain's angry cursing and Ash's snarling and sullen rejoinders the fact emerged that Ash not only wanted to go into the woods and shoot a deer also but

he intended to and Major de Spain said, 'By God, if we don't let him we will probably have to do the cooking from now on:' and Walter Ewell said, 'Or get up at midnight to eat what Ash cooks:' and since he had already killed his buck for this hunt and was not to shoot again unless they needed meat, he offered his gun to Ash until Major de Spain took command and allotted that gun to Boon for the day and gave Boon's unpredictable pump gun to Ash, with two buckshot shells but Ash said, 'I got shells:' and showed them, four: one buck, one of number three shot for rabbits, two of bird-shot and told one by one their history and their origin and he remembered not Ash's face alone but Major de Spain's and Walter's and General Compson's too, and Ash's voice: 'Shoot? In course they'll shoot! Genl Cawmpson guv me this un'—the buckshot—'right outen the same gun he kill that big buck with eight years ago. And this un'—it was the rabbit shell: triumphantly—'is oldern thisyer boy!' And that morning he loaded the gun himself, reversing the order: the bird-shot, the rabbit shell: triumphantly—'is oldern thisyer boy!' And that morning he loaded the gun himself, reversing the order: the bird-shot, the rabbit, then the buck so that the buckshot would feed first into the chamber, and himself without a gun, he and Ash walked beside Major de Spain's and Tennie's Jim's horses and the dogs (that was the snow) until they cast and struck, the sweet strong cries ringing away into the muffled falling air and gone almost immediately, as if the constant and unrummuring flakes had already buried even the unformed echoes beneath their myriad and weightless falling, major de Spain and Tennie's Jim gone too, whooping on into the woods; and then it was all right, he knew as plainly as if Ash had told him that Ash had now hunted his deer and that even his tender years had been forgiven for having killed one, and they turned back toward home through the falling snow—that is, Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way'—himself in front because, although they were less than a mile from camp, he knew that Ash, who had spent two weeks of his life in the camp each year for the last twenty, had no idea whatever where they were, until quite soon the manner in which Ash carried Boon's gun was making him a good deal more than just nervous and he made Ash walk in front, striding on, talking now, and old man's garrulous monologue beginning with where he was at the moment then of the woods and of camping in the woods and of eating in camps then of eating then of cooking it and of his wife's cooking then briefly of his old wife and almost at once and at length of a new light-colored woman who nursed next door to major de Spain's and if she didn't watch out who she was switching her tail at he would show her how old was an old man or not if his wife just didn't watch him all the time, the two of them in a game trail through a dense brake of cane and brier which would bring them out within a quarter-mile of camp, approaching a big fallen tree-trunk lying athwart the path and just as Ash, still talking, was about to step over it the bear, the yearling, rose suddenly beyond the log, sitting up, its forearms against its chest and its wrists limply arrested as if it had been surprised in the act of covering its face to pray: and after a certain time Ash's gun yawed jerkily up and he said, 'You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet. Pump it:' but the gun already snicked and he said, 'Pump it. You haven't got a shell in the barrel yet:' and Ash pumped the action and in a certain time the gun steadied again and snicked and he said, 'Pump it:' and watched the buckshot shell jerk, spinning heavily, into the cane. This is the rabbit shot: he thought and the gun snicked and he thought: The next is bird-shot: and he didn't have to say Pump it: he cried, 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' but that was already too late too, the light dry vicious snick! Before he could speak and the bear turned and dropped to all-fours and then was gone and there was only the log, the cane, the velvet and constant snow and Ash said, 'Now whut?' and he said, 'This way. Come on:' and began to back away down the path and Ash said, 'I got to find my shells:' and he said, 'Goddamn it, goddamn it, come on:' but Ash leaned the gun against the log and returned and stooped and fumbled among the cane roots until he came back and stooped and found the shells and they rose and at the moment the gun, untouched, leaning against the log six feet away and for that while even forgotten by both of them, roared, bellowed and flamed, and ceased: and he carried it now, pumped out the last mummified shell and gave that one also to Ash and, the action still open, himself carried the gun until he stood it in the corner behind Boon's bed at the camp

—: summer, and fall, and snow, and wet and sapribe spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to old man born of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved: and he would many someday and they too would own for their brief while that brief unsubstantiated glory which inherently of itself cannot last and hence why glory: and they would, might, carry even the remembrance of it into the time when flesh no longer talks to flesh because memory at least does last: but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife.

He was not going toward the Gum Tree. Actually he was getting farther from it. Time was and not so long ago either when he would not have been allowed here without someone with him, and a little later, when he had begun to learn how much he did not know, he would not have dared be here without someone with him, and later still, beginning to ascertain, even if only dimly, the limits of what he did not know, he could have attempted and carried it through with a compass, not because of any increased belief in himself but because McCaslin and Major de Spain and Walter and General Compson too had taught him at last to believe the compass regardless of what it seemed to state. Now he did not even use the compass but merely the sun and that only subconsciously, yet he could have taken a scaled map and plotted at any time to within a hundred feet of where he actually was: and sure enough, at almost the exact moment when he expected it, the earth began to rise faintly, he passed one of the four concrete markers set down by the lumber company's surveyor to establish the four corners of the plot which Major de Spain had reserved out of the sale, then he stood on the crest of the knoll itself, the four corner-markers all visible now, blanched still even beneath the winter's weathering, lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation tumescence conception and birth, and death did not even exist. After two winters' blanketings of leaves and the flood-waters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves anymore at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such: by bearings on trees: and did, almost the first thrust of the hunting knife finding (but only to see if it was still there) the round tin box manufactured for axle-grease and containing now Old Ben's dried mutilated paw, resting above Lion's bones.

He didn't disturb it. He didn't even look for the other grave where he and McCaslin and Major de Spain and Boon had laid Sam's body, along with his hunting horn and his knife and his tobacco-pipe, that Sunday morning two years ago; he didn't have to. He had stepped over it, perhaps on it. But that was all right. *He probably knew I was in the woods this morning long before I got here*, he thought, going on to the tree which had supported one end of the platform where Sam lay when McCaslin and Major de Spain found them—the tree, the other axle-grease tin nailed to the trunk, but weathered, rusted, alien too yet healed already into the wilderness' concordant generality, raising no tuneless note, and empty, long since empty of the food and tobacco he had put into it that day, as empty of that as it would presently be of this which he drew from his pocket—the twist of tobacco, the new bandanna handkerchief, the small paper sack of the peppermint candy which Sam had used to love; that gone too, almost before he had turned his back, not vanished but merely translated into the myriad life which printed the dark mold of these secret and sunless places with delicate fairy tracks, which, breathing and biding and immobile, watched him from beyond every twig and leaf until he moved, moving again, walking on; he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad, one: and Old Ben too, Old Ben too; they would give him his paw back even, certainly they would give him his paw back: then the long challenge and the long chase, no heart to be driven and outraged, no flesh to be mauled and bled—Even as he froze himself, he seemed to hear Ash's parting

admonition. He could even hear the voice as he froze, immobile, one foot just taking his weight, the toe of the other just lifted behind him, not breathing, feeling again and as always the sharp shocking inrush from when Isaac McCaslin long yet was not, and so it was fear all right but not fright as he looked down at it. It had not coiled yet and the buzzer had not sounded either, only one thick rapid contraction, one loop cast sideways as though merely for purchase from which the raised head might start slightly backward, not in fright either, not in threat quite yet, more than six feet of it, the head raised higher than his knee and less than his knee's length away, and old, the once-bright markings of its youth dulled now to a monotone concordant too with the wilderness it crawled and lurked: the old one, the ancient and accursed about the earth, fatal and solitary and he could smell it now: the thin sick smell of rotting cucumbers and something else which had no name, evocative of all knowledge and an old weariness and of pariah-hood and of death. At last it moved. Not the head. The elevation of the head did not change as it began to glide away from him, moving erect yet off the perpendicular as if the head and that elevated third were complete and all: an entity walking on two feet and free of all laws of mass and balance and should have been because even now he could not quite believe that all the shift and flow of shadow behind that walking head could have been one snake: going and then gone; he put the other foot down at last and didn't know it, standing with one hand raised as Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: "Chief," he said: "Grandfather".

He couldn't tell when he first began to hear the sound, because when he became aware of it, it seemed to him that he had been already hearing it for several seconds- a sound as though someone were hammering a gun-barrel against a piece of railroad iron, a sound loud and heavy and not rapid yet with something frenzied about it, as the hammerer were not only a strong man and an earnest one but a little hysterical too. Yet it couldn't be on the log-line because, although the track lay in that direction, it was at least two miles from him and this sound must be coming from: whoever the man was and whatever he was doing, he was somewhere near the edge of the clearing where the Gum Tree was and where he was to meet Boon. So far, he had been hunting as he advanced, moving slowly and quietly and watching the ground and the trees both. Now he went on, his gun unloaded and the barrel slanted up and back to facilitate its passage through brier and undergrowth, approaching as it grew louder and louder that steady savage somehow queerly hysterical beating of metal on metal, emerging from the woods, into the old clearing, with the solitary gum tree directly before him. At first glance the tree seemed to be alive with frantic squirrels. There appeared to be forty or fifty of them leaping and darting from branch to branch until the whole tree had become one green maelstrom of mad leaves, while from time to time, singly or in twos and threes, squirrels would dart down the trunk then whirl without stopping and rush back up again as though sucked violently back by the vacuum of their fellows' frenzied vortex. Then he saw Boon, sitting, his back against the trunk, his head bent, hammering furiously at something on his lap. What he hammered with was the barrel of his dismembered gun, what he hammered at was the breech of it. The rest of the gun lay scattered about him in a half-dozen pieces while he bent over the piece on his lap his scarlet and streaming walnut face, hammering the disjointed barrel against the gun-breech with the frantic abandon of a madman. He didn't even look up to see who it was. Still hammering, he merely shouted back at the boy in a hoarse strangled voice:

"Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They're mine!"

Text: *A CLEAN, WELL-LIGHTED PLACE*

It was late and every one had left the café except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light. In the day time the street was dusty, but at night the dew settled the dust and the old man liked to sit late because he was deaf and now at night it was quiet and he felt the difference. The two waiters inside the café knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him.

"Last week he tried to commit suicide," one waiter said.

"Why?"

"He was in despair."

"What about?"

"Nothing."

"How do you know it was nothing?"

"He has plenty of money."

They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the café and looked at the terrace where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the tree that moved slightly in the wind. A girl and a soldier went by in the street. The street light shone on the brass number on his collar. The girl wore no head covering and hurried beside him.

"The guard will pick him up," one waiter said.

"What does it matter if he gets what he's after?"

"He had better get off the street now. The guard will get him."

They went by five minutes ago."

The old man sitting in the shadow rapped on his saucer with his glass. The younger waiter went over to him.

"What do you want?"

The old man looked at him. "Another brandy," he said.

"You'll be drunk," the waiter said. The old man looked at him. The waiter went away.

"He'll stay all night," he said to his colleagues. "I'm sleepy now. I never get into bed before three o'clock. He should have killed himself last week."

The waiter took the brandy bottle and another saucer from the counter inside the café and marched out to the old man's table. He put down the saucer and poured the glass full of brandy.

"You should have killed yourself last week," he said to the deaf man. The old man motioned with his finger. "A little more," he said. The waiter poured on into the glass so that the brandy slopped over and ran down the stem into the top saucer of the pile. "Thank you," the old man said. The waiter took the bottle back inside the café. He sat down at the table with his colleague again.

"He's drunk now," he said.

"He's drunk every night."

"What did he want to kill himself for?"

"How should I know."

"How did he do it?"

"He hung himself with a rope."

"Who cut him down?"

"His niece."

"Why did they do it?"

"Fear for his soul."

"How much money has he got?"

"He's got plenty."

"He must be eighty years old."

"Any way I should say he was eighty."

"I wish he would go home. I never get to bed before three o'clock. What kind of hour is that to go to bed?"

"He stays up because he likes it."

"He's lonely. I'm not lonely. I have a wife waiting in bed for me."

"He had a wife once too."

"A wife would be no good to him now."

"You can't tell. He might be better with a wife."

"His niece looks after him. You said she cut him down."

"I know."

"I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing."

"Not always. This old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk. Look at him."

"I don't want to look at him. I wish he would go home. He has no regard for those who must work."

The old man looked from his glass across the square, then over at the waiters.

"Another brandy," he said, pointing to his glass. The waiter who was in a hurry came over.

"Finished," he said, speaking with that omission of syntax stupid people employ when talking to drunken people or foreigners. "No more tonight. Close now."

"Another," said the old man.

"No. Finished." The waiter wiped the edge of the table with a towel and shook his head.

The old man stood up, slowly counted the saucers, took a leather coin purse from his pocket and paid for the drinks, leaving half a peseta tip.

The waiter watched him go down the street, a very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity.

"Why didn't you let him stay and drink?" the unhurried waiter asked. They were putting up the shutters. "It is not half-past two."

"I want to go home to bed."

"What is an hour?"

"More to me than to him."

"An hour is the same."

"You talk like an old man yourself. He can buy a bottle and drink at home."

"It's not the same."

"No, it is not," agreed the waiter with a wife. He did not wish to be unjust. He was only in a hurry.

"And you? You have no fear of going home before your usual hour?"

"Are you trying to insult me?"

"No, hombre, only to make a joke."

"No," the waiter who was in a hurry said, rising from pulling down the metal shutters. "I have confidence. I am all confidence. I am all confidence."

"You have youth, confidence; and a job," the older waiter said. "You have everything."

"And what do you lack?"

"Everything but work."

"You have everything I have."

"No. I have never had confidence and I am not young."

"Come on. Stop talking nonsense and lock up."

"I am of those who like to stay late at the café," the older waiter said. "With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night."

"I want to go home and into bed."

"We are of two different kinds," the older waiter said. He was now dressed to go home. "It is not only a question of youth and confidence although those things are very beautiful. Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the café."

"Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long."

"You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant café. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves."

"Good night," said the younger waiter.

"Good night," the other said. Turning off the electric light he continued the conversation with himself. It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be

clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. Give us this nada our daily nada and nada us our nada as we nada our nadas and nada us not into nada but deliver us from nada; pues nada. Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee. He smiled and stood before a bar with a shining steam pressure coffee machine.

"What's yours?" asked the barman.

"Nada."

"Otro loco mas," said the barman and turned away.

"A little cup," said the waiter.

The barman poured it for him.

"The light is very bright and pleasant but the bar is unpolished," the waiter said.

The barman looked at him but did not answer. It was too late at night for conversation.

"You want another copita?" the barman asked.

"No, thank you," said the waiter and went out. He disliked bars and bodegas. A clean, well-lighted café was a very different thing. Now, without thinking further, he would go home to his room. He would lie in the bed and finally, with daylight, he would go to sleep. After all, he said to himself, it is probably only insomnia. Many must have it.