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An End to the Means: “An Odor of Verbena” as a Resolution in Yoknapatawpha

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Abstract of the Thesis

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Research for this thesis included William Faulkner’s novels *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Sanctuary*, *Light in August*, *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Unvanquished*. Critical material by Warren Akin IV, Melvin Backman, Arnold Goldman, Irving Howe, and Robert Knoll was also examined. The critical material suggests the simplicity of style and development in *The Unvanquished* in comparison to Faulkner’s other novels, and thus encourages readers to use the novel as an introduction to Faulkner’s work. The critical material also shows that the climactic story in *The Unvanquished*, “An Odor of Verbena,” is weakened by the lack of development and gravity in the novel’s six preceding chapters. A more careful consideration of the novels that precede *The Unvanquished* shows that the climactic final section is in fact very closely related to the unresolved issues from Faulkner’s previous work, thus making it a significant shift in Faulkner’s writing due to the characters’ relative successes in light of previous failures.

This paper examines the parallels in the Yoknapatawpha series leading up to *The Unvanquished*, and finds that the redefinition of one’s heritage as well as the resolution of the doomed gender partnership are strong aspects of “An Odor of Verbena” because they are the exact issues that cannot be overcome in Faulkner’s previous works. Therefore, the climactic final section of *The Unvanquished* can be seen as quite a significant triumph for Faulkner’s characters. Furthermore, because of the significance that the other Yoknapatawpha novels provide for *The Unvanquished*, it should not be used as an introduction to Faulkner, but reserved for later reading to maximize the strength and significance of its climax.

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I. Introduction

William Faulkner's *The Unvanquished* is his tenth novel, published in 1938, and chronologically the seventh to be set in the fictional Mississippi county of Yoknapatawpha. The novel is known for being written in seven sections, all published separately as short stories in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Scribner's Magazine* before being collected and edited into one continuous narrative in book form (Backman 253). In fact, Faulkner wrote the stories that make up *The Unvanquished* during a hiatus from his work on *Absalom, Absalom!*, which was published just two years earlier (Goldman 122). The details regarding Faulkner's process in completing *The Unvanquished* are paramount to the critical analysis of the work, because they allow details for each short story to be analyzed on their own merits or for the novel to be approached as a whole. Robert Knoll argues that *The Unvanquished* serves best as an introduction to Faulkner's works simply because the style is markedly more straightforward than that of his previous works. As he notes, "its characterizations are conventional, its situations ordinary, and its conclusions hackneyed" (Knoll 339). Arnold Goldman concurs, calling it a "children's book" (Goldman 122). Gone is the stream-of-consciousness which places a barrier between the reader and proper comprehension of works such as *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*. *The Unvanquished* is a story told by one narrator, Bayard Sartoris, in chronological order, with only a handful of characters and events to complicate the plot, thus making it seem like a detour from the complex and experimental style Faulkner had embraced for his previous works.

Warren Akin IV argues that the climax of *The Unvanquished* in the final story entitled "An Odor of Verbena" is less effective than it should be because of the lack of

weight and evidence in Bayard's journey in the preceding stories. He argues that Bayard's triumph in "renouncing revenge" would "gain much in resonance if the first six stories give substance to it. Only if they do lead to and enrich the final chapter do all seven stories form a coherent pattern, function as a novel" (Akin 3). This argument is based on the fact that the reader is not made privy to what the purpose of Bayard's maturation will be and the conflicts he is supposed to resolve. In fact, Bayard is peripheral in a few of the stories that relate his grandmother's dealings with the Yankee army during the Civil War, the journey of the Southern blacks to freedom, and his cousin Drusilla's struggle against Southern female customs. However, this critical argument misses the key fact of Bayard's triumph in "An Odor of Verbena": he succeeds in all the ways that Faulkner's previous Yoknapatawpha protagonists fail. Critics who recognize a weakness in the conclusion of *The Unvanquished* thus still point to the fact that Bayard is the first Faulkner protagonist to "redefine...his heritage" (Akin 3), with Isaac McCaslin, McCaslin Edmonds, and Charles Mallison following suit in Faulkner's later work. "Bayard's choice is significant, in fact, one of the major incidents in the Yoknapatawpha chronicle. For as well as being a personal act, revenge epitomizes the worst aspects of the Southern aristocratic code. Thus in renouncing revenge, Bayard becomes the first character before Isaac McCaslin to redefine part of his heritage" (Akin 3).

Yet it is a contradiction to place Bayard's achievement in the context of only the novel in which he appears, while simultaneously grouping his journey with those that follow him. If Bayard is to be seen in the proper historical perspective of Faulkner's protagonists, he must also be compared with his predecessors from Yoknapatawpha. To this end, my paper aims to broaden the scope of "An Odor of Verbena" beyond its

relationship to the six preceding chapters in *The Unvanquished*, and magnify the power of its climax in the context of the conflicts that Faulkner has already established in Yoknapatawpha with his previous protagonists, specifically the redefinition of one's heritage and the doomed gender partnership. This line of reasoning concludes by defending *The Unvanquished* as a novel to be read only after the Yoknapatawpha novels that precede it, rather than as an introduction to Faulkner's work as many critics suggest for it. This maximizes the weight of its climax.

Viewing *The Unvanquished* as the seventh novel in a series makes Faulkner's novel a better end piece than introduction, because it magnifies the power and conflict in Bayard's life exponentially. The seasoned reader of Faulkner would come to expect Bayard's failure, most likely at the hands of his female counterpart, Drusilla, but Faulkner surprises the reader by having the hero truly succeed at the point where all of his other protagonists, up to this point, have failed. This makes *The Unvanquished* extremely powerful to the established reader of Faulkner, and makes the case for it to be saved for examination until the issues of Yoknapatawpha have been defined, despite its simpler style and clearer narrative voice.

II. Bayard's Triumph

More than anything, *The Unvanquished* is the coming-of-age story of Bayard Sartoris, who journeys from boy to adolescent to man and, finally, to patriarch. Bayard is the savior of the South, along with his cousin Drusilla, and conquers the inner challenges that prove crippling for Faulkner's earlier male predecessors. Faulkner breaks the cycle

of the violent Southern male when he tells Bayard's story, a story of conquering not only one's history, but also of learning compassion.

Bayard's story is told from his own perspective from the time he is twelve years old in 1862 to when he is roughly twenty-four years old in 1874. The key aspect of Bayard's maturation is his ability to overcome his naturally ingrained violent urges and ultimately find a new kind of honor for his family and the South. At a young age, the games that Bayard and his friend/slave Ringo play are extremely violent, with the boys yelling, "Kill the bastards! Kill them! Kill them!" (7) during a game of war in the woods. They pretend to be generals, and think that combat is a game. This portrays violence as a juvenile notion from the start of the novel, and one of the novel's major triumphs is to show how immature the concepts of violence and revenge truly are. When Bayard's father, Colonel John Sartoris, tells the boys stories of battle in the Civil War, they only hear the violent parts, with Bayard admitting, "But we were just twelve... What Ringo and I heard was the cannon and the flags and the anonymous yelling. That's what we intended to hear tonight" (15). The very picture of two twelve-year-old boys enraptured by the idea of battle degrades war to no more than a childish fantasy.

Bayard glorifies the Civil War because of his role models and family history. Revenge and violence are all he has had foisted upon him during his upbringing, and therefore he does not think twice about engaging in violent acts himself. When Bayard as a young boy sees a soldier, he thinks the soldier "*looks just like a man*" (25), revealing his impressionable immaturity. Bayard's Uncle Buck yells to Bayard, "when you see [John], tell him I said to leave the horses go for a while and kill the [Yankee army]. Kill them!" (54), further displaying the barbaric example that Bayard must follow. Bayard

and Ringo shoot a horse with a musket because they don't know any better and think that shooting is what men do. They are very proud of their shooting at first, but then get scared because they do not realize the repercussions of what they have done. "Then we heard the boots and spurs on the porch. 'Granny!' I said. 'Granny!'" (27), is Bayard's reaction, a typically juvenile urge for his grandmother's protection. In fact, Bayard admits he is not ready for the actual consequences of revenge and violence as he helps his father ambush a Yankee camp, saying, "[there] is a limit to what a child can accept, assimilate; not to what it can believe because a child can believe anything, given time, but to what it can accept, a limit in time, in the very time which nourishes the believing of the incredible" (66). Bayard notes a large difference between a child's fantasy and reality in the violence of the war.

The key to Bayard's progress is experience, and he and Ringo engage in a sort of competition to gain the most experience. "We were almost the same age, and Father always said that Ringo was a little smarter than I was, but that didn't count with us, anymore than the difference in the color of our skins counted. What counted was, what one of us had done or seen that the other had not, and ever since that Christmas I had been ahead of Ringo because I had seen the railroad, a locomotive" (81). Bayard thus knows the answer, or at least knows that there is a reason to hope for progress in the South. He describes the railroad as "running straight and empty and quiet...full of sunlight...clean and neat...straight and fast and light like they were getting up speed to jump clean off the world" (87). This image of hope offers an escape from the oppressed Southern life. Yet the mangled railroad the boys come upon in its place tarnishes the

feeling of escape through progress, and perfectly symbolizes what the war has done to the South and the fact that there may indeed be no way out.

The glorious images of war and soldiers come crashing down as Bayard matures, and his extended rant at the novel's midpoint proves to be a turning point for him. He recalls seeing men coming home from battle in a decidedly inglorious fashion, "preceded by no flags nor drums" and "no galloping thunder of guns" (95). The soldiers come home to perform jobs like "plowing land, repairing fences, killing meat" and are wearing "obviously stolen" clothing (95). The change the change this sight prompts in Bayard is not immediate, but at least the larger-than-life image of his father is slowly being transformed into that of a simple man, angry for revenge and violence. Shortly after this, Granny comments that "You and Ringo look like men" (152), a large change from the twelve-year-old boys yelling "kill" while playing war games.

The precursor to Bayard's ultimate showdown with his father's killer at the novel's conclusion is his hunt and subsequent killing of Grumby, the man who murders Granny. The rain during Granny's funeral symbolizes the vengeance and violence in Bayard's quest for Grumby because is the exact smell that the verbena cancels out and replaces with courage later in the novel's final portion. Bayard wants to "borrow a pistol" (159) from his Uncle Buck in the hope of hunting down Grumby, and Buck gives Bayard the pistol "from around his neck" (176) in the rain to go on without them, a sort of changing of the guard. At this point Bayard is still continuing the tradition of vengeance and the old code of the South, an eye for an eye, in the way that his family has always operated. Violence is still portrayed as an immature notion, though, as Faulkner reminds the reader by noting that Grumby writes "like a child" (177) in his posting to the

boys. After killing Grumby, Bayard is praised as being “John Sartoris’ boy” (186), with the killing as proof. But is this a good thing? John Sartoris has “rain in [his] beard and clothes” (185), and the scent of vengeance and violence is what Bayard has now achieved.

The final portion of *The Unvanquished* confronts the post-Civil War conflicts in the Sartoris family following the death of its patriarch. Although John Sartoris has said he would meet his former business partner Redmond “unarmed,” he shows up with “the derringer inside his cuff” (232). John adheres to the violent tradition, as he cannot change his ways, although he has vowed that he will, similar to the drunk who cannot give up drink, as Bayard explains. John’s pride and resistance to change become his downfall, as he needlessly “taunts” (225) Redmond for not joining the army, and dies as a result. Bayard has two choices: avenge his father’s death by killing Redmond or peacefully resolve the conflict through the exhibition of a kind of courage that is unlike anything his family, and the South as a whole, have been able to display. Bayard realizes he is now “The Sartoris” (214), which empowers him. Professor Wilkins, his male role model at the university, tries to him along encourage the violent path when he offers Bayard a pistol in “a dozen different ways” (215). Ringo suggests that the two “bushwack [Redmond]...like [they] done Grumby” (218). John’s old army friend George Wyatt also tries to arm Bayard by “fumbling a pistol into [Bayard’s] pocket” (246). The influences towards violence come from all sides, even from Drusilla. Should Bayard opt to kill Redmond, he would surely continue the Southern code of violent revenge that all those around him embrace.

Fortunately, Faulkner allows Bayard to recognize his time when it arrives, unlike what occurs in other novels in which a character is crippled by opportunity or is ruined because of it. “An Odor of Verbena” reveals the self-conscious meanderings that are trademarks of past characters such as Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren. It is not until the last section of the novel that Bayard begins to question his mental abilities in light of what is expected of him as “The Sartoris.” When he has this thought, he admits it “had been one of the concomitant flashes, along with the *at last it has happened*” (214). Specifically, his new “flashes” of thought indicate that he can potentially end up insane like his predecessors. Bayard explains:

I was beginning to realize, to become aware of that which I still had no yardstick to measure save that one consisting of what, despite myself, despite my raising and background (or maybe because of them) I had for some time known I was becoming and had feared the test of it; I remember how I thought while [Mrs. Wilkins’] hands still rested on my shoulders: *At least this will be my chance to find out if I am what I think I am or if I just hope; if I am going to do what I have taught myself is right or if I am just going to wish I were.* (215)

Rather than standing idly by in an impotent state of paralyzed fury, as would the customary Faulkner hero, Bayard chooses to take action, more importantly the action that he knows is correct. He states, “those who can, do, those who cannot and suffer enough because they cant, write about it. Then I was free” (228).

III. The Oppressive Heritage in Yoknapatawpha

Bayard’s major triumph in redefining his heritage comes through reversing the violent traditions of the South. In order for this to be considered a triumph for all of

Yoknapatawpha, Bayard's story needs to be compared with those that leave the issue of heritage unresolved. The oppression that Faulkner's previous characters face due to their heritage develops into mental instability in many cases. Establishing this portrayal in Faulkner's earlier works proves Bayard's reversal of family heritage and subsequent mental stability to be quite powerful.

Faulkner first introduces the weight of family heritage through the character of Quentin Compson in his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin's narration in begins by highlighting his lack of control, specifically as handed down from his father. While he ponders the watch that is a family heirloom for the Compson males, originating with his grandfather, Quentin faces the complicated paradox that his progress is weighed down by family history, yet is pushed on heedlessly in time. Mr. Compson refers to the watch as "the mausoleum of all hope and desire" (76), the phrase itself embodying the paradox that the progressive terms of hope and desire are contained in the dead past. Quentin desperately wants to "forget [time] now and then for a moment" (76) to give his mind a rest from the motor that is constantly pushing him along. His desire to "forget time" rings of his frustration at being a conscious person, knowing the weight of the past and its influence on his future. Quentin is severely oppressed by this, as he finds himself at Harvard, "[where] the best of thought Father said clings like dead ivy vines upon old dead brick" (95). He cannot progress into the future, for the weight of history rests too heavily on his mind.

The main influence on Quentin's fatalistic attitude is his father, who has raised Quentin to think that every man is "the sum of his misfortunes" (104). Quentin remembers his father's advice that "no battle is ever won...They are not even fought.

The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools” (76). Mr. Compson’s comment conveys a pessimistic acceptance of fate’s influence on man’s efforts, and leaves Quentin feeling as though it is hopeless to overcome the things that weigh him down, specifically his familial expectations.

Unfortunately, time is always ticking for Quentin, never giving him relief from the idea that time is forever marching on towards the inevitable. Even when Quentin tries to ignore time, he realizes that it is everywhere, remarking, “There was a clock, high up in the sun” (83).

The expectations of his Southern heritage slowly drive Quentin mad, and result in his suicide shortly after his narration during “June Second, 1910.” Rather than convey hopes and dreams for the future, the fatalistic attitude is full of despair and darkness. Faulkner illustrates the vanity of Quentin’s vision when Quentin comes across a trio of boys fishing in Cambridge. The boys are talking to one another about an uncatchable fish, remarking, “Cant anybody catch that fish” (120). When Quentin asks them about visible clocks and the correct time, the boys again remark, ““We didn’t try to catch him,’ the first said. ‘You cant catch that fish’” (121), implying that if one knows one cannot catch a fish, it is vain to try, and thus other fish should perhaps be sought. Quentin would do well to heed this warning, as he is essentially going after the uncatchable fish and fighting against his heritage. Instead, Quentin inevitably drives himself to suicide by continuing his attempt to outrun his family’s doomed past.

In fact, the consciousness that Quentin has of these issues is his problem, and he is in effect fighting against himself to overcome this knowledge. He explains his plight by way of a story that a family slave, Versh, once told him “about a man who mutilated

himself” (115). Quentin admits that self-mutilation is not the answer, because it does not address the problem at the root. “But that’s not it. It’s not not having them. It’s never to have had them then I could say O That That’s Chinese I don’t know Chinese” (116).

Quentin is explicitly lamenting his consciousness, his knowledge of himself and his history. Had he stayed in a state of innocence, these problems may have never presented themselves. But Quentin has knowledge of the uncatchable fish and refuses to live without pursuing it. Thus his family heritage has created mental instability that is too strong for him to overcome. He puts up a much weaker fight than Bayard, and succumbs to his suicidal thoughts quite easily, which establishes not only the power and weight of Southern heritage, but also the relative weakness of the Southern male to cope with it.

Quentin’s story is continued in *Absalom, Absalom!* as he learns the details of the Sutpen family during the 19th century from Rosa Coldfield and his father. The history that Quentin learns becomes the story he tells when asked about the South while at Harvard, and the latter parts of the novel include Quentin and his roommate Shreve reconstructing the downfall of the both the South and the Sutpen family. At the conclusion of *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin is left to contemplate whether or not he resents the South based upon Sutpen’s story. Faulkner leads us to believe that he does, and this recognition starts the downward spiral leading to Quentin’s suicide shortly thereafter. Therefore *Absalom, Absalom!* can be seen as a story directly concerned with how Quentin’s history has left his mental health in a state of despair.

Towards the beginning of his meeting with her, Rosa tells Quentin that he has been “fortunate enough to escape” (5) the events that she is about to relate, the obvious irony being that Quentin has not only not escaped these events, but they will now haunt

his consciousness as he tries to decipher them for himself. Faulkner means for Quentin to embody the South as it moves on in history, and, therefore, Quentin cannot escape the past events that are very much a part of his present life: “[Quentin’s] very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. He was a barracks filled with stubborn back-looking ghosts still recovering, even forty-three years afterward, from the fever which had cured the disease” (7). Quentin experiences the Sutpen traditions as details that provide the basis for his mental instability and lead to his suicide.

Thomas Sutpen, in contrast, understands the importance of having no past, and makes this a key aspect of his persona when he enters the South and begins work on Sutpen’s Hundred in *Absalom, Absalom!*. The day he arrives is marked by mystery: “that Sunday morning in June 1833 when he first rode into town out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion, apparently out of nothing” (7). In fact, Quentin’s grandfather is the only person “to whom Sutpen ever told anything about his past” (30-31), directly linking Quentin to the Sutpen tragedy. Sutpen essentially attempts to enact Quentin’s vision of “never [having] them” by eliminating his past. In the eyes of Mr. Compson, the fatalist who believes history will always control one’s destiny, however, the fight is lost from the start. As he puts it, Sutpen is fighting “not only human, but natural forces...compromising his dream and his ambition like you must with the horse which you take across country...which you control only through your ability to keep the animal from realizing that actually you cannot, that actually it is the stronger” (41).

Sutpen's lack of control over his past causes his tragic downfall, as his son Henry kills Charles Bon, a forgotten child that Sutpen has meant to keep hidden, and thus ruins the Sutpen bloodline and hope of future prosperity for the plantation. The fatal aspects of this story are all the more emphasized because Mr. Compson is the one telling it, reshaping history for his own ends of teaching Quentin. Sutpen dies in the most symbolically fatal way possible, being slashed with a scythe, the traditional tool of death.

Quentin muses on his father's tale of Sutpen and realizes that Sutpen's awareness became his downfall, which matches Quentin's own frustrations some forty years later. Quentin thinks, "*Mad impotent old man who realized at last that there must be some limit even to the capabilities of a demon for doing harm, who must have seen his situation as that of the show girl, the pony, who realizes that the principal tune she prances to comes not from horn and fiddle and drum but from a clock and calendar*" (148). Quentin feels Sutpen's pain, because it is a pain with which Quentin can be very sympathetic: at this point in 1910, Quentin has already begun contemplating suicide as an answer to his haunted past. When Quentin, in turn, tells Sutpen's story to Shreve, he emphasizes the fact that Sutpen "couldn't even realise yet that [Sutpen's] trouble, his impediment, was innocence because he would not be able to realise that until he got it straight" (188), musings on innocence and tradition that form an eerie parallel to Quentin's own looming suicide.

It is almost as though Quentin is defending himself when he defends Sutpen's story: "Because [Sutpen] was not mad. He insisted on that to Grandfather. He was just thinking, because he knew that something would have to be done about it; he would have to do something about it in order to live with himself for the rest of his life and he could

not decide what it was because of that innocence which he had just discovered he had, which (the innocence, not the man, the tradition) he would have to compete with” (189). This rings true for Quentin; for as the novel ends he is left thinking to himself, “*I don’t hate it!*” (303) when considering if his Southern heritage affects him, the obvious implication being that it certainly does, and in fact plays a big part in his decision to commit suicide. In his defense of Sutpen’s sanity, Quentin ironically reveals the mental instability that the story exposes in him. Thus *Absalom, Absalom!* is a chilling prequel to Quentin’s narrative in *The Sound and the Fury*, as well as a detailed explanation of the burden of family heritage. These issues are unresolved at the conclusion of both novels.

Like Quentin, Darl seems to exist entirely in thought and consistently fails to act in *As I Lay Dying*. In fact, the resistance to movement and embrace of complacency is very prominent in Darl and his father Anse, implying a resistance to progress on the part of the whole family. The opening words of Anse’s first section are, “Durn that road. And it fixing to rain, too. I can stand here and same as see it with second-sight” (35), which tips the reader to his natural inclination to avoid the road, both literally and symbolically, and his tendency towards standing still. The coming rain is also referenced many times by both Darl and Anse, who assume an attitude of inevitability that recalls the fatalism of both Quentin and Mr. Compson. Anse is frustrated with the illogical way in which God has created man, insisting, “When He aims for something to be always a-moving, He makes it long ways, like a road or a horse or a wagon,” but he follows his frustration with an acceptance of the order of things: “when He aims for something to stay put, He makes it up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man. And so He never aimed for folks to live on a road” (36). Peabody, the family doctor, even comments that Anse

should have “trees roots” (42) because he rarely moves, and “has not been in town in twelve years” (42). Anse’s immobility obviously hurts the Bundrens’ chances at progressing as a family. Another town man, Samson, remarks of Anse that, “it aint the moving he hates so much as the starting and the stopping” (114), which all but decides the Bundrens’ ability to thrive in what has become a constantly changing culture. A late scene in the novel is symbolic of the Bundrens’ getting left behind in the South, as Darl notices, “[a] car comes over the hill. It begins to sound the horn, slowing. It runs along the roadside in low gear, the outside wheels in the ditch, and passes us and goes on” (228). Darl’s immobility contrasts sharply with Bayard’s realization to take action in “An Odor of Verbena.”

Darl laments the inevitable movement away from youth and into a state of fear in a very similar manner as Quentin, damning time as an unstoppable motor. “How do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no-sound, the weary gestures wearily recapitulant: echoes of old compulsions with no-hand on no-strings: in sunset we fall into furious attitudes, dead gestures of dolls” (207), thinks Darl, adding later the hope that “[if] you could just ravel out into time. That would be nice. It would be nice if you could just ravel out into time” (208).

The Bundrens’ inability to progress in Southern society confuses Darl and he begins to contemplate his existence. Early on Darl comments that “[in] a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not” (80). Peabody further suggests the capabilities of the mind when he admits that “I can remember how

when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind” (44). Yet Darl’s tendency to overuse his mind has dire consequences, as Cora Tull relates: “For the Lord aimed for him to do and not to spend too much time thinking, because his brain is like a piece of machinery: it wont stand a whole lot of racking” (71). Thus it is no surprise that Darl ends up laughing and referring to himself in the third person on his way to Jackson, albeit ironically on a railroad, the very symbol of progress. It is that very inability to progress away from his family’s inaction that leads to his insanity.

Bayard’s conclusion is the exact opposite of Darl’s and he indeed overcomes the very things, inaction and insanity, that are Darl’s downfall. Perhaps Faulkner has tired of his characters standing by helplessly at the moment of truth, impotent to effect any change on the landscape. Unlike Quentin (suicide), Darl (insanity), and Sutpen (murder), Bayard does not fail and acts in a morally and humanly correct way while keeping his sanity intact, making him a triumph over all of his predecessors. He almost telepathically drives his father’s killer out of town through a peaceful approach that goes against the expectations of Wilkins, Wyatt, Ringo, Drusilla, and presumably the entire Southern tradition. It is also important to note that Bayard narrates his story from some point in the future, which makes him Faulkner’s first protagonist to thrive beyond the novel’s end. Bayard seeks to find a different kind of justice in the South, one that is both righteous and non-violent.

In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner first examines the idea of justice in the South through a young lawyer named Horace Benbow. Horace has left the safety of his marriage and stumbles into the murder trial of Lee Goodwin during his travels. Horace, like Bayard,

attempts to do the right thing and uphold true justice as he sees it, for he knows Goodwin is innocent. Yet, Horace's inherent belief in true justice and the civilized code of men is tested throughout the novel, with Horace left shocked and impotent after he realizes that his brand of justice is defeated by the Southern code of violence and revenge.

Horace is a lawyer attempting to uphold justice in the South and find common benevolence among men. Goodwin is accused of murdering a black man named Tommy, when the actual murderer is the evil Popeye. Goodwin will not confess to knowledge of Popeye's guilt out of fear that Popeye will kill him as well. The old Southern code of violence and revenge is thus introduced, a code that Bayard experiences later in *The Unvanquished*. However, Horace's fundamental beliefs are contrary to the barbarity of revenge. He takes Goodwin's case because he "cannot stand idly by and see injustice" (119) constantly reiterating that "law, justice, [and] civilization" (132) serve as protection for humankind. When Goodwin's wife, Ruby, admits to Horace that she will not be able to pay him for his legal services, Horace responds, "'It's not that. You know it's not that. But cant you see that perhaps a man might do something just because he knew it was right, necessary to the harmony of things that it be done?'" (275).

Yet *Sanctuary* is full of constant reminders that Horace's fight is in vain, similar to the reminders of people who try to encourage Bayard to shoot Redmond. When Horace nobly tells his sister's maid, Miss Jenny, of his defense case, she harshly responds, "[you] won't ever catch up with injustice, Horace" (119). Indeed, lies and injustice begins to sprout from all sides, eventually overwhelming Horace and crippling his righteous battle. The "most reliable newspaper" (176) runs a false story about Temple Drake's whereabouts. The District Attorney that opposes Horace in the case is

exposed as a cheater in a poker game that is played “behind drawn shades” (262). The inherent injustice in the South makes Horace’s battle a losing cause, as there is no brand of true justice. After glass is broken in a store, a man remarks, ““Suppose somebody broke it while we was there. Suppose they couldn’t ketch who done it. Do you reckon they’d let us out withouten we paid our share?”” (191). In the absence of doing what is right, false justice and revenge rule the Southern landscape, and Horace’s failure to do right sends him into mental despair.

Sanctuary is rife with mirrors and reflections, which shows a duality in man and forces him to reconsider his true nature, as Bayard is forced to do. The novel opens with Horace, fresh from leaving his wife, taking a drink in a pool near the Old Frenchman’s Place, but being interrupted. “In the spring the drinking man leaned his face to the broken and myriad reflection of his own drinking. When he rose up he saw...the shattered reflection of Popeye’s straw hat” (4). Horace has seen Popeye’s reflection in his own, and this serves as a grim foreshadowing of what Horace is to discover about humanity. The duality of man is further implied by a description of Popeye having “two simultaneous expressions” (5), suggesting there are two sides to every man, with the evil side gradually coming face to face with the innocent, as literally occurs when Horace and Popeye “squatted so, facing one another across the spring, for two hours” (5). The preliminary showdown that frees Horace to begin his journey towards self-realization foreshadows the inner conflict that is to come for the young lawyer. Once Horace recognizes his own duality, he cannot turn back, and he “[finds] a seat at the rear, facing backward” (178) on a train. The position on the train is illustrated masterfully, as the reader can picture Horace moving away from his past and into the courageous

responsibility of awareness, staring straight back at his lost past with despair and, most likely, fear.

IV. The Doomed Gender Partnership in Southern Heritage

The Southern heritage creates mental conflicts for Faulkner's characters, but the male protagonists are always pushed to their downfall by a female influence. *The Unvanquished* not only sees Bayard redefine his heritage, but also redefine the male/female dynamic in Faulkner's work. Bayard's triumph over his heritage and subsequent mental stability are made significantly more important because his female cousin, Drusilla, inadvertently helps facilitate his progress. Thus it is not only important *what* Bayard triumphs over, but also *how*. Up until *The Unvanquished* Faulkner's female serves as a rival or even an enemy of the male. "An Odor of Verbena" presents a significant shift in Faulkner's work in that in it the male learns from the female and triumphs.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin is the oldest sibling in a family that consists of three sons and one daughter. Much of the distress that Quentin endures in the second section of the novel stems directly from his past relationship with Caddy, and the form of a female in his life presents him with a responsibility that he is ultimately unable to uphold. Quentin has romanticized his role in relation to Caddy, something he has learned from his father and the tradition of the South. "Father and I protect women from one another from themselves our women" (96), he possessively rambles while away at Harvard. Quentin is struggling with the fact that Caddy needs to be her own person, and

her independence contrasts with his need to protect her. In recollections of his youth, Quentin remembers hearing some advice from an anonymous voice, presumably that of Dilsey or perhaps one of his parents, that “Caddy’s a woman too remember. She must do things for women’s reasons too” (92), which is meant to calm him after he learns of the existence of Dalton Ames, Caddy’s lover. For Quentin, his inability to control Caddy’s actions is a failure of duty, a duty that has been passed down to him by generations of Southern men protecting their compassionate, yet complacent, women.

Complicating the problem is Quentin’s inability to distinguish between the role of sister and the role of lover. When Quentin attempts to correct Caddy’s behavior when they are younger, he cannot help but sexualize his memory of her, as occurs when he recalls her getting wet down at the branch in 1898, and taking off her dress: “Then she didn’t have on anything but her bodice and drawers, and Quentin slapped her” (18). This scene details the symbolic stain on her morality and subsequently Quentin’s conscience. Quentin sees Caddy’s purity as a triumph for the traditional Southern ways he has been taught, and thus has great difficulty dealing with her morally ambiguous forays into womanhood and his own incestuous responses to them. He dwells on the fact that there are “Roses. Not virgins like dogwood, milkweed” (77) at Caddy’s wedding. In fact, Quentin sees himself as a Christ figure, as a martyr for the South, as he expresses in his opening thoughts of the novel’s second section. “Like Father said down the long and lonely light-rays you might see Jesus walking, like...Father said that. That Christ was not crucified: he was worn away by a minute clicking of little wheels. That had no sister” (76-77). In this light, it seems as though Quentin wants to be a redeemer for the

South, sacrificing himself for its values, but his sister will not let him. As long as she acts immorally, Quentin will view himself as a disgrace.

Quentin's own need for a female to protect and support, specifically a sister, continues in his interactions with a young Italian girl he meets at Harvard just before his suicide. The young girl is alone, and Quentin admits that, "I reckon that's what to do", I said. 'I've got to do something with her...Come on, sister'" (130). By referring to her as "sister" and taking responsibility for her, Quentin is filling a large void inside of himself that was created by losing Caddy. Quentin refers to the girl as "sister" many times before the appearance of her actual brother, Julio, who is furious that Quentin has assumed his duty as older brother. Julio accuses Quentin of "[stealing his] sister" (139), displaying the exact dependency that Quentin has admitted to having with Caddy. Quentin does not understand at first, but once he realizes the irony of his situation, he has a reaction that Faulkner uses for the moments of self-realization of many characters: he laughs.

Quentin's laughter is another step in his downward spiral, and a bystander even remarks, "he's crazy, I believe" (140). The laughter shows the helplessness that Quentin now feels in fighting for his cause, that perhaps he has succumbed to the fatalistic life his father has convinced him of, and that his relationship with Caddy is the conduit. Quentin's constant refrain of "[did] you ever have a sister?" (166) when frustrated with his roommates reinforces the importance that Caddy has for him. She thus facilitates his downfall by acting impurely by Southern standards, and Quentin commits suicide because of it.

Like Quentin, Darl Bundren is the male sibling who cannot come to grips with his relationship to his younger sister, Dewey Dell, in *As I Lay Dying*. Early on in the novel, Darl is depicted as "different from those others" (21) by Cora Tull, a friend of the family.

Indeed, the difference in Darl is due to the fact that he is “queer, lazy” (24) and often cannot speak or act because his heart is “too full for words” (25). Dewey Dell distinctly notices Darl’s intuition because she shares an almost telepathic relationship with him. Dewey Dell explains the realization that her brother has of her secret pregnancy because “[Darl] said he knew without the words like he told me that ma is going to die without the words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us” (27). When Darl sees Dewey Dell carrying a parcel to the wagon before their journey to bury their mother, he knows what she is up to just by looking at her eyes, thinking, “within them I can see Peabody’s back like two round peas in two thimbles” (103). The telepathic relationship that Darl and Dewey Dell share exhibits an eerie connection between the two, and although there is no mention of incestuous desire, Darl seems overtly concerned with her unplanned pregnancy. Like Quentin, he has learned from his father to care for his mother and sister. Anse thinks to himself, “I am a man and I can stand it; it’s on your womenfolk’s, your ma and sister that you should care for, and I turned and looked back at [Darl] and him setting there, laughing” (106), which parallels Quentin’s laughter in response to his male obligations to the Italian girl.

When Darl is apprehended and sent away to a Jackson insane asylum for setting fire to the barn that houses his mother’s body, Dewey Dell is the first to restrain him, as she wants him to go away and thus keep her secret pregnancy hidden. “[Dewey Dell] hadn’t said a word, hadn’t even looked at [Darl], but when them fellows told him what they wanted and that they had come to get him and he throwed back, she jumped on him like a wild cat so that one of the fellows had to quit and hold her and her scratching and

clawing at him like a wild cat” (237). Thus Dewey Dell facilitates the capture of Darl so he can be sent to the Jackson asylum. She desperately wants her pregnancy to be kept a secret, and sacrifices Darl to accomplish this. Not only has Darl attempted to burn his mother’s body, but his sister, whom he protects, has turned on him. Darl’s only response, like Quentin’s, is exhibited “on the train, laughing” (253) at the futility of his protective efforts. The burden has been too much for Darl, as Cash explains at the end of the novel that “it is better so for him. This world is not his world; this life his life” (261).

Horace Benbow also depends on his sister Narcissa, only to be let down by her at the end of *Sanctuary*. Horace vehemently denies his dependence, saying, “It wasn’t Narcissa I was running to. I haven’t quit one woman to run to the skirts of another” (107), but of course that’s exactly what he does when he leaves his wife. The male Horace needs the female counterpart, and a rivalry is hinted at between Narcissa and Horace’s wife, Belle, for this position. Miss Jenny explains, “If you keep on expecting him to run off from Belle, he will do it...But Narcissa wouldn’t be satisfied, even then” (26). Immediately after this comment, Jenny makes a jest at the chivalric competition between Narcissa’s suitor, Gowan Stevens, and Horace for Narcissa’s affections, joking, “Narcissa, will you send up to the chest in the attic and get the dueling pistols?” (26). Even the symbolism used for Caddy’s decline from moral purity in *The Sound and Fury* is imitated here, as Horace recollects how, when they were younger, Narcissa had gotten “muddy bottoms” (122) from playing in a canal. He also recollects her “naked feet” (123), furthering the incestuous and dutiful feelings he had towards her as a child. Clearly, Horace is torn between his duties to his wife and to his sister, a conflict that is only exacerbated by the fact that Narcissa has had different men since her husband died,

When a man driving Horace remarks, “We got to protect our girls” (298) he recalls the injunction given by Anse to Darl and Mr. Compson to Quentin.

Much like Caddy and Dewey Dell, Narcissa causes the downfall of her male counterpart by deceptively undermining him. When Horace explains to Narcissa his plans for the Goodwin case, she is eerily interested in who the District Attorney that will be opposing Horace is, explaining to Miss Jenny that she “just wondered” (186). Miss Jenny the motive behind Narcissa’s meddling, though, responding with “Fiddlesticks,” foreshadowing Narcissa’s future involvement in Horace’s case. When the trial begins and Horace is unable to track down the key witness, Temple Drake, because the District Attorney has gotten to her first, thanks to Narcissa’s tip, Narcissa’s undermining of Horace’s entire case renders him impotent to protect Goodwin and uphold justice as he sees it. At the trial’s conclusion, Horace is described as an “old man” (291) and is truly broken by the injustice that prevails. “He began to cry, sitting in the car beside his sister” (292). His mental instability now apparent, he attempts to call his stepdaughter, Little Belle, but cannot find the words to speak to her. “I just wanted to tell you...” (301), are Horace’s last words of the novel, as his consciousness has been rattled and his progress impeded by Narcissa and Temple. His wife then reminds him to “[lock] the back door” (301), which Horace surely will do in light of the injustice and revenge that will seemingly never leave the South.

Like Horace and Narcissa, Henry and Judith Sutpen are described as “curious” (A, A! 62), and the maturation of the two only makes their relationship more interesting. Henry and Judith are described as having “something of that fierce impersonal rivalry between two cadets in a crack regiment who eat from the same dish and sleep under the

same blanket and chance the same destruction and who risk the death for one another not for the other's sake but for the sake of unbroken front of the regiment itself" (62-63). They are so close and similar, in fact, that they form a relationship not unlike that of Dewey Dell and Darl in that they communicate in their own language and exist almost symbiotically. "The two of them, brother and sister, curiously alike as if the difference in sex had merely sharpened the common blood to a terrific, an almost unbearable, similarity, speaking to one another in short brief staccato sentences like slaps" (139). The "short brief staccato sentences" turn into telepathic communication, as Henry facilitates the relationship between his friend, and half brother, Charles Bon, and Judith. "As though by means of that telepathy with which as children they seemed at times to anticipate one another's actions as two birds leave a limb at the same instant; that rapport not like the conventional delusion of that between twins but rather such as might exist between two people who, regardless of sex or age or heritage of race or tongue, had been marooned at birth on a desert island" (79).

Similar to the way Quentin values Caddy's purity, Henry is conscious of his "fierce provincial's pride in his sister's virginity" (77). The incestuous nature of Henry and Judith's relationship is obvious, as Henry recruits the man, Charles Bon, whom he has "aped [in] clothing and manner" (76) to take his place and marry Judith because Henry is not able to. In this sense, Bon has "seduced [Henry] as surely as he seduced Judith" (76), which suggests that both Henry and Judith use Bon as a surrogate for each other. The cyclical relationship of the three is made tragically ironic by the fact that Bon is partly their brother, leaving both men to fill the role of protector for Judith, a job that only one can do. "She was just the blank shape, the empty vessel in which each of them

strove to preserve, not the illusion of himself nor his illusion of the other but what each conceived the other to believe him to be” (95). The level of denial existing between Bon and Henry thus achieves magnificent proportions, with Judith in the center as the conduit for the conflict’s projection.

Judith facilitates Henry’s murder of Bon because her purity comes into question when Bon’s secret is discovered. Henry murders Bon not because the marriage would be a form of incest, for he admits, “kings have done it! Even dukes!” (273). The reason for the murder is the discovery that Bon’s “mother is part negro” (282). Henry cannot allow a Negro to marry his sister, and thus must do all he can to stop the marriage. Bon forces Henry to murder him by admitting that his true identity is not as Henry’s brother, but as “the [Negro] that’s going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry” (286). Henry must protect his sister and his family, and is forced into violence. His sister’s purity in combination with his duty as a Southern man causes him to commit murder. Most importantly, Henry disappears after this event until Rosa discovers him hidden in his father’s mansion over forty years later, where he is eventually burned alive. In attempting to protect his sister from sleeping with a Negro, Henry’s life is destroyed.

V. “An Odor of Verbena” Resolves Heritage and Gender Rivalry

The relationship between Bayard and Drusilla is underdeveloped during the first six stories of *The Unvanquished* and does not take on the significance of Faulkner’s past relationships until “An Odor of Verbena.” In fact, Drusilla and Bayard have very little contact at all until “An Odor of Verbena,” during which Faulkner changes the entire

nature of their relationship to match his previous pairings more closely. Drusilla's first introduction casts her as drastically different from the typical Southern lady. "Then we all heard the horse at once; we just had time to look when Bobolink came up the road out of the trees and went across the railroad and into the trees again like a bird, with Cousin Drusilla riding astride like a man and sitting straight and light as a willow branch in the wind. They said she was the best woman rider in the country" (88-89). She rides with the freedom of a "bird," evoking a free flying spirit not easily held down, but natural to the open air. She rides like a man, on a horse rather than in a carriage. Furthermore, her brother Denny refers to her as "Dru" (89), a decidedly masculine-sounding nickname. She "had on pants, like a man" (89) and is introduced by Bayard as not married (her fiancé has perished in the war), with no aspirations to marry, but rather to "[ride] in Cousin John's troop not to find a man but to hurt Yankees" (191). Drusilla's character is solidified by her most powerful expression of independence when she says to Bayard:

'Who wants to sleep now, with so much happening, so much to see? Living used to be dull, you see. Stupid. You lived in the same house your father was born in and your father's sons and daughters had the sons and daughters of the same negro slaves to nurse and coddle, and then you grew up and you fell in love with your acceptable young man and in time you would marry him, in your mother's wedding gown perhaps and with the same silver for presents she had received, and then you settled down forever more while your husband got children on your body for you to feed and bathe and dress until they grew up too; and then you and your husband died quietly and were buried together maybe on a summer afternoon just before suppertime. Stupid, you see.' (100-101)

Because the previous six stories present little to no connection between the two aside from Drusilla's defiant nature towards male relationships, the exposure of Bayard's past closeness with Drusilla in "An Odor of Verbena" suggests a turn of events. Bayard reveals that "I was twenty then and she and I would walk in the garden in the summer

twilight” (219). It is during these walks, one month before Bayard’s confrontation with Redmond, that Drusilla implores, “[kiss] me, Bayard” (227), to which Bayard promptly refuses due to her romantic association with his father. Drusilla cannot be denied, however, and Bayard kisses her soon thereafter.

Bayard’s final change comes as a result of his relationship with Drusilla, who ultimately provides him with not only the courage to face Redmond, but the compassion to do it humanely. The “sprig of verbena” (219) in Drusilla’s hair becomes the key, as it is “the only scent you could smell above the smell of horses and courage and so it was the only one that was worth the wearing” (220). This scent symbolizes the courage with which Drusilla has provided Bayard. The verbena smell is invoked for Bayard by the mere sight of Drusilla, and thus it is ingrained psychologically in him to the point that it is purely Drusilla giving him this courage rather than an actual smell that makes him forget rain and horses. Instead of endlessly torturing Bayard (like Caddy does Quentin, Dewey Dell does Darl, Narcissa and Temple do Horace, and Judith does Henry), Drusilla facilitates his triumph by giving him courage and teaching him compassion.

The final story in *The Unvanquished* begins in a similar way as Faulkner’s other works, in that the female Drusilla is preparing to facilitate Bayard’s downfall. When Bayard goes back home from the university, he knows “Drusilla [will] be waiting for [him] beneath all the festive glitter of chandeliers...holding the two loaded pistols” (219). The reader familiar with Faulkner’s works, in light of the previously meddlesome behavior of female characters, expects this to be the beginning of the end for Bayard. He will either be killed when he faces Redmond, or, even worse, kill Redmond and thus

become the target for further revenge, perpetuating the cyclical nature of violence and revenge in the South.

At this point, the reader expects Bayard to fail because all of the typical pieces are in place. Not only has Faulkner set up the expectations of Bayard's heritage, but he has also revealed Bayard's inner monologue and mental conflict. To complete the story, Faulkner would customarily have the female rival facilitate the male's final downfall. Only a change occurs, and Drusilla is able to find a man beyond Grumby's murderer within Bayard. Bayard recalls a time that he has shared with Drusilla some two months before his father's murder, and he says to her that he will "never forget Grumby" (227).

Drusilla responds:

You never will. I wouldn't let you. There are worse things than killing men, Bayard. There are worse things than being killed. Sometimes I think the finest thing that can happen to a man is to love something, a woman preferably, well, hard hard hard, then to die young because he believed what he could not help but believe and was what he could not (could not? would not) help but be. (227)

Drusilla strikes a chord in Bayard, and looks at him "in a way she never had before" (227). Bayard admits that neither of them understands the significance of this point, for John will not be murdered for two months. Drusilla and Bayard kiss, and unbeknownst to Drusilla, she has instilled love and compassion in Bayard, which prove to be the main feelings missing from Faulkner's Southern males. After Bayard first learns love and compassion, he exclaims that he is now "free" (228).

Indeed, when Bayard finally arrives after his father's murder, he meets Drusilla, who hands him the "two duelling pistols" (237) as expected. She describes the pistols as "true as justice" (237). Faulkner even displays the scene of Drusilla handing Bayard the

pistols in a picture at the start of “An Odor of Verbena” which emphasizes the importance of Drusilla’s presence. After handing Bayard the pistols and verbena, she takes his hand and “[kisses] it” (238). Drusilla then realizes that Bayard is not planning to kill Redmond, while the two stare at each other in silence “for a whole minute” (239). In a master stroke, Faulkner reverses the roles and Drusilla “[begins] to laugh, the laughter rising, becoming a scream yet still remaining laughter, screaming with laughter...the laughter spilling between her fingers like vomit, the incredulous betrayed eyes still watching [Bayard] across the hand” (239). Drusilla has “kissed his hand!” (239), as she repeats in disbelief. Drusilla cannot believe her lack of foresight, as she accidentally facilitates a change in Bayard. Ironically, she teaches Bayard compassion and love, something that John Sartoris fatally lacks with his dead “eyelids closed over the intolerance” (236) and his “intolerant heart” (237) no longer beating. Drusilla inadvertently brings out the humanity in Bayard, and the murderer who slays Grumby is overshadowed. The verbena does not simply give Bayard courage; it gives him the courage to be true to the compassion and love he learns from Drusilla. Horace Benbow’s courage is famously missing. Without the duality of Horace as both a man of justice and of evil urges, it is perhaps not possible to see Bayard’s duality, but with *Sanctuary* for contrast, the change is clearly evident. As the males in earlier novels are reduced to laughter in the face of their futile struggle, Drusilla is now the one laughing at her own ineffectual efforts. Without Darl’s laughter on the train to Jackson, or Quentin’s laughter days before his suicide, Drusilla’s actions and subsequent laughter are considerably less ironic and significant.

VI. Conclusion

On Bayard's way to the confrontation with Redmond, Faulkner evokes the image of a "mockingbird" (241) singing, sealing the useless nature of vengeful killing. After Bayard peacefully and courageously faces Redmond unarmed, there "was a mockingbird singing in the magnolia" (252), reminding the reader that Bayard has made the right choice and acted compassionately, leaving the mockingbird be. In fact, the absence of compassion has been the main trait lacking in the Southern males, and Bayard has had to learn it from Drusilla to break away from his heritage and thrive in the new South. Drusilla, likewise, progresses as a female because of the independence she learns from John Sartoris. As a result, both genders are able to progress. Whereas Faulkner previously had set the gender pairings as rivals, a major change occurs in *The Unvanquished* where the genders learn from each other and combine to break away from history's weight and actually achieve progress, away from the Southern past that has caused inner conflict and despair. The climactic final chapter of *The Unvanquished* is ironic in its role reversal, and symbolic in its redefinition of the Southern Code. "An Odor of Verbena" would be neither of these without the precedents that Faulkner's earlier novels have set.

In light of the weight that Faulkner's previous works provide for *The Unvanquished* in their many parallel aspects, the novel is best kept until the others have been experienced. When Bayard talks about the importance of movement and action rather than thought, the knowledge of Darl's failures makes Bayard's decision significantly more difficult. When Drusilla and Bayard engage in a kiss, the experienced

reader is weary of the incestuous impulses that weigh upon Henry, Quentin, and Horace. The looming figure of John Sartoris and his influence on Bayard's maturation should stir echoes of Quentin's constant preoccupation with his father's advice and expectations, as well as Anse's influence on Darl. The female's presence in the climactic conflict should signal the reader of the male's imminent failure, as with Quentin, Darl, Henry, and Horace. Rather than portray these themes coming full circle with Bayard, Faulkner returns to of his previously unresolved issues and settles them in the conclusion of Bayard's story. Therefore, although the conclusion is unsubstantiated relative to the six stories that precede it, it is a grand retribution for Faulkner's characters in the larger scope, as well as for the reader who has patiently waded through failure after failure in Yoknapatawpha.

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