

THE PORTRAYAL OF HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS
IN SIX OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S NOVELS

by 1264

REBECCA ANN BOOSTROM
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Approved by:

Paul McCarty
Major Professor

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Sustained heterosexual love is not portrayed in William Faulkner's novels.¹ Love is usually a passion of the sexually awakened and soon subsides. Yet the dying² or the absence of love is not a major concern in Faulkner. In almost all of Faulkner's major works, love is not thematically considered. Only at the beginning of his career, in Soldier's Pay, and toward the end of his writing, as in The Wild Palms, did he directly, thematically treat love. The critical question which arises is -- how are heterosexual relationships portrayed in the general absence of a portrayal of heterosexual love? Are there any patterns in the portrayal of heterosexual relationships?

¹Leslie Fiedler presents the thesis that the American novel has never depicted normal and mature heterosexual love in Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Criterion Books, 1960); cf. pp. 309-315, 443-449 for discussions of Faulkner.

Irving Howe notes that "seldom in Faulkner's work do we find a mature recognition of the possibilities in the relations between men and women--possibilities, I might specify, of fulfilled love and tragic complication. And a writer unable to summon the first of these is likely to have trouble in reaching the second" in William Faulkner: A Critical Study (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 141.

Howe points out three exceptions to Faulkner's usual treatment of the sexes, but these cases are not examples of sustained love. Lee Goodwin in Sanctuary is burned at the stake by a mob. Jack Houston in The Hamlet is murdered by Mink Snopes. Gavin Stevens' platonic, idealistic love for Linda Snopes, in The Town, causes him to marry, in The Mansion, another woman, keeping a promise he made to Linda.

²For a study of the patterns of other failures in Faulkner's works, consult Walter J. Slatoff's Quest for Failure: A Study of William Faulkner (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960).

In this study of heterosexual relationships in Faulkner, six novels will be considered, first of all, as representative of different chronological stages in Faulkner's development. Mosquitoes (1927) and Sanctuary (1929, 1931)³ are early novels; Light in August (1932) and Absalom, Absalom! (1936) are from the height of Faulkner's most mature and prolific period; and at the end of that same middle, prolific period are The Wild Palms (1939) and Go Down Moses (1942).

The patterns discernible in Faulkner's portrayal of heterosexual relationships do not always neatly fit into periods within his writing, but a study of two novels at a time which were written in close sequence will immediately show certain general changes or patterns in Faulkner's emphasis and attitudes. Mosquitoes and Sanctuary are both examples of Faulkner's early emphasis on female protagonists and his serious, sometimes scathing concern with female sexuality. With Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner turns from a concentration on the female to a focus on dominant, tragic male figures. He writes about how dominant forces within Southern culture, and not women, determined these male protagonists' lives. The Wild Palms and Go Down Moses, representative of the later part of Faulkner's middle period, will be the last two novels considered in this study because they illustrate a completion of Faulkner's gradual change from a basically serious and critical approach to an accepting, humorous or humorously satirical treatment of

³The first version of Sanctuary was composed in 1927; the revised version was composed in 1929 and published in 1931. Cf. Melvin Backman, Faulkner: The Major Years, A Critical Study (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 41.

problematic male-female relationships.⁴ The advance to a humorous, accepting approach to heterosexual relationships, from an earlier serious, sometimes outraged, approach, shows a maturity in Faulkner's thought which, to this writer's knowledge, is not artistically or thematically surpassed in his late works.

These three patterns of change show a general shift from a concentration on the female to a concentration on the male: (1) the change in character emphasis is from female protagonists to male protagonists, (2) the change in thematic interests is from a concentrated concern with female sexuality to a portrayal of the male's grappling with the forces of the "outside world," and (3) the change in mood is from a serious, often outraged, portrayal of the female's role in the relationship to a humorous, although uncomprehending, "acceptance" by the male of the heterosexual relationship.

Illustrating these changes and also revealing Faulkner's tendency to avoid depicting a true male-female conflict are several narrative devices.

⁴ Leslie Fiedler in Love and Death in the American Novel, pp. 320-324, and Irving Howe in William Faulkner: A Critical Study, pp. 141-144, note that the misogyny in Faulkner's works is directed against the woman's sexual knowledge and actions. Fiedler points out that Faulkner changed his attitude toward women in his late works, The Town and Requiem for a Nun. Howe suggests (in two sentences) that Faulkner's "inclination toward misogyny need not always be taken too literally or solemnly," p. 143, because of the humor often involved in the depiction of women. This study varies with both Fiedler's and Howe's views, with regard to the timing of Faulkner's change in attitude toward women.

As I Lay Dying (1930) is an exception to this broad pattern.

(a) One device utilized by Faulkner in portraying a male-female struggle in which the basic sexual and individual differences need not be portrayed in detail because the nature of the conflict never brings them into play is having the member of one sex be almost completely passive. The passive person, usually a male, is the object of an attack and then withdraws; thus, the relationship is severed and no further interaction need be portrayed. This method of presenting a heterosexual conflict is used in Mosquitoes and in Part IV of "The Bear."

(b) A second device used in portraying a male-female struggle, which does not necessitate an understanding of the psychological make-up of a woman, is depicting the woman as feeling and acting like or wanting to be a man. This female (as male) versus male device is used in the cases of Temple Drake in Sanctuary and Joanna Burden in Light in August.

(c) A third narrative device used by Faulkner which does not require a picturing of the distinctive and subtle differences between individuals of the opposite sexes is presenting the conflict indirectly through a man-to-man fight which arises from heterosexual problems. This technique is particularly used in Absalom, Absalom! and in Go Down Moses.

A primary reason for the general shift in concentration from the female to the male is the lack of depth in Faulkner's portrayal of women characters. A number of studies have been done on Faulkner's women; in these, character types are frequently focused upon or the

women's common characteristics are examined.⁵ Faulkner did limit his portrayal of women characters, and the types he presented in his early works did not appreciably change in the later works. Since he kept depicting women with the same basic characteristics, he had to change the emphasis given to, the thematic importance of, the attitude toward these women, and the method of presenting them within a heterosexual conflict, at least in order to avoid monotony.

A similar or comparable study on the portrayal of heterosexual relationships in a representative number of Faulkner's novels has not been published in periodical form, unless quite recently, and

⁵Elizabeth M. Kerr in "William Faulkner and the Southern Concept of Women," Mississippi Quarterly, XV (1962), pp. 5-16, lists various categorizations by critics of Faulkner's women, especially as noted in three unpublished master's theses, cf. p. 5, n. 1. Miss Kerr's own thesis is that the Southern code for women encourages frustration, perversion, frivolity, or hypocrisy among upper-class women.

Karl E. Zink is aware of the lack of depth in Faulkner's women characters when he concludes: "But his [Faulkner's] young, married or marriageable women share so many generalized traits that despite their individuating features, they all seem the same woman." (p. 143) in Zink's Faulkner's Garden: Woman and the Immemorial Earth, Modern Fiction Studies, II (Autumn 1956), pp. 139-149. Zink's thesis actually only covers women who are united with nature through pregnancy in a common and natural way; his conclusions do not apply to young women who were never pregnant, or to those whose affinity to nature through pregnancy was a peculiar unity.

David M. Miller in "Faulkner's Women," Modern Fiction Studies, XIII, no. 1 (Spring 1967), pp. 3-17, divides the women according to their fertility into groups of "earthmothers" and "ghosts." Miller also writes about a pattern of "earthmother-seedbearer-Prufrock" in Faulkner's depiction of the sexes.

has not been published in a full-length study of Faulkner, unless after 1960.⁶ In this study of six novels, representing three chronological stages in Faulkner's development, the portrayal of heterosexual relationships will be examined as a part of four broad patterns in (1) character emphasis, (2) thematic interests, (3) dominant moods, and (4) narrative devices.

The first two novels in which these patterns will be examined are Mosquitoes, Faulkner's second novel, and Sanctuary, another early work. Since Faulkner emphasizes women as the main characters in these works, much in the discussion of these novels will necessarily concentrate on these women. Understanding these females, especially in their roles with men, should make it easier to understand why Faulkner de-emphasized the importance of the female in later works.

In Mosquitoes Faulkner presents two types of women who will keep reappearing. Pat, the sexually active virgin who "controls" the man sexually and in other ways, becomes Temple Drake, Joanna Burden,

⁶Cf. the "List of Works Consulted" at the end of this paper; especially note the bibliographies compiled by Beebe, Vickery, and Sleeth, and the indexes consulted, Essay and General Literature Index, June, 1955-June, 1968, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Index (formerly International Index), April, 1955-December, 1968.

Frederick Hoffman makes an interesting comment on the nature of the criticism done on Faulkner in full-length studies in book form until 1960: "Some eleven books on Faulkner have already appeared; four or five others are shortly to appear. Those so far published are chiefly 'expositions for the beginner,' containing rather brief statements about the work or, as in Campbell and Foster's, applying as many modern critical suggestions as possible to it." Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery, eds., William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960), p. 50.

Isaac McCaslin's wife and Charlotte Rittenmeyer in later works. Jenny, who is soft, passive, and placid, is the type that reappears later as Lena Grove, the pregnant woman in The Wild Palms, and Eula Varner. These young girls, Pat and Jenny, represent the aggressive and passive types which often complement each other in Faulkner's works. In Mosquitoes Faulkner seems to be experimenting with or "working out" the portrayal of these female types almost apart from their involvement with men—the male characters are stoic observers or uninvolved "talkers," with the exception of the foolish, lecherous "talker," Mr. Talliaferro.

The affair between Pat, the rich Mrs. Maurier's niece, and her newly acquired boyfriend, the steward on her aunt's yacht, is the most developed action in Mosquitoes. Pat aggressively gains the attention of David the steward by inviting him to meet her for a midnight swim. Her control of the friendship is obvious. She cajoles him into swimming in his underwear, and letting her carry him with a lifeguard hold; but four hours later, at their early morning meeting, when she is swimming in the nude, David irritates her by "looking at her with dumb and utter longing."⁷ She proceeds to climb out of the water nude in front of him. When dressed, she holds him and kisses his cheek, but when he responds by starting to kiss her on the mouth, she turns her head and almost ridicules him, despite her seriousness,

⁷William Faulkner, Mosquitoes (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1955), p. 166. Subsequent references to Mosquitoes are to page references in this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

"No, no not that. Everybody does that." (167) She titillates him, but rejects his advances as unoriginal. And he does not protest.

The climax of their relationship occurs when they get lost in a mosquito-infested swamp area. The sexual tedium of the book gains some momentum when Pat flails herself in an effort to drive off the mosquitoes. By noon, in her pain, she goes through the contortions of an agonizing excitement which has sexual overtones—from rocking back and forth, wringing her body "in an ecstasy," to "crouching again in that impossible spasm of agony" to lying "suddenly flat, writhing her back in the dust, clutching his hand." (179)

Throughout their time in the mosquito-infested area, Pat is "boss." Against David's advice, she leads them in the wrong direction, into the swamp. Later, against David's advice, she exhausts herself by running through the hot undergrowth, and then he has to carry her. When David willingly gives her his shirt as a protection against the mosquitoes, she keeps apologizing for taking it and keeps offering to repay the favor—as though she has lost part of her independence by accepting a favor from him. When they hire a boat to get back to the yacht, she pays. She tells David to keep quiet when he tries to cut short the boatman's lurid comments, holds him in his seat when the man calls her a whore, and then orders David to knock the man out of the boat if he says anymore.

David's manliness is seriously called into question, despite his youth, because of his own acquiescence and pliability. He does not react to Pat's domineering ways. He does not try to control her.

Only once on their jaunt through the swamp does he get disgusted and tells her—"You do whatever you want to." (212) Exhausted, she had finally asked him what they should do. Perhaps Faulkner keeps David inactive in order to show the extent to which a woman is a natural "bitch," but the result is that David fulfills the passive, compliant, feminine role in their relationship. His only assertive (or defensive) action is quitting his job as steward and leaving the yacht during the night. In the crises of his and Pat's relationship he was passive; then, instead of continuing their "friendship" with more assertion on his part, or even facing her the next day with a changed attitude, he handles the problematic relationship by escaping it.

Faulkner does not seem to be making any judgement of the behavior of the young people in Mosquitoes. Pat never mentions David after he leaves. The artist Fairchild informs the reader of David's departure (escape) and comments about the previous day's activities: "'The way she went off with Da—the steward. It was kind of nice, wasn't it? And came back. No excuses, no explanations—Think no evil you know. That's what these post-war young folks have taught us.'" (228) This portrayal of the young people as "innocent" contradicts the myth of the twenties that young people were wild and immoral. However, Pat's "innocent," independent, titillating sexual behavior followed by avoidance becomes a form of evil in the personage of Temple Drake in Sanctuary.

In Mosquitoes, though, sexual titillation and sexual experimentation within the limits of virginity are considered amoral. Although Pat climbs into bed with her brother, after following him to his room and lying naked waiting for him to finish his shower, and bites his ear in an apparent ritual between them, no further suggestion of incestual desires is made. An almost neutral tone of observation, except for the mosquitoes incident, pervades this novel, as though the young woman's behavior is completely normal. The mosquitoes incident has strong imagistic suggestions that Pat is being sexually and sadistically punished for being "boss"; Sanctuary will develop on a full-scale the sadistic punishment of a sexually titillating young woman.

In Mosquitoes Jenny is the other young girl who contributes to a focus on sexuality and on a female who controls heterosexual relationships. As a contrast to Pat who initiates the action, Jenny is basically passive. Members of the yacht party are attracted to Jenny although she does not try to gain their attention. She is the object of a sexual interest among both males and females; Mrs. Wiseman, Pat, Josh, Pete, and Mr. Talliaferro like to touch and to pet her, with restraint and without any prolongation, of course.

Jenny views petting action with her boyfriend Pete, Pat's brother Josh, or the lecher Mr. Talliaferro as amoral and quite defensible—"You've got to do something, haven't you?" (141) In her relationships with her boy friend, Pete, almost no action, except a suggestion of advanced petting, is described. While on board the ship Pat lets herself

be petted by Mr. Talliaferro, a seduction-minded fool who constantly talks about techniques leading to seduction but who cannot effectually act. After the yacht trip, Pat accepts a date with him but rejects his sexual advances in the taxi as uncalled for and somewhat offensive and then at the dance hall she dithches him for another man. This rejection incident under different circumstances but with the same basic type personalities is brought to artistic perfection in The Hamlet in Eula Varner's unperturbed dismissal of her schoolmaster's advances: "'Stop pawing me . . . You old headless horseman Ichabod Crane.'"⁸ In Mosquitoes Faulkner was developing the passive, attracting, accepting type female in Jenny that he later enobled as Lena Grove and deified as Eula Varner; even the description is the same—"a suspine fecundity," "her soft placidity, her sheer passive appeal to the senses." (104)

Both Pat and Jenny are young girls who are and remain virgins in Mosquitoes. They are sexually titillating to the older men on the cruise and allow them certain advances. They only become involved, however, with the young boys on board, perhaps because their relationships with them are characterized by a lack of mutual interaction and a dominating, controlling influence on the part of the woman. These young girls and their activities and feelings receive all the emphasis in this novel, and in the heterosexual relationships described.

Temple Drake in Sanctuary is similar, in some ways, to Pat and Jenny in Mosquitoes. All enjoy the companionship of weak men, whom

⁸William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1940), p. 122.

they can control or avoid. They "play" with sex. Temple, however, excites a group of men quite different from the men Pat and Jenny "mess around with" in Mosquitoes. The male is no longer passive. In Sanctuary Faulkner more seriously evaluates the theme gently handled in Mosquitoes—"Fooling with sex, kind of dabbling at it, like a kitten at a ball of string." (326) Faulkner scourges the young female who has not thought about the serious consequences of sexual titillation.

Ruby Goodwin's ideas of love and sex should be examined before discussing Temple Drake's involvement with men, because Temple's story is set against the standards of womanhood described and portrayed by Ruby. Moreover, the closest Faulkner comes to a portrayal of sustained heterosexual love in the novels being considered is ironically in Sanctuary, in Ruby and Lee Goodwin's relationship.

The affair between Ruby and Lee survived as 'love' through his imprisonment, her prostitution (for him), the birth of a child, poverty and rats on a ramshackle farm, and a murder rap eventually involving molestation of a girl he had become sexually interested in. But their love was 'doomed': Goodwin is burned by a mob. The life of Ruby and Lee's love prematurely ends and is only briefly treated in this short novel, but in its depiction Faulkner comes the closest to a portrayal of sustained love.

The background for the Goodwin's love—prison, prostitution, murder, bootlegging, a common-law marriage, and destitution—is not

considered normal or common even in Faulkner's works and perhaps that is why he never expanded on a full scale the ideas of love he portrayed through Ruby and Goodwin. In fact, in The Wild Palms he satirized some of the ideas about love that he seriously presents through Ruby in Sanctuary.

In Sanctuary, however, Faulkner is trying to show in a serious manner that Ruby's love is beyond a concern with respectability and that it has grown out of and been strengthened by suffering:

"I have slaved for that man," the woman whispered.
 . . . "I have worked night shift as a waitress so I
 could see him Sundays at the prison. I lived two years
 in a single room, cooking over a gas-jet, because I
 promised him. I lied to him and made money to get him
 out of prison, and when I told him how I made it, he
 beat me. . . ."9

Unlike Charlotte Rittenmeyer in The Wild Palms, Ruby is in union with nature and thus must be taken seriously. Inadvertently but meaningfully, she is nursing her child alongside a stream in the woods during the time Temple is unnaturally raped in the barn.

Ruby is the chief verbal critic of Temple Drake's approach to feminine sexuality. Her comments are primarily directed against Temple's relationship with her boyfriends, but also against Temple's enticement of the men on the Old Frenchman's Place. She sarcastically points out that Temple's attitude is partly the result of being spoiled and sheltered as an upper-class girl, who can flirt around without having to pay for it:

⁹William Faulkner, Sanctuary (New York: The Modern Library, 1931) p. 59. Subsequent references to Sanctuary are to page references in this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

"Take all you can get, and give nothing. 'I'm a pure girl; I don't do that.' You'll slip out with the kids and burn their gasoline and eat their food, but just let a man so much as look at you and you faint away because your father the judge and your four brothers might not like it." (55)

"But you good women. Cheap sports. Giving nothing, then when you're caught. . . ." (56)

"You poor little gutless gool," the woman said in her cold undertone. "Playing at it." (58)

To a certain extent, Ruby's comments are a criticism of middle-class dating habits when virginity was more highly prized and preserved. Also, her contempt for Temple's easy virtue as a rich girl might come from a jealousy and a regret that she had to pay so dearly for love, when the chastity of her faithfulness to Lee was violated by prostitution. Ruby's comments suggest the idea that Temple needs to be humiliated, rather than to be humbled by sex:

" . . . Nobody asked you to come here. Nobody cares whether you are afraid or not. Afraid? You haven't the guts to be really afraid, any more than you have to be in love." (59)

Temple's relationship with her boyfriend, Gowan Stevens, could have been a source of protection, but unfortunately Ruby had correctly described its shallowness in her comments on college dating. Gowan was half-drunk when he picked up Temple and then wrecked the car near the Old Frenchman's Place, which he was approaching to buy more liquor. Stranded there as a result of his wreck, he became totally drunk, and thus completely incapacitated himself as a protector of Temple. The next morning his self-pride, as Temple's pride the night before, causes him to "run." The thought of seeing Temple among the men again or taking her back to town was a reproach to him, as though she had

already been raped. In his drunken condition, Gowan had struggled to protect her, "'gemman got proteck'" (71), and Temple had called for him "'Gowan, Gowan,'" (59) as Ruby talked to her with hostility about real men and love. But their relationship showed that neither one of them had "guts."

The most complicated heterosexual relationship in Sanctuary is between Temple and Popeye, of course. As Dr. Kubie pointed out, Temple invited her violation and Popeye sadistically responded: "That Temple invited the assault with her provocative, if unconscious, exhibitionism, is unquestionable."¹⁰ A discussion of the rape in this study, however, will try to clarify Temple's attitude as a woman without concentrating on the abnormality of the rape and its aftermath.

In her frantic avoidance of the hardened men engaged in bootlegging on the Old Frenchman's Place, Temple Drake seems to be trying to control her independence as a woman, defiantly trying to define herself as unsubmitive to men, and trying to deny even the necessary physical weakness of being female. Temple, in her own way, is trying to control the men. Concurrent with her attraction of men is a foreknowledge that men will eventually sexually subdue her, and she becomes frightened and frantically tries to avoid the possibility of being subdued. Her reaction to the fear of losing her virginity causes her violation.

¹⁰ Lawrence S. Kubie, M. D., "William Faulkner's Sanctuary: An Analysis," Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. by Robert Penn Warren (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 141.

Later, in the Memphis whorehouse, in retelling her account of the rape, Temple concentrates not on the rape but on the previous night's events when she succeeded both in attracting the men and in avoiding them: "That was the only part of the whole experience which appeared to have left any impression on her at all: the night she had spend in comparative inviolation." (208) On that night she darts around in front of a houseful of men, her scampering advertising the fact that she is tender prey. She is the center of attraction: Tommy keeps following her partly to protect her but literally drools himself; Gowan is concerned about her safety despite his drunkenness; Godwin fights off Van; and Ruby stands guard over her in the dark and then directs her to a safe place to sleep. Significantly she mixes up the time of her actual rape with this night of her sexual attractiveness.

In her memory of this night, she takes a taunting attitude toward Popeye as he stands over her bed. (Tommy and Ruby are guarding her in the dark room.) "Then he was standing over and she was saying, 'Come on. Touch me. Touch! You're a coward if you don't. Coward! Coward!'" (211) This taunting attitude manifests Temple's denial of her womanliness.

Her taunt, first of all, is a refusal to suffer. Her challenge--Go ahead, violate me--is a form of saying, you can't make me suffer. Her subsequent testimony against Goodwin, her lack of self-control in seeing Red, which resulted in his death too, and her co-operation with Popeye indicate that she will not face reality, will not suffer even for her pleasures.

Secondly, Temple's taunting attitude indicates a denial of her womanliness, in that it arises from a literally represented penis-envy. In her dreamlike version of the circumstances of her rape, she believes that she is a boy. This pretence takes the form of a joke on the man. Popeye, she ironically thinks-dreams, will be so surprised when he discovers that she is a boy. The joke, however, is not on him, as even she begins to realize in her memories of a jerking pleasure apparently reminiscent of masturbation as Popeye's cold hand approaches her but never gets there. The next morning Popeye literally fools her with what she does not realize until later is a corn-cob. If a joke has been played, she must bear the brunt of it. Temple's taunting, whimpering, self-righteous behavior aroused a sadistic reaction in a man who could not boast about his masculinity as Temple could take pride in her virginity.

Probably out of pride (and shock) she complies with Popeye after the rape, obeying him, allowing him to reprimand her for self-pity as they start for Memphis. A cowardly pride also apparently keeps her from attempting to escape Popeye in Miss Reba's whorehouse. There she discovers that Popeye needs help, and that even with help, he cannot satisfy her. Instead of facing the truth of her perverse, sadistic rape and becoming upset, she engages in a further perverse activity with a drive for complete gratification. With a certain pride in her sexual awakening and the strength of her sexual feelings, she goes to Red and thus causes his murder. In Red's murder as in Tommy's, a flaunting of her sexuality arouses a sadistic tendency in Popeye. But rather than to admit that she was humiliated by an

impotent man or emotionally subdued by the rape and its aftermath, she proceeds to cause the death of Goodwin, Ruby's lover, a "real man."

Temple's complicity in her relationship with Popeye shows that she is not capable of love, as Ruby defined it, because of her inability to suffer. In her narration of the circumstances of her rape, "Horace realized what she was recounting the experience with actual pride, a sort of naive and impersonal vanity." (209) Temple's pride in her virginity and her flaunting of an unconquerable sexuality, on the night before her rape, are what cause Ruby to realize that Temple does not know how to establish a normal or love relationship with a man. She emphasizes sexuality too much, and Ruby, who prostituted herself for the sake of love, knows the value of and the powers of sexuality.

In Sanctuary, then, love is defined and briefly portrayed by Ruby, but Temple's sexuality is more important. Similarly, in Mosquitoes "love" is mentioned in the conversations of the artists-intellectuals group of men, but the sexual activities of the young people, not love, is portrayed. In these two early novels, Mosquitoes (1927) and Sanctuary (1929, 1931) a concern with female sexuality dominates the novel and directs the portrayal of heterosexual relationships. Concomitant with the emphasis on sexuality in Mosquitoes and Sanctuary is a focus on females who try to control. Most of the actions in Mosquitoes are viewed with an amoral detachment and in Sanctuary a detached, journalistic style prevails. But through the

mosquito incident and the unnatural rape and consequent murders, Faulkner seriously chastizes the young, independent, sexually active, controlling female.

A year after Sanctuary was published, Faulkner published Light in August (1932) and then Absalom, Absalom! (1936). Just as Mosquitoes and Sanctuary were similar in their emphasis on a young controlling female and her sexuality, Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! have parallels with each other in their presentations of heterosexual relationships. For the first time,¹¹ Faulkner creates a mature male who dominates the action of the novel and, in turn, Faulkner sublimates the same female concentrated on in the earlier works to an almost uninfluential position. The women in these novels are instrumental in bringing about the tragic end in the men's lives, but more powerful inner drives or forces shape and control the males' lives and ultimately destroy them. The women in their lives are significant only within the scope of these greater, outside forces. Perhaps Faulkner does not think that a woman is worthy of being the antagonist. In Light in August the tragic hero Joe Christmas is driven by the forces of miscegenation and Calvinism; in Absalom, Absalom! Thomas Sutpen conceives a "design," a dream of social acceptance to which he subordinates all aspects of his life. Joe Christmas is "predestined" to ultimate alienation; "fate" slowly turns the wheel of fortune frustrating all of Thomas Sutpen's attempts to realize his dream of success and

¹¹ Bayard Sartoris, although the protagonist in Sartoris, as a character does not dominate the novel.

acceptance.¹² The "predestination" of Calvinism and the "fate" operating in classical tragedies are always in the background of the tragic heroes' attempts to work out their own lives within the "damning" standards of Southern culture. Not a woman, but the decisive forces of miscegenation and Calvinism or "a design" drive the tragic heroes to their ultimate doom.

In Light in August Calvinism¹³ can be seen as an integral part of the punishment-, prayer-, or sex-incidents in Joe Christmas' life.

¹²For a more detailed discussion of "predestination" cf. Alwyn Berland, "Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII (Summer 1962), pp. 159-170.

For a more detailed discussion of "fate" cf. pp. 282-283 of Ilse Dusoir Lind's "The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!" reprinted in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1963), pp. 278-304.

¹³A detailed discussion of Calvinism in Light in August has been done by the following critics. William Van O'Connor notes that "a Calvinistic spirit is the central issue" in The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), pp. 72-73; cf. also Ilse Dusoir Lind, "The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August," New England Quarterly, XXX (September 1957), pp. 307-329.

Alwyn Berland discusses "the Calvinism which conditions and shapes the world of Joe Christmas" in "Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII (Summer 1962), p. 159.

Cleanth Brooks in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963) refers to Joe Christmas as "the sternest and most thoroughly dedicated 'Calvinist' in the book," p. 65-66.

The alleged fact of Joe's Negro blood, however, can really only be seen working in the relationship he has with Joanna Burden; otherwise, it is always a "taunt" after a change in his life has already been decided upon or necessitated. Besides being a "taunt" which always accompanies Joe's being "on the move," the suggested importance of his blood is always associated with a repulsive sexual encounter with a woman.¹⁴

Joe Christmas apparently is influenced from birth by a fanatically religious hatred of "bitchery," i.e., a distrust of women. Toward the end of the novel, the reader learns that as a new-born baby, Joe was involved in a traumatic incident in which his grandfather allowed his mother to die in childbirth and then took him to an orphanage, where he obtained a job as a janitor to see the workings out of providence with regard to Joe, his grandson, a "bastard" and a "nigger."

Faulkner, of course, does not try to make a direct connection between this womb-rending experience and his later life, but at the age of five, Joe already has feelings of "shock" and "outrage" when a woman is immoral and tries to bribe him.

The important pattern in Joe Christmas' relationships with women which this paper will initially examine is that Christmas does not think that women "play fair."

¹⁴Berland, "Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner," p. 162; in noting that Joe's Negro blood is always important when sex is important too fits this coinciding into his thesis that black or "Negro" stands for original sin or natural depravity, which has always almost exclusively meant "Sex."

Lind, "The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August," pp. 309-329, presents a good discussion of miscegenation.

In the beginning of Light in August the first incident relating to Joe's childhood takes place in the dietician's bedroom at the orphanage. She discovers him there eating toothpaste. Since she has been in bed with a lover preceding the discovery, she tries to bribe him to silence. Even though Joe thinks that the whole problem centers around his eating her toothpaste, he expects, believes he deserves, and wants a punishment; he is "shocked" at the dietician's actions. When he does not accept her bribe, she eventually sees to it that he has to leave the orphanage because of his apparent Negro blood. The punishment and strict discipline of children emphasized by Calvinism was not carried out by the dietician; and at the important Oedipal age of five, when according to Freud a boy usually "falls in love with" his mother or a mother figure, Joe Christmas already evidences a hostile attitude toward women. The anger which he feels toward the dietician turns into disgust in his next narrated encounter with a woman.

Shortly thereafter Joe leaves the orphanage and is placed in the McEachern's home. The narration picks up again on a Sunday morning when Joe is eight. McEachern whips him to the point where he faints because he does not know his catechism. ("He will eat my bread and he will observe my religion. . . ."¹⁵ McEachern had said at the orphanage.) That evening, after McEachern leaves the farm, his wife brings Joe some food in his room. As she watches, he takes it and dumps it on the floor in a corner. Her subterfuge is what he hates:

¹⁵William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 127. Subsequent references to Light in August are to page numbers in this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

several times she tells him, "'He [McEachern] don't know.'" (135)

In his teen-age years Mr. McEachern lets him take her money from a place where she hides it from her husband. Joe does not respect her for her secrecy or for her inadvertent complicity in his sin. Unknown to her, he is using the money to bring small gifts to his girlfriend, a part-time prostitute. Although by this time Joe realizes that Mrs. McEachern is a frustrated wife and mother and that her method of approaching him is childish, he still hates her for her foolish, weak, silly, secretive ways and wants to hurt her by telling her that he is a "nigger."

The attitude Christmas has toward women is always related to the relationships he has with men. On that Sunday morning when McEachern whips him, Joe believes that a punishment is due and that he is to endure it unflinchingly. " . . . TWENTY YEARS LATER MEMORY is still to believe On this day I became a man." (128) Part of his initiation into manhood is a disregard of Mrs. McEachern when she keeps appearing in the barn, when he has to fetch the Bible from the house, and when she brings him food that night, just as Mr. McEachern ignores her.

Another whipping occurs at the age of twelve when he arrives home late because he and some of his friends were using the services of a young Negro girl; Joe, however, instead of having intercourse with the girl, kicked her. Upon his arrival home, without any questions being asked or excuses given, he is punished with a beating for what McEachern instinctively knew involved "bitchery." Joe

expects the punishment, as if " . . . the whole situation were perfectly logical and reasonable and inescapable. Perhaps he was thinking then how he and the man could always count upon one another, depend upon one another; that it was the woman alone who was unpredictable." (139) The relationship between him and the man is set according to bigoted, religiously just, rigid standards, with the rewards and punishments understood. The "soft kindness" and secretive ways of the woman, however, he cannot adjust to, accept, expect or understand.

The third woman in Joe's young life who does not "play fair" is Bobbie, a local waitress and prostitute on the side. She has a real fondness for Joe and does not charge him. His youth and virginity is "something for love to feed on," (154) and he falls in love with her. He later refers to the beginning of this affair as "the terrible early time of love." (204) His relationship with this waitress-prostitute is soon discovered by McEachern, against whose strict morality Joe is rebelling. In an encounter between Joe, Bobbie, and McEachern at a country dance hall, Joe fatally knocks him to the floor. Bobbie feels insulted that McEachern labeled her as a prostitute and that Christmas has brought her to the attention of the police and at this time shows a resentment of the apparent fact of Joe's Negro blood. At the dance and later above the restaurant she excoriates him: "'He told me himself he was a nigger! The son of a bitch! Me F---ing for nothing. . . .'" (190) During her tirade "He [Joe] just stared at her, at the face which he had never seen before, saying quietly . . . in slow amazement: Why I committed

murder for her. I even stole for her . . ." (189) By turning against him during this crisis, Bobbie deepens Joe's distrust of and disillusionment with women. They both are forced to flee the area.

The possibility of Joe's Negro blood did not affect his relationship with Bobbie until they had to part. Bobbie's tirade included every reference she could think of to hurt him, only one of which was his admitted Negro blood. This insult was tied up with the fact that she had been offering him her services without fee, and that now he had gotten her into trouble with the police. Since Joe has been "in love" with her and is so inexperienced that he does not quite realize she is a prostitute, he cannot understand her anger. Moreover, Faulkner does not depict her as being justified in her anger. The sting of Bobbie's excoriating references to his Negro blood and their sexual union, which are inter-related, is like a taunt which follows him and keeps driving him on.

Faulkner briefly describes the next period in Joe's life during which he travels North and sleeps with numerous white women and afterwards shocks them with the fact of his Negroid blood, lives with a coal-black woman, and taunts numerous white and Negro men to fight with him over his racial identity. After this period in his life when he identified with his apparent Negro status, he goes to the South and decides to stay on Joanna Burden's place, knowing beforehand that she is sympathetic toward Negroes¹⁶ and that she lives

¹⁶O'Connor, The Tangled Fire of William Faulkner, p. 76, maintains that "Joe Christmas knows that Joanna's helping the Negro is a duty undertaken, but that it is abstract and impersonal. She acts not out of sympathy for other human beings but out of an obligation to carry out God's design in a depraved world."

Lind, "The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August," p. 325, writes that "Joanna is always aware of him as being 'different' rather than as

by herself. The importance of Joe's Negro identification in his and Miss Burden's relationship is subtly handled by Faulkner.¹⁷

Before examining Joe Christmas' involvement with Joanna Burden, Joe's man-to-man relationship with McEachern should be reviewed because it makes his and Miss Burden's female (as male) -to-male struggles more understandable. During Joe's life on the McEachern farm, McEachern influenced any encounters he had with women. Joe accepted without resistance the whipping McEachern gave him for not knowing his catechism, but later that day he threw on the floor the food that Mrs. McEachern brought him. He kicked the young Negro girl in the shed, but unflinchingly accepted a punishment when he got back to the farm for a "sin" McEachern suspected he committed. He did not trust women and was somewhat repulsed by them, but he believed that the severe discipline McEachern imposed upon him was fair, and he never tried to avoid or escape an encounter with McEachern. Joe's affair with Bobbie the waitress was a form of rebellion against McEachern and his strict Puritanical code. McEachern's influence still had a power over Joe, however, even in his death, because he had come to the dance hall to warn Joe against the "bitchery" which Bobbie then did exhibit, and which so disillusioned Joe.

¹⁷Little attention is now paid to Maxwell Geismar's thesis in "William Faulkner: The Negro and the Female," Writers in Crisis (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942), pp. 143-183, that Faulkner was showing a hatred of the North by having a "Northern" woman "raped" and murdered by an "emancipated" Negro; see especially p. 179.

Berland, "Light in August: The Calvinism of William Faulkner," p. 165, in reference to earlier critics' concern, as Geismar's, with the murder, states the present critical position: "We can no longer believe that either is the victim of the other; they are both victims together."

The first whipping which Joe received was on the day he "became a man," (128) at the age of eight. Notably, this initiation rite excluded Mrs. McEachern. All of Joe's subsequent "fights" with McEachern were a working out of their man-to-man relationship, but these struggles for dominance between them always arose from Joe's interest in women. In the dance hall incident, Joe's rebellion against McEachern to establish his sexual freedom did not firmly establish the importance of a heterosexual relationship. Rather Joe saw that the woman for whom he had stolen and murdered a man was unworthy of his love. His relationship with Joanna Burden is quite involved, but one which has as its basis a female (as male) -to-male adhesion.¹⁸

Miss Joanna Burden and Joe Christmas are bound together by strong ties. Joanna's father used to tell her: "'I'll learn you to hate two things . . . or I'll flail the tar out of you. And those things are hell and slave-holders.'" (212) A fanatically religious, Calvinistic upbringing filled with violent action and a type of identity with the Negro race is the common background of Christmas and Miss Burden, a background which not only united them but leads to their doom.

Joanna is a composite of the problematic forces in Joe's life, for in addition to her Calvinism and Negro sympathy, she is a woman.

¹⁸Cf. Brooks, William Faulkner, pp. 56-57, for Brook's suggestion that Joe is a latent homosexual as a result of his experiences with women in his early life and Brook's statement that Joe's latent homosexuality involves him with Joanna Burden,

As a symbol of "bitchery" she lures Christmas, but despite her attempt to reach a sexual fulfillment as a woman, she herself cannot successfully rebel against the Calvinism of her past. Her disciplined upbringing, however, developed masculine qualities in her which threaten or challenge Joe. The tension or struggle between them is usually on a man-to-man basis. Because Joe has a basic distrust of women, the masculine aspects of Joanna's personality often prolong their relationship.

In his initial conquest of her virginity, Joe is fighting "the mantrained muscles and the mantrained habit of thinking" (205) of her religious past. Just as Joe unflinchingly resisted McEachern the day he was initiated into manhood, Joanna resists him without tears or pleas, with "the strength and fortitude of a man." (205) Just as the struggle between Joe and McEachern was dictated by laws outside them, Joe "struggled physically with Joanna as if with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone." (205) Joanna Burden had not resisted with "woman resistance," but "she had resisted fair," as a man. The victor was the one who physically defeated the other, as when men fight with their bodies.

The next day, however, when Joe begins to think about her attitude, "a quiet rage" grows in him, and he goes to her that night with the intention to sexually subdue her, rather than just conquer her on a mere physical level. "'I'll show the bitch!'" he thinks. (206) On the following day, Joe intends to "blow"—after he eats. Heretofore he has always entered the house through the kitchen door, but this

evening as a matter of ego he starts to go through the back door which leads into a parlor, but finds it locked. This blow to his pride--accepted without resistance the second night but locked out afterwards--is compounded by his discovery that the kitchen door is unlocked and the food has been recently cooked for him. His rage mounts as he realizes that the food has been "Set out for the nigger. For the nigger," (208) and in a re-enactment of his initial contempt for Mrs. McEachern, he throws the food on the floor.

Miss Burden's "perspicuous and still contempt" for him as a man and as a Negro keeps him from moving on. He had tried to seduce and arouse and humiliate her as a woman on the second night, but she in turn tries to subtly humiliate him as a man and as a Negro by coldly defining his rights on her property, although both knew that he could easily break into any part of the house. To meet her challenge, Joe gets a job the next day at the mill and works without eating until he gets paid two days later. Joe, who has always had a contempt for the important women in his life, is now concerned about a woman's contempt. He avoids her for weeks and then he just merely ignores her, waiting for her to make the next move.

Four months later, Joanna Burden goes to him and in their sexual relations becomes "like a sewer." She goes through the motions of "a woman in love," (226) but "the sewer ran only at night." (224) During the day, even though they are the only ones on the grounds, she regards him with a cold and aloof attitude, or completely disregards him as though he were "invisible." The suggestion is that she is acting as a "white woman" should toward an available, sexually attractive Negro man. At night, she shocks, astonishes, and bewilders

him. Despite his promiscuous life, and contrary to the myth of the "wild" sexuality of the Negro, Joe is only used to "healthy and normal sin." (227) Miss Burden would hide in a closet in the dark house panting and waiting for him, or she would be naked, or with her clothes torn to shreds, hiding beneath designated shrubs on the grounds of the once-pretentious mansion. Despite the American gothic imagery, the description of Joanna's sudden and violent sexual behavior does not "break" her characterization as an educated, proper, upper-class spinster. Her sexual life at night is portrayed as the antithesis of her daytime behavior and is described with an "almost clinical objectivity."¹⁹

The motivation of her wanton behavior is a revolt against her religious upbringing. Her sexual fury is an attempt to abnegate her Puritan background, "the abject fury of the New England glacier exposed suddenly to the fire of the New England biblical hell." (225) Despite her furious sexual activities, as a woman she is still impregnable. Her Puritanical training is too deep-rooted. Her "physical purity . . . had been preserved too long now even to be lost." (228) Her sexual activities only display a rebellious passion, and she begins returning to her former sexual stillness and coldness. Christmas realizes that the forces behind her were always out of his control, but once the sexual fury of her rebellion begins to subside, he begins to be afraid of his own involvement in her problems. He suspects that she would like to return to her former habits of prayer and good works.

¹⁹Lind, "The Calvinistic Burden of Light in August," p. 325.

This wild second phase of their relationship finally dies down to a level at which they would always meet in the bedroom, she would talk about a child, and he, on side trips to Memphis, would be unfaithful to her—as if they were married. He knows that she wants to be married, but is not willing to deny the years of his rebellious independence. Finally she lies and tells him that she is pregnant. He does not visit the house anymore, and again, he thinks that he will leave town, but he doesn't. The second phase of their relationship has lasted for one year, from September to September. Despite their sexual entanglements, they never have achieved a real union as man and woman.

A half-year later, in February, they begin to see each other again. This phase in their relationship leads to their deaths. Joanna Burden approaches Joe to try to get him to attend college, admit that he is a Negro, and to join her as a Negro lawyer in her work for various Negro colleges and other Negro institutions all over the South. But the climax occurs because she wants him to pray with her. At first she would subtly suggest this by praying until the time he got to the door, so that he could hear her. Then one night in May she continues praying until after he is in the room with her and directly asks him to pray. He refuses. Two nights later, he again refuses. They both are ready: she pulls a revolver on him, which doesn't fire; he whips open a razor. A suicidal mood prevails. Joe Christmas allows himself to be caught a week later for her murder. The Southern tradition has a special treatment for a "Negro" man who "rapes" and murders a "white woman." A mob murders and castrates him through the hands of Percy Grimm.

In the final, fatal aspects of their relationship, Joe was subconsciously held to Joanna Burden because of her masculine influence. (They were not having sexual relations.) On the night of the murder, when she prayed, she prayed as a man: " . . . talking to God as if He were a man in the room with two other men. She spoke of herself and of him as of two other people, her voice still, monotonous, sexless." (245) As McEachern had asked him to recite his catechism, she asked him to pray.

In her religious sexless attitude, she represented the stern Calvinistic moral code regarding sex he had rebelled against. His foster father had whipped and fist-fought him to save him from "lechery." His self-appointed overseer at the orphanage, later identified as his grandfather, had a crazed knowledge of the "Womanfilth" and "bitchery" that was his predestined damnation. This grandfather, Old Doc Hines, had shot Joe's father and let his mother die in childbirth, while he forcefully kept the doctor from coming, as a protest against his daughter's "Bitchery and abomination!" In his life, Joe had encountered a number of the sinful women that his white forefathers had railed against. He was exposed to the bitchery of his mother, the bitchery of the dietician, the bitchery of the young Negro girl, the bitchery of Bobbie and Mrs. McEachern's complicity in that bitchery, the bitchery of innumerable and unnamed other women, and Joanna Burden's bitchery.

Miss Burden, however, was both a symbol of bitchery and of Calvinism, both his means of rebelling and what he was rebelling against. Even in her sexlessness, she lured him because of the man-orientated Puritanism which she represented and which he thought he had success-

fully rebelled against until he met her. She was the instrument through which the forces of Calvinism and miscegenation lead him to his tragic end.

Four years after the publication of Light in August, Faulkner published the story of Thomas Sutpen, the dominant, tragic male figure in Absalom, Absalom! As Joe Christmas' complete alienation is predestined, Thomas Sutpen's failure to achieve his design was fated. As in the case of the orphan Joe Christmas, the backwoods Thomas Sutpen is pitted against the crushing forces of Southern culture. The ostracizing force of miscegenation helped alienate the tragic figure in Light in August, and will help frustrate Sutpen's revenge for his social rejection in Absalom, Absalom! Just as a woman, Joanna Burden, was instrumental in bringing about Joe Christmas' doom, a woman, Eulalia Bon, is instrumental in the failure of Sutpen's "design." Just as Joe Christmas' experiences with women were presented as part of the history of his Calvinistic background, complicated by the possibility of his Negro blood, Thomas Sutpen's involvements with women are portrayed as being adjuncts to the fulfillment of his "design."

Thomas Sutpen's heterosexual relationships are presented, as the rest of the novel is, in the gradual unfolding of the story through the alternating contributions of four narrators.²⁰ This structure and

²⁰For discussions of the roles of the narrators, cf. Ilse Dusoier Lind, "The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!," reprinted in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman, and Olga W. Vickery (eds.), (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 281-286; Olga W. Vickery, The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation, Revised Edition, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), pp. 84-93.

these points of view make Absalom, Absalom! Faulkner's most "difficult" work to read and examine.²¹ The "limited" point of view of these narrators means that often incidents involving women in Sutpen's life are presented only through a few known factual details and recounted conversations (especially by Mr. Compson), are imaginatively reconstructed (by Quentin and Shreve in particular), or are exaggerated and misinterpreted (most often by Miss Rosa). Thus the story of Sutpen's heterosexual involvements is affected by the various narrators' points of view. As needed for accuracy in reference, general clarity, or a point of significance, an incident's narrator and his sources of information will be labeled or discussed. The order in which Sutpen's marriages are presented in the novel will be reversed in this paper, in order to examine chronologically his attempts to fulfill his "design" through a marriage to or an impregnation of four women.

Sutpen himself consciously, articulately described the driving force in his life: "'I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife.'"²² This "design" which included but did not

²¹To avoid a confusion of the already complex time sequences in Absalom, Absalom!, the past tenses will be used in this paper to refer to the incidents in Thomas Sutpen's life, which all occurred at least forty years before the narration of his story is begun in the novel by Miss Rosa. The narrators' contributions and the novel itself will be discussed in the present tense, according to the usual form.

²²William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), p. 263. All subsequent references to Absalom, Absalom! will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

emphasize a wife was the means²³ Sutpen realized was needed to avenge the insult he had received at the age of fourteen when he was turned away by a Negro servant from a white plantation owner's front door. To conquer this blow to his pride and sense of individual worth, Sutpen realized that he had to gain acceptance in Southern society. "'You've got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with.'"²⁴ (238) Notably, "a wife" was not always mentioned as a part of his plan. When included, however, the wife had to be white and respectable. Sutpen's first wife, he discovered after the birth of their first child, was not a pure Caucasian, but part-Negro. Because she could never be an adjunct to the fulfillment of his design, and because the design was all-important in his life, Sutpen left her.

The details of Sutpen's first marriage are recounted by Mr. Compson from two conversations General Compson and Sutpen had about that marriage. Sutpen was trying to explain, in both instances, his "design" to General Compson, his only friend. In retelling the story of Sutpen's experiences in the West Indies to Quentin, Mr. Compson,

²³Thomas L. Lorch in "Thomas Sutpen and the Female Principle," Mississippi Quarterly, XX (Winter 1966-1967), pp. 38-42, uses the analogy of form and matter in explaining how Sutpen's male aspirations and creative energies worked on female passivity and acceptance in his attempt to achieve his design.

²⁴The game imagery throughout Faulkner's novels is noted by Nicholas M. Rinaldi in "Game Imagery and Game-Consciousness in Faulkner's Fiction," Twentieth Century Literature, X (October 1964), pp. 108-118. Rinaldi's survey of references to game imagery does not attempt to achieve any depth in interpretation. The main thesis advanced, however, is weak: Rinaldi concludes that the only object of the game is to win and that its rules are always ruthless or impersonal.

Quentin's father, makes it clear that Sutpen's story was not a love story but a story of his adventure and attempt to gain wealth. In Shreve and Quentin's retelling of Sutpen's experiences in the West Indies which happened to lead to his first marriage, they vaguely imagine the wife-to-be in the background during the revolt, depicting her hand extending a loaded musket, for example. When Sutpen conferred with General Compson after Judith's engagement to Charles Bon, the whole recounting of the marriage was an attempt, on Sutpen's part, to discover where he had made "a mistake" in his plans. The purpose of Sutpen's conversations with General Compson (as recounted by Mr. Compson)—to narrate his adventures as a young man looking for wealth and to review the motivation for and his behavior in his first marriage to see if he had "errored" there—limits the details about Sutpen's first marriage.

These thematic and structural devices artistically justify an omission of any description of Sutpen's first wife, Eulalia Bon. She is never described in the novel, except in Shreve's imagined scheme of her revenge.

In Mr. Compson's narration of Sutpen's conversations with General Compson about his first marriage, Sutpen appears as an honorable and just man in his private life (in his public life, his actions suggest that he was of heroic stature).

One detail of Sutpen's original plan that might easily be overlooked because it seems to be just mentioned once in the novel is that as a part of his design, Thomas Sutpen purposely remained a

virgin until he married. Perhaps Faulkner just wanted to have the end of Sutpen's sexual innocence symbolically coincide with what should have been the end of his intellectual innocence²⁵—a marriage based on a misrepresentation of and a withholding of the truth. But why is his virginity mentioned as being a part of the "design"? General Compson noted that when Sutpen told him this point in his plan, "it was the only time he ever knew him to say anything quiet and simple." (248) Sutpen's aspiration to follow the Southern way of life would certainly have allowed him and even extended to him the privilege of having sexual relations with Negro slave girls. But the only plausible explanation of Sutpen's abstention from sex until marriage must have been an Isaac-McCaslin-like effort not to perpetuate the evils of slavery, through miscegenation. Later Sutpen did have a mulatto daughter Clytie and he did not refrain from intercourse with his women slaves, but in his youth he must have felt an obligation to refrain on moral grounds.

Before his first marriage, Sutpen had an understanding of the evils of slavery. Before going to the West Indies he believed "that the earth was kind and gentle," (251) but there during the slave revolt he recognized that the burning of the fields and the barns of sugar was a revenge from "the heart of the earth." (251) The small of the burning sugar so impressed on him the existence of the hatred and implacability associated with "200 years of oppression and exploitation" (251) that he never used sugar again for the rest of his life. Yet,

²⁵For a discussion of Sutpen's "innocence," cf. Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, pp. 296-297.

even though he apparently purposefully avoided sexual relations with Negro girls, and although he could understand the intensity of the revenge behind the slave revolt, he could not understand that he committed an injustice toward his first wife when he left her because of her mixed blood, nor could he understand that she might want to avenge his rejection of her.

9 Sutpen had an honorable attitude toward his first wife. When he mentioned that "incidentally of course, a wife" was part of his design, he was not trying to say that a wife was merely incidental in his life, but was incidental to his "design." The context of his remark was his discussion with General Compson about where his mistake was made in achieving his design. Obtaining a wife was not the primary goal of any of his actions, and before the revolt he had scarcely noticed his future wife. When he left her, Cleanth Brooks points out, he treated her honorably.²⁶ He never defamed her name; he stayed with her after the birth of the child and named it; he left her all his land and possessions; he only took a few slaves with him. Although she misled him and withheld from him the one fact about her that he would have wanted to know before marrying her, he did not hold a grudge against her.

Sutpen could have fooled the world about the racial identity of his first wife and son, but his "design" arose from a personal need to avenge the insult to his individual worth in his youth. He needed to have the personal satisfaction that he had "matched" the system. He

²⁶ Brooks, William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, pp. 300-301.

did not consider, however, that he was not respecting the individuality of his wife by leaving her only because ~~he~~ he was part-Negro. As an ironic counterpart to Sutpen's desire to avenge the insult of his youth, Shreve imagines that Eulalia Bon purposely (and vindictively) sent her son, Charles Bon, to marry Sutpen's only daughter. Shreve only imagines the strength of Eulalia's hatred and desire for revenge, however, rather than any particulars about her personality.

Sutpen's second marriage is first narrated, at the very beginning of the novel, by another woman who hates Sutpen and has been rejected by him, Miss Rosa Coldfield, Sutpen's second wife's sister. Her reasons for hating Sutpen will be discussed later when Sutpen's attempts to "impregnate" her are described. Miss Rosa's hatred of him causes her to refer to him as "demoniac" or as a "demon" throughout her narration of his marriage to her sister, Ellen Coldfield Sutpen.

Love was non-existent in Sutpen's marriage to Ellen Coldfield. Her apparent frigidity is suggested in her name. Miss Rosa comments that their children were conceived in a "lack of gentleness." (9, 13) Ellen admitted to her father that she did not love Sutpen. Sutpen's apparent lack of love for Ellen is implied by the fact that marriage did not change him; he continued the drinking, gambling, and fighting of the days he was building up his plantation. A wife was just a necessary part of his "design," but did not change his own life.

Ellen is presented as being the mother of his children, which was her primary function in the plan. The fact that Ellen never understood Sutpen as a man is seen in her concern about their children.

She asks her sister, Miss Rosa, to "save" Judith from Sutpen, the girl's own father. Sutpen, on the other hand, understood Ellen's bafflement with the possibility that his masculine interests influenced Judith, who loved gambling and fighting as a little girl. When Ellen caught Judith watching her father fighting naked with Negro men in a session in the barn, Sutpen realized that Ellen would not believe that he had not intentionally brought Judith to watch the fight.

When the townspeople saw Sutpen changing from a ruthless man who worked naked covered with mud alongside his slaves clearing the swamps, to a fashionably dressed man who had a mansion exquisitely furnished and surrounded by formal gardens, they began to fear his bid for respect as a "gentleman." They tried to "stop" this "outsider," but they were too late. On the day that a posse led by the sheriff arrested him as he left the Cornfield house, he was already engaged. Mr. Cornfield and General Compson bailed him out. But on the evening that he married Ellen Cornfield, the invited guests sat in their carriages outside the church in the dark, and the riff-raff of the area threw garbage on the couple as they left the church. Sutpen ordered his men not to attack, and seemed to smile under his beard, as though he knew that this effrontery to him and his wife was a part of the system which he was fighting.

Mr. Compson's narration of Sutpen's second marriage only portrays Sutpen's inter-action with the townsmen. He is never pictured with Ellen except on the night of their marriage, and then in order to

show his reaction when they were pelted with garbage. He moved her behind him. Ellen is never described as having any feelings for Sutpen. When Mr. Compson notes that she cried before the wedding, he indicates that she was crying because she wanted a big wedding, not because she was marrying Sutpen. This narrative technique of showing men in conflict over a heterosexual relationship, instead of depicting the heterosexual relationship itself, will be used again in the narration of Sutpen's affair with Milly Jones.

Ellen came through the early years of her marriage by withdrawals from the truth. She never understood and never loved Sutpen, except perhaps for the glamour he afforded her. She did not understand that the glamour was only a part of an image Sutpen created to satisfy his inner need to be a "match" in material possessions to the best of his kind. The superficiality in the life of ease which Sutpen created for her can be seen in the portrayal of her character when Sutpen was at the height of his financial and social success. Her daughter was engaged to be married, at this time, to her son's best friend.

Her carriage, air, now was a little regal. . . . shopping--as though she had succeeded at last in evacuating not only the puritan heritage but reality itself; had immolated outrageous husband and incomprehensible children into shades; escaped at last into a world of pure illusion in which, safe from any harm, she moved, lived, from attitude to attitude against her background of chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate. . . . (68-69)

In general, Ellen's lack of substance as a person is gently handled—"Ellen the butterfly" is an image repeatedly used in her description. (69, 74, 78, 80)

Perhaps Faulkner does not have any of his narrators depict Sutpen and Ellen in any inter-action because such a confrontation would demean his stature²⁷ as a man, because of the shallowness of his wife, and would minimize the importance of his design, which required a second marriage to this model of white, respectable Southern womanhood.

Although little is described of Sutpen's relationship with his wives, his treatment of them seems honorable. Likewise, little is described of his relationship with the last two women in his life through whom he vainly tried to achieve his dream of a son, but his attitude toward them is no longer depicted as honorable. Posterity was a necessary part of his "design," and possibly through a son Sutpen's own dream would have eventually gained fruition. Quentin and Shreve imagine that Sutpen thought that "possibly he could get but one more son, had at best but one more son in his loins. . . ." (279) But his attempts to continue his male line as he neared old age are clearly part of Sutpen's decline.

Three months after he proposed to Miss Rosa, several years after the death of his wife, he suggested that they marry only if they first produce a male child, "breed a couple of dogs together," (180) as Miss Rosa phrased the proposition. When Milly Jones, Wash Jones' granddaughter, a poor-white, teen-age girl, gave birth to a female child of his, he merely commented: "Well, Milly; too bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable.'" (286)

²⁷Lind in *The Design and Meaning of Absalom, Absalom!*, pp. 279, 282, notes Sutpen's "heroic enlargement" as an aspect of classical tragedy.

In his involvements with these two women, Sutpen was acting out of desperation. He undoubtedly knew that when the war ruined his plantation and Charles Bon's death broke up the family that his success in fulfilling his "design" was over. When he made his unique proposal to Miss Rosa, he had just realized that he could only retain one acre of Sutpen's Hundred, and even Miss Rosa partly excuses him by later mentioning that she believes that he had not thought of the male-heir-first clause until he actually approached her. When Sutpen impregnated Milly Jones, he was in his sixties and had been drinking heavily—the implication is that he was probably becoming a little senile. Also, his comment comparing her with the mare could partly be excused because, amid his other disappointments, he was thrilled that his favorite mare had had a colt.

Despite his dejection, desperation, senility, and failure, Thomas Sutpen was guilty of callously treating women. Mr. Compson notes that Sutpen never "learned" about or understood women. To "repay" Sutpen, blackening what Sutpen thinks was an honorable, moral, just image of himself, Faulkner lets Miss Rosa narrate not only her sister's story but part of her own, too. Quentin and Shreve, however, are more important as narrators of and commentators on Sutpen's involvement with both Miss Rosa and Milly Jones.

These two affairs were a part of Sutpen's decline, and to take the focus off of him, Faulkner allows Quentin and Shreve to add aspects of masculine humor, despite their seriousness about Southern morals, in their depiction of Sutpen's last attempts to obtain a white, male heir.

Quentin and Shreve imagine that after Sutpen was engaged to Miss Rosa that he realized that he only had one chance to have an heir. To make sure that that chance was good, he proposed to Miss Rosa that they marry only if she would have a male child first. Quentin and Shreve with a grim humor admire Sutpen's strategy in his dire situation:

inventing with fiendish cunning the thing which husbands and fiances have been trying to invent for ten million years: the thing that without harming her or giving her grounds for civil or tribal action would not only blast the little dream-woman out of the dovecote but leave her irrevocably husbanded. . . . with the abstract carcass of outrage and revenge. (180)

Another aspect of the humor in the Sutpen-Miss Rosa story hinges upon the fact that she had always hated him, although undoubtedly he did not ever realize this. He "chose for this purpose more children the last woman on earth he might have hoped to prevail on, this Aunt R—all right all right all right—that hated him, that had always hated him." (180) Almost inadvertently Sutpen set off a reaction that had been building for years in Miss Rosa. She should never have become engaged to him because she had a suppressed hatred of him. Thus when he rejected her, after she had accepted him, she was in a particularly ridiculous position. She let herself be hurt by a man she had always hated. With pity, the joke was on her. Sutpen did not ever notice her as a child, did not recognize her when he came back from the War, became formally engaged to her in the presence of Judith and Clytie, and did not court her or speak to her even during the three month interval between the engagement and the added proposal. Particularly after Miss Rosa has been allowed to vent her anger and outrage as the narrator of sections early in the novel, the humor in

this later depiction of her "romantic" involvement can be more readily appreciated. Sutpen unintentionally made a fool of her, without malice and without deliberation, but she nevertheless has reasons to be outraged.

Sutpen's last attempt, according to Quentin and Shreve, to complete his design through his posterity involved his impregnation of Milly Jones, the sixteen-year-old grand-daughter of the ignorant, mentally retarded, destitute overseer of his plantation days. Sutpen and Milly Jones are never pictured together until the day of childbirth. Rather their affair is presented through the parleying and conflict between Sutpen and her grandfather, Wash Jones.

Using this narrative technique helps Sutpen retain some of his former dignity in that he is not pictured as a senile, alcoholic man in his sixties having an affair with a teen-age poor-white girl. Rather, to the dim-witted Wash Jones, Sutpen still represented "the gallant, the proud, the brave; the acknowledged and chosen best among them all to bear the courage and honor and pride" (290)—the ideal Southern man. To Wash Jones, Sutpen more than attained the success to which he had aspired.

The play between Sutpen and Wash Jones as conceived by Quentin and Shreve was initially a contrast between the real world in which the "niggers" laughed and jeered at Wash for letting Sutpen carry on with his granddaughter and the illusionary world in which Wash deified Sutpen. (This imagined deification of Sutpen lends a note of dignity

and magnanimity to Sutpen's image until the tragic end of his life.) The practical inter-action between the two men involved a setting of the terms. Wash patronizingly asked Sutpen his intentions and made clear that he expected him to "make it right" if anything happened. Sutpen did not commit himself, but defended himself by maintaining that Wash should not be apprehensive. The action between the two men suggests that Wash Jones was trying to "catch," "trap," or "get one up on" Sutpen:

Wash Jones has fixed old Sutpen at last. It taken him twenty years to do it, but he has got a hold of old Sutpen at last where Sutpen will either have to tear meat or squeal. . . . (287)

Jones, however, soon realized that Sutpen had no emotion toward Milly and her child and did not even treat her with common courtesy. He realized that it was the colt, not Milly in childbirth, that got him up. When Sutpen's only and uncouth remark registered in Wash Jones' mind, he killed Sutpen with a scythe. The contest between them involving their own kind of pride and honor continued even in this murder, according to Quentin and Shreve, because Sutpen provoked the murder, with suicidal intentions. As Sam Fathers or Old Ben in "The Bear," Sutpen was ready to die. Then, just as Sutpen was not a victim in his death, Wash Jones saw to it that his dignity as a poor white was not lightly treated or allowed to become a joke. In a protest against Southern honor, justice, courage, and bravery, he killed his granddaughter, her child, and himself.

The four women in Sutpen's life, as typified in Milly's case, are not presented in detail within the context of a heterosexual

relationship with Sutpen. Within the novel, Sutpen never speaks to his first wife. He is only quoted once in conversation with his second wife, Ellen Coldfield, when Ellen came to the barn during the fights looking for Judith. Sutpen's infamous proposal is never put into his exact words by Miss Rosa. Many actions involving both Sutpen and Ellen Coldfield are narrated, but with the intention to show Sutpen's driving ambition and the fulfilling of his "design," not to show their marital relationship. Almost no action involving both Sutpen and the other three women, his first wife, Miss Rosa, and Milly, is portrayed.

The negligible descriptions of the women Sutpen was involved with are partly justified in that his stature as a heroic figure is based on his conflicts with "a man's world." The narrative technique of describing Sutpen's first marriage within his conversations with General Compson to explain his "design," the narrative device of concentrating on Sutpen's "outsmarting" the townsmen in gaining a "shield" of respectability through his second marriage, and the narrative structuring of Sutpen's relationship with Milly Jones as a contest between Sutpen and her grandfather do not thematically or structurally require or allow detailed descriptions of his inter-actions with women.

If the women in Sutpen's life had been described in more detail, a note of pathos would have surrounded the image of Sutpen as a ruthless, courageous, and shrewd man. The women with whom he was aligned did not complement his heroic characteristics with their love and understanding. The psychological presentation of the women indicates that

they were incapable of love: Ellen was like a butterfly; Milly was a sixteen year old girl who was wooed with trinkets, bangles, and ribbons; Miss Rosa had always hated men; and Sutpen's first wife, as conceived of by Quentin and Shreve, was revengeful and vindictive, although as Sutpen pointed out, she had tricked him.

Of all of the women in Sutpen's life, probably his first wife was the most capable of loving and being loved by him. Her son Charles Bon wooed and won Judith's hand. Admittedly, Bon won Ellen through "seducing" Henry who was like Ellen; and, admittedly, as his mother concealed the fact of her Negro blood in marrying Sutpen, Bon concealed the revenge behind his advances toward the Sutpen children. Nevertheless, Charles and Judith fell in love—Charles who was like his mother and Judith who was like her father.

The short-lived, unfulfilled, undeveloped love between Judith and Charles Bon is not emphasized in Absalom, Absalom!, but it is described as thoroughly as Faulkner ever develops real love. Judith is described as listening to Henry's praise with a "serenity"—the "repose" of a "mature woman in love," a serenity that has gone beyond the passivity of the adolescent's "pointless and dreamy unvolition." Charles Bon wrote to her, "We have waited long enough." (131) Then he explained that he knew that she had been waiting too, indicating that she was a woman with passions as well as he. Several aspects of their love are worth noting in view of the behavior of the young people in Faulkner's earlier novels. Instead of displaying the aggressive or passively controlling behavior of Pat, Jenny or Temple,

Judith patiently waited for fulfillment. Instead of the sexual experimentation of titillation portrayed earlier, Judith and Charles' love developed through correspondence and several meetings, in which Quentin (significantly) imagines that they kiss as brother and sister. Judith's love is directly contrasted to Miss Rosa's and Sutpen's first wife's reaction in a love situation. Judith's love is identified with Faulkner's masculine virtues of pride and trust. It is described most eloquently and without satire:

Judith, giving implicit trust where she had given love, giving implicit love where she had derived breath and pride: that true pride, not that false kind which transforms what it does not at the moment understand into scorn and outrage and so vents itself in pique and lace rations, but true pride which can say to itself without abasement I love, I will accept no substitute; something has happened between him and my father; if my father was right, I will never see him again, if wrong he will come or send for me; if happy I can be I will, if suffer I must I can. Because she waited; she made no effort to do anything else. . . . (121)

Judith's brother Henry, however, when he found out that Bon was part-Negro killed him to prevent the marriage.

Absalom, Absalom!, an artistic rival to The Sound and the Fury in style and theme, is Faulkner's great, tragic, almost epic-like story of the Old South. Understandably, for three years after this overpowering novel, Faulkner did not publish any lengthy works, and when he did a comparative calmness and humor in tone is to be noted, a contrast to and perhaps the aftermath of the driving fury and seriousness found in Light in August and Absalom, Absalom!

The Wild Palms (1939), Faulkner's first novel after Absalom,

Absalom!, has a dominant dry humor²⁸ and satire throughout, which is built upon the portrayal of male-female relationships. The low-key humor in The Wild Palms is also found in Go Down Moses (1942). The humorous aspects in the portrayal of the sexes in these two novels show a maturity in Faulkner's thought. Instead of the earlier serious, male attitudes of consternation, repulsion, outrage, and distrust or an almost total disregard, the dominant attitude is one of acceptance. In Go Down Moses a variety of moods are portrayed within the heterosexual relationships; sometimes the male's "acceptance" of the problems is accompanied by a low-key humor, but sometimes by only seriousness and calmness. In The Wild Palms, however, from the male's realization and acceptance of or complete avoidance of the inevitability of heterosexual problems, the humor arises.

In The Wild Palms Faulkner returns to the depiction of a dominant, aggressive female—Charlotte Rittenmeyer. Charlotte pulls her lover Wilbourne by the hair, she clenches her fists and beats him on the chest or legs, or, jabs him with her elbows, undresses him and holds him hard. In all the love scenes, she initiates sex.

Among the six novels being considered in this study, The Wild Palms is the only one which really concentrates on love and love situations. The treatment, however, is satiric. By itself, the love story, "The Wild Palms," might be taken too seriously. The protagonist

²⁸The Hamlet (1940) also has a dry humor throughout; the union of Eula Varner, voluptuous earth goddess, and Flem Snopes, who is impotent and emotionless, is presented with ironic humor.

As noted above, cf. p. 3, n. 4, in As I Lay Dying the female's problems with the male are humorously presented.

Charlotte Rittenmeyer does die as the result of an attempted abortion performed by her lover, an ex-intern. "Wild Palms," though, should be interpreted as inter-related²⁹ with "Old Man." When the two stories within the novel are interrelated, the humor in the one and the satire in the other are heightened. The absurd, dry humor in "Old Man" in the portrayal of the released convict's preference of prison to freedom, i.e., his flight from women, and the unperturbed simplicity of his companion, a pregnant woman who gives birth to her child in the most horrendous circumstances, are in contrast to the satirically serious presentation of Charlotte and Wilbourne's complicated, planned, conscious, verbalized attempts to realize love in "Wild Palms."

Moldenhauer³⁰ has aptly pointed out the problem of Puritanism in the lives of Harry and the country doctor which causes a serious tone throughout "Wild Palms," but many of the same points that fit into a completely serious discussion of Puritanism are also part of the satirically humorous portrayal of how the modern woman, Charlotte Rittenmeyer, lives according to a belief in love, a kind of faith which is accompanied by the virtues of honesty, creative activity, and sex. Her lover Wilbourne is caught up in her belief in love and even when he begins to question the practicality and the validity of

²⁹For other discussions of the structure cf. W. R. Moses, "The Unity of The Wild Palms," Modern Fiction Studies, II (Autumn 1956), pp. 125-131; W. T. Jewkes, "Counterpoint in Faulkner's Wild Palms," Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature, II (Winter, 1961), pp. 39-53.

³⁰Joseph J. Moldenhauer, "Unity of Structure and Theme in The Wild Palms," in William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism, Frederick J. Hoffman, and Olga W. Vickery (eds.), pp. 305-322.

Charlotte's trust in and striving for love, he allows the possibility that Charlotte might make love last ("work") for them.

The story "Wild Palms" opens with an emphasis on the fact that Charlotte hates men, and that she and Harry are not married. When in "Old Man" the convict takes the rap for a serious manslaughter charge in order to avoid the wrath of a woman, the parallel between the stories suggests that it is better not to become involved with women in any way.

In the next chapter of the love story, Harry remembers how he had "repudiated" love as a young man, only to shortly thereafter end up with Charlotte (a married woman with two children and a rich husband) calling him a fool on their way to Chicago and undressing him in the Pullman car. The parallel chapter in "Old Man" significantly has the warden authorizing writing off the convict as dead. Wilbourne, too, seems to now be dead to his old life of day dreaming and sexual abstinence, but later he, like the tall convict, voluntarily returns to this type of existence.

Wilbourne has been trapped by love. Much is made of the fact that he had never been in love before;³¹ otherwise, Charlotte suggests the first day of their honeymoon, he would not have thrown away his last four months of internship to run away with her.³² Wilbourne

³¹William Faulkner, The Wild Palms, A Vintage Book (New York: Random House, 1939), pp. 42, 43, 46. All subsequent references to The Wild Palms will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³²John L. Longley, Jr., labels Wilbourne as the only "romantic hero" in Faulkner's works and notes that Faulkner always portrays a young man in love as being overcome by a "comic agony," in his The Tragic Mask: A Study of Faulkner's Heroes (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 29-30.

realizes his mistake when he sees that she is more intent than he is in "making it" with him and when he discovers that he cannot find a job (84-85). The second morning of their honeymoon, Wilbourne realizes: "'So it's not me you believe in, put trust in; it's love. . . . Not just me, any man.'" (83) As a part of Charlotte's answer to Wilbourne's analysis, which she does not deny, but extends in meaning, she tells him to get up, that she has already found an apartment for them that morning, and within an hour they move out of the hotel. Charlotte is not only practical, she is the boss.

After some time in Chicago, Charlotte cannot find any work, and they decide to move to the country. Their friend McCord ridicules them for living out a "ninth-rate Teasdale," with their cult of starvation and destitution. (100-101) Finally Wilbourne goes a little mad in their country habitat, but realizes: "I have been seduced to an imbecile's paradise by an old whore. . . ." (114-115) When Wilbourne proposes the idea of her going back to the city by herself, Charlotte becomes hysterical and Wilbourne again realizes how intent she is on preserving their "love," "God, he thought. God help her. God help her." (118-119) While Charlotte would swim and sunbathe in the nude and sketch and hike, Wilbourne would sleep in a fetus-like state or count the number of cans of food left. Charlotte was the only one who was enjoying their life together.

Wilbourne's predicament is paralleled by the convict's feelings toward the pregnant woman: "He wanted nothing for himself. He just wanted to get rid of the woman, the belly, and he was trying to do that ~~in~~ the right way, not for himself, but for her. He could have

put her back into another tree at any time—" (161) Finally he does bring her to a flat, dry strip of land.

After their sojourn in the country, Wilbourne is the one who becomes worried about the complacent, habitual life they are leading in the city. When he realizes that he is beginning to develop husband-feelings, he decides to take a job in a mining camp.

In the next chapters of the stories, childbirth or the acceptance of a natural process and its responsibilities becomes important. The pregnant woman in "Old Man" gives birth to and cares for her child without comment, following nature's laws, just as the tall convict takes care of both of them and tries to fulfill his prescribed duty by man's laws. In "Wild Palms," however, when Charlotte Rittenmeyer discovers she is pregnant, she immediately wants an abortion; she is not willing to be united with nature³³ in this basic manner; and Wilbourne breaks the laws of man and nature in attempting an abortion.

Charlotte has placed a real emphasis on the fact that they have paid for love: ". . . love and suffering are the same thing and that the value of love is the sum of what you have to pay for it. . . ." (48) She clarifies her thinking by stating that she was not considering leaving her husband and two children as a part of the price; rather, she was gauging the suffering in terms of the financial deprivation and destitution they were involved in. When Wilbourne wants to get a job so that they can support a child, Charlotte maintains that their

³³ Melvin Backman in his Faulkner: The Major Years, A Critical Study (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), pp. 127-159, traces the theme of man in union with or against nature.

near-poverty existence is not the main factor in her determination to get an abortion. The memory of her difficult childbirths is very painful, "I said they hurt too much. Too damned much." (217) She has paid for love by suffering financial deprivation, but she is not willing to pay with gathering painful memories of another hard childbirth. Wilbourne points out in this section that she gave up her children "scarcely knowing him." (217) Earlier Charlotte pointed out that she had discovered that what books had said about real love was true when she met Wilbourne. Now, however, despite her dedication to love, she refuses to have a baby. Her situation and feelings have a counter-point in "Old Man," when the pregnant woman gives birth to a child on a snake-infested strip of land during a flood and cuts the cord with a sterilized tin-can lid. She is placid despite the horrendous circumstances of her child-birth.

In the final chapters of The Wild Palms the dissonance, resulting from the serious aspects of "Wild Palms" being indirectly contrasted to the humorous approach in "Old Man," is heightened. Charlotte Rittenmeyer dies due to an infection which resulted from an attempted abortion. Wilbourne is tried and imprisoned for manslaughter. There he thinks of the "waste" involved in her death. However, when the tall convict's hatred of women becomes apparent in the closing of the novel, the reader might well remember that the novel opened with an emphasis on Charlotte's hatred of men. When the tall convict seeks re-imprisonment, his desire for an escape from the world of women has a parallel in Wilbourne's desire for imprisonment--he had more than one change to escape. When

the tall convict muses that perhaps his teen-age girlfriend's desire for glamour was partly responsible for his initial imprisonment for a train robbery--i.e., manslaughter, a comparison might well be made indicating that Charlotte's dream of love was partly responsible for Wilbourne's imprisonment for manslaughter. Also, just as the tall convict returned to his ascetic existence without women, Wilbourne returned to the passive, ascetic existence he led before Charlotte spotted him. The novel as a whole, then, is a humorous depiction of woman-hatred in "Old Man"--which helps counter-point³⁴--and is combined with a satirical portrayal of idealistic love in "Wild Palms."

The thematic combination of a satire on a too romantic conception of love and a feeling of misogyny in The Wild Palms suggests the idea that the need to withdraw from women might be the result of an early disillusioning sexual experience. Wilbourne and the tall convict did both somewhat voluntarily withdraw from the world of women. Their illusions about romantic love had been destroyed. Wilbourne realized that he had been "seduced"; right after the convict thinks of his teen-age girlfriend, he utters his final comment on women, "Women---t." (339) Both are somewhat repelled by the idea of physical relations

³⁴The counter-point technique used in The Wild Palms was also used in Light in August. There are not as many parallels, however, between the Lena Grove-Byron Bunch story and Joe Christmas' history, although Lena Grove, the pregnant, passive, placid, trusting female is clearly a contrast to Joanna Burden. The story of Lena's calm but assured hunt for the father or any father for her child and Byron Bunch's immediate but unexpressed infatuation with her and consequent care and protection of her is an interesting contrast to the story of the convict in The Wild Palms who takes care of but wants to escape the pregnant woman.

with women. The convict has feelings of "a kind of savage and horrified revulsion" (339); Wilbourne thinks of sex as "the habit—the wheezing lungs, the troublesome guts incapable of pleasure." (324) The convict's final comment on women is a curse; Wilbourne's, however, is one of grief.

Wilbourne in choosing to stay alive in prison, rather than take the poison which Charlotte's ex-husband offers him, knows that he must reach some sort of conclusion about the meaning of his and Charlotte's affair which resulted in her death. He finally realizes "the waste" in her death; he was "thinking of, remembering, the body, the broad thigh and the hands that liked bitching and making things." After an initial disillusionment, he reaches an acceptance of and an appreciation of her sexuality. His final attitude is one of grief.

In the direct portrayal of a heterosexual relationship and a treatment of the idea of love in The Wild Palms, Faulkner has again turned to a female protagonist and the disturbing fact of female sexuality, as concentrated on in earlier works. The women (the sexually aggressive Charlotte and the passive and placid pregnant woman) are the same types presented earlier. But the attitude of the male has changed. Humorously, the convict openly admits his feelings of woman-hatred. The "seduced" and disillusioned lover is not ashamed to feel grief over the loss of his "beloved." The mood has changed, too. The earlier, serious, turbulent, probing, explosive tensions were somehow lessened, and a calmer, humorous, sometimes satirical, sometimes light-hearted mood has emerged.

In Go Down Moses, the dominance of the changed mood in the portrayal of heterosexual relationships is evident. In this novel, Faulkner once again, however, sublimates the female and her sexuality as he presents dominant male figures. Faulkner also again uses the technique of emphasizing a male-to-male struggle which arose from heterosexual problems, and does not depict the male and female in direct conflict or interaction. As in Absalom, Absalom!, the female is barely described in heterosexual situations.

In Go Down Moses (1942) Faulkner reaches a significant point of blending varied treatments of heterosexual love in one volume of interrelated stories. The stories, which Faulkner considered a novel, are interrelated by concentrating on the McCaslin family and on the themes of freedom and bondage,³⁵ miscegenation, and the white man's reparation. Yet a love affair is part of every story, except "The Old People" and "Go Down Moses."³⁶ Even though love per se is not important in Go Down Moses, the poignant tenderness of the feelings

³⁵Cf. Lawrence Thompson's William Faulkner: An Introduction and Interpretation, Second Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), pp. 81-98, for a discussion of the themes of "freedom" and "bondage" in Go Down Moses.

³⁶John M. Muste in "The Failure of Love in Go Down Moses," Modern Fiction Studies, X (Winter 1964-1965), pp. 366-378, advances the following thesis: "That in his human relationships, the white man has not known or felt anything about love, and has been unable to understand what he has heard." (p. 367)

Muste's article has been justly attacked on technical grounds by Patrick G. Hogan, Jr., Dale A. Myers, and John E. Turner in a commentary on it in Modern Fiction Studies, XII (Summer 1966), pp. 267-270. This present study shows that Muste's thesis has no basis in characterization or theme.

portrayed is. Despite Faulkner's limited description of heterosexual inter-action and of the women involved in a love relationship, a mellow, tender, sympathetic mood prevails, undoubtedly because of the dominance of Isaac McCaslin's history.

Perhaps Faulkner achieves a tender mood in portraying heterosexual relationships because women are just barely described. In "Was" Miss Sophonsiba is only briefly described by a little Negro boy. In "The Fire and the Hearth" very little is written about Lucas' wife until the end of the story when the divorce case comes up. The young Negro woman whose death causes her husband unbearable grief in "Pantaloon in Black" is only referred to in a few sentences. Roth Edmonds' mistress in "Delta Autumn" is the most delineated woman involved with a man in the novel. In "The Bear" the bedroom incident and its immediate background receive four pages of attention out of the sixty-one pages in Part IV of "The Bear." The emphasis is on the men and their actions, feelings, and decisions.

Within the stories "love" is treated in a variety of ways. In "Pantaloon in Black" Faulkner touchingly portrays the "savage" violence of a young Negro man's grief over his wife's death, which demands a physical release. The young Negro's actions are outwardly narrated as wryly humorous by the sheriff who sees an incongruence between the fact that Rider (the young Negro) instead of grieving and taking off of work at the time of his wife's death is the first one to start putting dirt on the grave and is also the first one back at work the next day; another incongruence, in the sheriff's eyes, is the fact

that during his "rampage" Rider kills (for cheating) a white man who has been operating a crooked crap game for fifteen years at which Rider has often peacefully lost money; a third apparent incongruency in the Negro's action is that he does not run, and peacefully surrenders although he cannot stand to be locked up. Within the context of prejudice, the young Negro man's actions in his grief are presented as wryly humorous, but the sheriff's lack of psychological insights actually heightens the intensity of the touching sadness and melancholy in the young Negro's physically violent attempts to alleviate his unbearable grief. The wife "Mannie" is merely described as a housewife in a few sentences, but her husband's reaction to her death is a tribute to her as a woman or to love.

"The Fire and the Hearth" is similar to "Pantaloons in Black" only in that both young Negro couples keep a fire burning in their hearth from the first day of their marriage as a symbol of their love or marital union. In "The Fire and the Hearth" two incidents comprise the love story that accompanies the main story of Lucas Beauchamp's obsession with a money-finding machine. In both of these incidents, the presentation of Molly the wife is subordinated to a contest between the husband Lucas and Zach Edmonds and later his son Roth Edmonds.

In the first incident Molly has just returned home from a six-month stay in Zach Edmonds' house, begun the night that Edmonds' wife died in childbirth and ended because Lucas demanded her back. Lucas and Molly have almost nothing to say to each other on the day of her return; they only bicker over the fact that she has brought with her not only their son but Edmonds' son. Lucas's belief that he has been abused heightens when Edmonds does not come to get his son.

The next morning Lucas goes to the Edmonds' house at day-break and enters Zach Edmonds' bedroom apparently to kill him. The emphasis throughout is on the fact that Lucas, although a Negro, is superior to Edmonds because he is descended from Carothers McCaslin through a male line whereas Zach Edmonds is a "woman-made" McCaslin. Because of their common blood and because of his male superiority in blood, Lucas is concerned with fighting fairly, honorably.

The emphasis is on the man-to-man relationship in view of the possible adultery, almost as though Molly's involvement in the male fight is incidental, undeterminable, and possibly uncontrollable. On the evening after Lucas has met and fought Edmonds he concludes:

Women, he thought. Women. I won't never know. I don't want to. I ruther never to know than to find out later I have been fooled. . . . "How to God," he said, "can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he won't?" 37

Even in the realization of his helplessness in controlling the situation, Lucas has placed the emphasis on truth and honor.

A number of years later, in their old age, when Molly asks for a divorce from Lucas because of his Gold-hunting, again the emphasis is on his manhood, honor, and descent, rather than on his relationship with Molly. Again, also, the incident is narrated as a contest between Lucas and an Edmonds, Zach Edmonds' son, Roth. Roth is standing up for Molly in the matter of the divorce. But Lucas, who descended by a male line in two generations from old Carothers McCaslin, is not about to

³⁷William Faulkner, Go Down Moses (New York: The Modern Library, 1955), p. 59. All subsequent references to Go Down Moses will be in this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text.

let his affairs be settled by Roth Edmonds, whose descent from Carothers McCaslin is five generations back and through a female line. Molly was not trying to control Lucas because she knew she couldn't, but Edmonds was. Lucas is emphatic about his position as the husband and Edmonds' right to interfere: "'I'm a man,' Lucas said. 'I'm the one to say in my house, like you and your paw and his paw were the ones to say in his. You ain't got any complaints about the way I farm my land and make my crop, have you?'" (120) At the last minute, when they are before the judge, Lucas declared that there is not going to be any divorce, almost making a fool of Roth Edmonds because of his zeal in upholding Molly's right to a divorce, but not exactly because Edmonds as a white man helps Lucas in the court room. The incident ends on a tender note when Lucas buys Molly a nickle's worth of candy, as though that was all it took for Lucas to please her.

"Was," the first story in Go Down Moses, again uses a contest between men to settle a male-female problem. Miss Sophonsiba is chasing Uncle Buddy who, to use her metaphor, is "a bee sipping from flower to flower." (11) Except for a description of her silliness in talking to Uncle Buddy, sipping his toddy to sweeten it, sending him a ribbon for "success" in the chase of Tomey's Turl, and screaming when Uncle Buddy accidentally climbs into bed with her, Miss Sophonsiba does not enter into the story. The focus in the story is on Uncle Buddy's avoidance of her, her brother's insistence that he should marry her, and the card game that decides Uncle Buddy's fate. Later, he does marry her, but within the story "Was" the humor is completely by a theme of avoidance.

Despite the completely humorous treatment of the romance between Isaac McCaslin's parents, the story of Isaac McCaslin himself is always presented in a serious manner. "The Old People" and "The Bear," except for Part IV, deal with his initiation in the rites of and his reverence toward the wilderness as a young boy. Part IV of "The Bear" narrates his discovery as an adolescent of the sins of Carothers McCaslin (who impregnated his own mulatto daughter, an act which caused her mother to commit suicide) and his decision to repudiate his inheritance of land as expiation for inherited guilt. The account of his marriage in Part IV is brief but intense and tragic.

The love Isaac felt for his wife is described with symbolism suggestive of the divinity:

. . . 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: 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 top-less and floorless in glory for him . . . her dowry from one; her wedding present from three. . . . (311-312)

In "Delta Autumn," Isaac McCaslin described love as a brief period in which the lovers are like God, or are God.

Then his wife seduces him one evening in order to try to persuade him to get back the farm and their love ends. On this night for the first and last time he saw her naked--passionate. Her seduction of him pits her as a female against all men, not just Isaac, because as a woman she has an intuitive knowledge of provocative sexuality which

man can have no fore-knowledge of, and hence no warning against.

Consequently she as a female has a weapon to use against the male, and is his enemy:

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. . . . 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 . . . laughing and laughing (315)

Within "The Bear" Isaac McCaslin's relationship with his wife ends with her avowal that he will never have a son by her and her cachinnation, a counterpart to Isaac's seriousness, and vow repudiating his inheritance of the land.³⁸ In "Was" and again in "Delta Autumn" the reader learns that Isaac lived with his wife until her death. In "The Fire and the Hearth" Isaac's pity and grief over the death of his marriage are mentioned in connection with his belief that they had forgiven each other during the passion of their love for "all that each knew the other could never be." (108) In that same story

³⁸Cf. Richard E. Fisher, "The Wilderness, the Commissary, and the Bedroom: Faulkner's Ike McCaslin as Hero in a Vacuum," English Studies, XLIV (February 1963), pp. 25-28, for his view that Isaac's whole development ended in the bedroom incident because he generalized from his wife to all women and thereafter found love, in all its ramifications, meaningless.

In connection with the bedroom incident, Fisher misinterprets two important points about Isaac's later life: (1) he maintains that Isaac deliberately decided not to have a son, and (2) he views Isaac's revulsion and outrage in his interview with Roth McCaslin's mistress in "Delta Autumn" as a reaction against miscegenation itself.

and in "Delta Autumn" Isaac thinks of the futility of his renunciation. Despite (or perhaps because of) the high price that he had to pay for his beliefs, Isaac keeps a respect for his decision, maintains a humble acceptance of himself, and notably does not bear a grudge against his wife. Isaac explains that he "lost her, because she loved him." (352) He realized that she was not merely being selfish but that she passionately wanted her husband to fulfill the dreams she had before marriage of their life of prosperity using his inheritance.

In "The Bear" Isaac speaks to his cousin about why he didn't shoot the bear. In his explanation he refers to the poem, "Ode to the Grecian Urn," interpreting "love" as a truth which "covers all things which touch the heart—honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love." (297) In Isaac's own life, these virtues have been more important than love. He did not shoot the bear because he did not think that he was worthy enough, yet he knew that its end would come and he wanted the bear to be killed by one of them—in the tradition of pride and honor and humility. Yet, Old Ben is killed by Boon and the fyce, symbols of savagery and mechanization. Similarly, in "Delta Autumn," Isaac's abstention in the matter of having a son is somewhat negated by the action of his cousin Roth Edmonds.³⁹

³⁹Various studies have pointed out the futility of Isaac's renunciation and questioned his maturity. Cf. W. R. Moses, "Where History Crosses Myth: Another Reading of 'The Bear,'" Accent, XIII (Winter 1953), pp. 21-33; William Van O'Connor, "The Wilderness Theme in Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" Accent, XIII (Winter 1953), pp. 12-20; Herbert A. Perluck, "'The Bear's Driving Complexity': An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" Accent, XX (Winter 1960), pp. 23-46.

Roth Edmonds as a teen-ager felt the shame of his heritage when he painfully realized that Lucas Beauchamp, his part-Negro cousin, and his father had fought over a woman and that Lucas had won. Despite the fact that the woman involved was the only mother he ever knew, as a young man he becomes defiant and hardened and as an old man (in "The Fire and the Hearth") defensive and authoritative. In "Delta Autumn," his attitude toward women is almost heartless: "'Does and fawns—I believe he [Roth] said women and children—are two things this world ain't ever lacked.'" (348)

Roth Edmonds' mistress and new-born child come to visit him at the hunting camp, not for money, not to try to get him to marry her, but because she loves him and wants to be sure that he does not want to see her. She had accepted him with no hope of marriage and without asking him to marry her. Roth refuses to speak to her at the hunting camp. He has "provided" for her—"Honor and code too." (361) He feels ashamed, but with a self-centered bitterness and self-hatred: "'Then there are some Gods in this world I wouldn't want to touch, and with a damn long stick . . . And that includes myself . . .'" (348)

While Roth's former mistress talks to Isaac McCaslin, who is now in his seventies, Roth is hunting deer with a shotgun rather than with a rifle, a weapon of sportsmanship. Moreover, now that the wilderness has been innudated by civilization, the hunters now do not kill does "because if we did kill does in a few years there wouldn't be any bucks to kill . . ." (347), as Roth's companion Wyatt pointed out. But instead of speaking with the mother of his child, Roth goes out and kills a doe with a shotgun. Roth's killing the doe not only parallels

his use of the woman, but symbolizes that use. Roth does not know that his mistress is part-Negro, but Isaac McCaslin, who is related to both her and Roth, realizes this fact. Through Roth, then, the reparation Isaac tried to achieve for old Carothers McCaslin's impregnation of his own daughter and the responsibility for her mother's suicide is negated. Old Carothers' rapacity has been perpetuated. Moreover, the young Negro woman puts the blame on Uncle Lucas and Aunt Mollie who raised him to be spoiled and on Isaac who spoiled him by surrendering to him through his grandfather an inheritance that was not Roth's by right. She maintains that Roth Edmonds is not a man yet because he has been spoiled by receiving Isaac's inheritance. In "Delta Autumn" at least it is clear that Roth is not mature (he will not speak to her despite the fact that she has recently had his child) and that Roth is bitter (he kills the doe as he used the woman, without any feelings of pity). An irony is evident in the fact that Roth Edmonds is the inheritor of Isaac McCaslin's birthright, the repudiation of which caused Ike to lose the chance to have a son, and that he treats with bitterness and contempt the young Negro woman who bore him a son that he did not want.

In Go Down Moses Faulkner presents varied treatments of heterosexual relationships, with humor and pathos, emphasizing the grief, the glory, the humiliation, the bitterness, the sadness, the incomprehensiveness, the humor, the forgiveness, and the tenderness of love or heterosexual involvements. Since the women in Go Down Moses are only briefly described and described only within their involvements with men, and heterosexual interaction is almost never portrayed,

the portrayal of the relationships is chiefly defined through the males' actions.

Throughout this study of Mosquitoes, Sanctuary, Light in August, Absalom, Absalom!, The Wild Palms, and Go Down Moses, the general change in character emphasis, from female to male, has been noted. Since Faulkner was primarily interested in women characters for their sexuality, active or passive, and stressed this interest in Mosquitoes, Sanctuary, and Light in August, when he kept presenting the same types of women in later works, he began to control their contribution to a story by presenting them with greater terseness, as in Absalom, Absalom! and Go Down Moses, or with more humor, as in The Wild Palms.

In the serious presentation of female sexuality, a basic alienation between the sexes is established and Faulkner thereafter never changes that basic alienation. The woman's actions are portrayed as basically narcissistic and the man's response is not one of physical sexual involvement. Pat's writhing while David holds her hand in the swamp in Mosquitoes, Temple's jerking movements as Popeye's hand moves down her body in her dream version of the rape in Sanctuary, and Joe Christmas' "hard and urgent" use of his hands to make a woman of Joanna Burden and her subsequent panting and tearing off her clothes in Light in August are incidents which do not show a mutual sexual activity.

The man's reaction to these displays of female sexuality may be one of amazement and puzzlement. David, the steward in Mosquitoes, is seen alone holding and studying Pat's shoe, a symbol of her (lack of) femininity, and then without comment he quits his job that night. Horace Benbow, in listening to Temple's account of the circumstances of

her rape, in Sanctuary, is astonished that she has a certain pride in the incident. Joe Christmas, in Light in August, realizes that Miss Burden's sexual fury goes beyond ordinary, normal sin and is shocked.

Other reactions on the man's part to female sexuality are strong feelings of outraged revulsion, or a hostile attempt to subdue the woman. Popeye unnaturally rapes Temple Drake. Joe Christmas feels repulsed when the dietician bribes him, he kicks a young Negro girl who is prostituting herself in the shed, and he forcefully sexually arouses Joanna Burden when she initially resists him and subsequently kills her when she retreats sexually.

In the thematic change from an interest in female sexuality to a concentration on the powerful inner drives in the male that arise from the forces of Calvinism, miscegenation, and the social structure in Southern culture, the question of "control" between the sexes is taken care of. The man is driven by non-personal forces and his relationships with women are within the context of these dominating, external forces. The woman, however, is an instrument of these forces in the defeat of the tragic hero. Joanna Burden, as a symbol of sexual rebellion and of adherence to the disciplines of Calvinism, attracts Joe to his ultimate doom. Thomas Sutpen, according to Shreve and Quentin, meets his tragic end through the revenge of his first wife through their mulatto son and through the pride of a poor-white who is insulted by Sutpen's treatment of his granddaughter.

In the last two novels discussed in this study, The Wild Palms and Go Down Moses, the change from a serious to a satirical or humorous or accepting portrayal of heterosexual relationships is

evident. The males do not feel as threatened or repulsed. In fact, when the male is portrayed as being seduced, his former fear of the "controlling" females turns to a feeling of wry humor or pity and forgiveness. Wilbourne in The Wild Palms admits: "I have been seduced . . . by an old whofe." (114-115) Isaac McCaslin, who has the highest regard of love and sexuality of any of Faulkner's characters, is seduced by his wife, but along with his grief over the incident he has pity and forgiveness for her. Another reason why the male does not feel threatened or repulsed by the female is his open admission of the desire to escape the female, as the tall convict's choosing prison to avoid women, or his admission that he cannot understand or control the woman, as Lucas Beauchamp's realization: "Women. I won't never know." (59)

Faulkner uses three narrative techniques in presenting crises in heterosexual relationships which do not require a portrayal of the subtle and distinctive differences between the opposite sexes, and which particularly do not require an understanding of the woman.

One device utilized by Faulkner in portraying a male-female crisis is having the member of one sex remain almost completely passive during an assault which ends the relationship. David in Mosquitoes does not react to Pat during the time of her domination of him; shortly thereafter he "escapes" her. Isaac McCaslin in Part IV of "The Bear" is seduced by his own wife, and then he apparently never goes to bed with her again. This presentation of Isaac McCaslin's passivity is thematically justified in that it shows his identity with the wilderness, which is also subject to violation and denudation.

A second device used in portraying a male-female struggle which does not require an understanding of the psychological make-up of a woman is depicting the woman as feeling and acting like or wanting to be a man. Although Faulkner used this device as a result of his limited understanding of women, he used it effectively. In Sanctuary in the dream version of the rape, he portrayed Temple Drake, who imagines that she is a male, haughtily challenging Popeye to approach her because she believes that she is "invulnerable" and because she wants to play a "joke" on him. In Light in August, because Joe Christmas did not trust women, the presentation of Joanna Burden as being like a man makes more plausible the fact that she was a serious challenge to Joe. The struggle between Joanna Burden and Joe Christmas is repeatedly referred to as a man-to-man relationship.

When Faulkner turns from Female protagonists and female sexuality to the subsequent concentration on male protagonists and the forces of Southern culture which determine their lives, he uses a third narrative device which allows the male-female relationship to be indirectly depicted. Two men are drawn together as a result of a heterosexual problem, and through the conversation or interaction of these two men the heterosexual relationship is indirectly presented. The accounts of Joe Christmas' rejection of the female, the young Negro girl and Mrs. McEachern, in his early life, in Light in August; the accounts of Thomas Sutpen's desertion of his first wife and his abuse of Milly Jones in Absalom, Absalom!; the accounts of Lucas Beauchamp's concern about his young wife's suspected infidelity and her divorce procedures against him in their old age, and Miss Sophonsiba's attempt

to trap Uncle Buddy McCaslin in Go Down Moses are all portrayed as male-to-male involvements. The men (Thomas Sutpen and Wash Jones, Sutpen and General Compson, Lucas Beauchamp and Zach Edmonds, Lucas and Zach Edmonds, Lucas and Roth Edmonds, Buddy McCaslin and Mr. Hubert, Joe Christmas and Mr. McEachern) are drawn together over male-female problems, but the problems between the opposite sexes are not really discussed. The concern is with the man-to-man relationship, usually involving pride and honor, or a rejection of or escape from women. This indirect presentation of the heterosexual problems allowed Faulkner to overlook the harsh or petty realities involved in heterosexual clashes. By keeping a distance from the male-female conflicts, Faulkner does not need to mention any male weaknesses and is able to emphasize more strongly the man's humor, pride, or honor in dealing with the problems caused by his relationships with women.

The patterns in the portrayal of heterosexual relationships as Faulkner's writings developed, until the end of the middle, prolific, climatic period of his career, all show a general shift from a concentration on the female to a concentration on the male. This shift in concentration is the result of Faulkner's limited understanding of women. He never achieved any depth in his portrayal of the female in heterosexual relationships, and he kept portraying the same types of female. Nevertheless, Faulkner did achieve a maturity in his attitude toward the enigmatic and blatantly sexual actions of his female characters and the resultant problems which such actions caused.

The growth in Faulkner's attitude toward heterosexual problems, despite his limited understanding of the female's contribution to them, is effectively reflected in the patterns in character emphasis, thematic interests, dominant moods, and narrative devices used in the portrayal of heterosexual relationships in Mosquitoes (1927), Sanctuary (1929, 1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1936), The Wild Palms (1939), and Go Down Moses (1942).

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THE PORTRAYAL OF HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS
IN SIX OF WILLIAM FAULKNER'S NOVELS

by

REBECCA ANN BOOSTROM

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The patterns in the portrayal of heterosexual relationships in William Faulkner's novels constitute an important critical consideration in view of the fact that Faulkner does not portray sustained heterosexual love.

Four broad patterns in (1) character emphasis, (2) thematic interests, (3) dominant moods, and (4) narrative devices can be traced in six of Faulkner's novels: Mosquitoes (1927), Sanctuary (1929, 1931), Light in August (1932), Absalom, Absalom! (1936), The Wild Palms (1939), and Go Down Moses (1942). These novels are representative of stages in the development of Faulkner's writing until the end of his prolific, mature middle period. The four patterns show changes in the presentation of heterosexual relationships, which, in general, evidence a shift from a concentration on the female to a concentration on the male.

The pattern in character emphasis shows a change from female protagonists, Pat in Mosquitoes and Temple Drake in Sanctuary, to male protagonists, Joe Christmas in Light in August and Thomas Sutpen in Absalom, Absalom! The change in the sex of the protagonist is engendered by the thematic interests. In the early novels female sexuality is thematically important in the conversations about and multifarious displays of female sexual titillation, culminating in the rape in Sanctuary. With the appearance of dominant, tragic, male figures, there is a thematic shift from a concern with female sexuality to an emphasis on the male's grappling with the forces of the outside world.

In Light in August and Absalom, Absalom! there is a thematic concentration on the powerful inner drives in the male that arise from the forces

of Calvinism, miscegenation, and the socio-economic structure in the South, and as a result the male's relationships with women are sublimated significantly within the scope of these forces. The question of primacy between the sexes appears to be artistically resolved in favor of the male, even though the woman is instrumental in bringing about the defeat of the tragic hero. Jeanna Burden, as a symbol of sexual rebellion and of the masculine disciplines of Calvinism, attracts Joe Christmas to his ultimate doom. The women in Thomas Sutpen's life, except Miss Rosa, are barely described and are primarily depicted as adjuncts to the fulfillment or frustration of Sutpen's "design."

The pattern in dominant moods evolves from an initially serious and often outraged approach in the portrayal of the female's role in a relationship to a later emphasis on an honorable or a humorous acceptance or avoidance by the male of his involvement with women. The change in mood, however, does not affect the basic alienation between the sexes, which is constant throughout Faulkner's works. For example, in The Wild Palms, opposite types of women are depicted with humor or satire as causing the men to wish to escape them.

The fourth pattern involves narrative devices used in presenting heterosexual crises that do not require a portrayal of the subtle and distinctive characteristics of the opposite sexes, particularly the female sex. Within this pattern of technical craftsmanship, the focus switches from showing the woman dominating a passive male, as in Mosquitoes, to portraying her being like a man when challenging the male, as in Sanctuary and Light in August, to indirectly portraying the female's role in the

conflict and depicting instead a man-to-man conflict which arises from a heterosexual problem, as in Go Down Moses.

The primary reason for the general, over-all shift in concentration from the female to the male is Faulkner's limited understanding of women and his consequent inability to characterize them. He achieves a mastery, however, in his presentation of heterosexual relationships by emphasizing the male and by controlling the female's contribution to the story in various ways, such as by presenting her indirectly, or as like a man. Faulkner's male characters' heterosexual experiences help them to accept women better, if not to love and understand them better, and the changes in their reactions and feelings seem to reflect a growth in Faulkner's own attitude toward heterosexual problems. He moderates the male characters' moods and reactions of naivete, repulsion, and outrage in his later works with humor, satire, and feelings of honor and even pity.

The changes in the four broad patterns in character emphasis, thematic interests, dominant moods, and narrative devices suggest the growth in Faulkner's attitude and help show the mastery in his portrayal of heterosexual relationships in Mesquitoes, Sanctuary, Light in August, Absalom, Absalom!, The Wild Palms, and Go Down Moses.