

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S YOKNAPATAWPHA:

THE LAND OF BROKEN DREAMS

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PREFACE

On the first day of creation God made the heavens and the earth, and on the last day He created man from the earth and gave him dominion over it. From that day the land has been the primary resource of man. But because of its basic nature, the land is often taken for granted; and its influence is frequently overlooked. The purpose of this study is to note briefly the importance of the land to Southern life and literature in general and then to show in detail the impact of the land on William Faulkner and his writings. The land has numerous roles in Faulkner's works in addition to its obvious function of serving as a part of the setting. It helps to establish the mood of the works, and it provides vivid imagery; but more importantly, it helps to determine character; it motivates characters to action; and at times it seems to fill the role of a character itself. This study is devoted to exploring the ways in which Faulkner has used the land in his books, especially the way that he has used the condition of the land to reflect the condition of the families who inhabit it.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ii

PART I

Chapter

I. THE LAND AND THE SOUTH 1
II. THE LAND AND SOUTHERN LITERATURE 9
III. THE LAND AND WILLIAM FAULKNER 19
IV. THE LAND AND FAULKNER'S WRITING 29

PART II

V. FRENCHMAN'S BEND 36
VI. THE COMPSON DOMAIN 54
VII. THE MCCASLIN PLANTATION 75
VIII. SUTPEN'S HUNDRED 98
IX. THE SARTORIS PLANTATION 121
X. CONCLUSION 135
NOTES 138
BIBLIOGRAPHY 155

CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE SOUTH

William Faulkner tells the story of the South, and the story of the South is inseparable from the story of its land. Frank Lawrence Owsley in his discussion of early life in the South has pointed out that most of the early Southern settlers were not gentlemen but yeomen who were rooted in the "tradition of the soil." Their attachment to the soil was so strong, he says, that "each word, name, sound, had grown from the soil. . . . Thoughts, words, ideas, concepts, life itself, grew from the soil. The environment all pointed toward an endless enjoyment of the fruits of the soil."¹ The love of the early Southerners for their land was so strong, says Owsley, that they searched literature and history for people who had lived close to the land, people who could serve as models and inspirations. And although early Southerners admired the Greek way of life, their greatest sense of kinship was with the Romans of the early republic. Owsley says, "These Romans were brave, sometimes crude, but open and without guile. . . . They reeked of the soil, of the plow and the spade; they had wrestled with virgin soil and forests; they could build log houses and were closer to many Southerners than even the English gentleman in his moss-covered stone house."²

The early settlers, however, did not find the soil completely free for their taking when they arrived. The Indians already occupied the land; and they were, as Howard W. Odum has pointed out, "part and parcel of the continent to be conquered and taken."³ Recent studies are giving increasing insight into the culture of the American Indian, and these studies illustrate the love and reverence of the Indian for the land and show his kinship with the land.

In spite of the Indians' devotion to the land and the white men's attachment to the soil, however, the two groups could not live harmoniously on the land which they both loved. The very first settlers were the hunters, and Odum hypothesizes that the early hunting economy which required that the white men take from the Indians their hunting grounds "might well have set the pattern of later ruthless exploitation of Nature and of slaves."⁴

In this early conflict between white men and Indians, one can see the beginnings in the South of the conflict which has always existed in some part of the world, the conflict between civilization and nature. And in the South, as elsewhere, civilization inevitably won; and the land came to be "cultivated." The "hardy, proud, land-hungry" pioneers, whom Odum describes,⁵ loved the land. The early farmer, according to Andrew Nelson Lytle, "possessed nature as little as possible, but he enjoyed it a great deal."⁶ But the free enjoyment of the land was relatively short-lived, and the love of the farmer became a possessive love.

The land had to be made to conform to the farmers' notions of usefulness, and these notions demanded that the land be cleared for the production of the goods which men wanted. No longer could the land bring forth every good fruit in its season; it had to bring forth the crops that men wanted, and it had to bring them forth as nearly as possible in the season when men wanted them. The land had to produce crops that could be sold for money.

The chief crop that men wanted was cotton, and cotton was a crop that required rich soil for its nourishment. It steadily depleted the land which sustained it so that farmers had always to be seeking and clearing new land as they left behind the land which had been exhausted and ruined by cotton. The result was that the great crop cotton, according to Odum, "impoverished a region while making it rich."⁷ Many have felt that the farmer prostituted the land when he ceased to use it merely for sustenance and when he began to defile it for the riches that it could be forced to produce. The relationship between man and the land ceased to be a love relationship; man began to exploit the land. He lost sight of the agrarian ideal, expressed in the twentieth century by Lytle, that "a farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn."⁸

But even though the South came to embrace an economy based on money rather than natural goods, the society was still agrarian rather than industrial; and man still looked to the land rather than the factory as the source of his livelihood. To the North, however, the industrial revolution had brought sweeping changes which were

welcomed in the area where the land was less suitable for farming than the land of the South. And just as the conflicts between the Indian and the white man had been inevitable, so the conflict between the industrial North and the agrarian South could not be avoided. The result of the conflict was what Odum has called,

The pastoral rebellion of the earth
Against machines, against the Age of Steam,
.
The genius of the land
Against the metal hand.⁹

The result of the conflict was the Civil War, which ravaged the land of the South even as it wreaked havoc on the bodies and souls of the people who lived there. And just as the early settlers had forced the Indians off their land, the descendants of those settlers became the dispossessed; and with their dispossession came a bitterness which has never completely subsided. Owsley has set forth the reasons for this bitterness:

After the South had been conquered by war and humiliated and impoverished by peace, there appeared still to remain something which made the South different--something intangible, incomprehensible, in the realm of the spirit. That too must be invaded and destroyed; so there commenced a second war of conquest, the conquest of the Southern mind, calculated to remake every Southern opinion, to impose the Northern way of life and thought upon the South, write "error" across the pages of Southern history which were out of keeping with the Northern legend, and set the rising and unborn generations upon stools of everlasting repentance.¹⁰

The "Northern way of life and thought" was, of course, the industrial way; and even Thomas Nelson Page, who in the years immediately after the war sought to keep alive the tradition of the gentleman

cavalier, embraced the New South and the industrialism which it sought to establish. In 1892, however, he lamented the passing of Southern tradition: "There is no true history of the South. In a few years there will be no South to demand a history."¹¹ On the other hand, other Southerners, such as Henry Watterson in 1903, exulted in the demise of Southern traditions and spirit. He rejoiced, "You wish me to talk to you about the South. The South! The South! It is no problem at all. I thank God that at last we can say with truth, it is simply a geographic expression. The whole story of the South may be summed up in a sentence: She was rich, and she lost her riches; she was poor and in bondage; she was set free, and she had to go to work; she went to work, and she is richer than ever before."¹²

Watterson and Page and many other Southerners had capitalized on a nationwide interest after the Civil War in the lore and culture of the Old South, the agrarian South. Henry Nash Smith attributes the "pleasure which readers in all sections during the seventies and eighties took in stories about a vanished Golden Age in the South" to "a reaction against the ugly adolescence of Big Business." As he sees it, "the feudal and now defunct Old South had embodied the only serious challenge to the triumph of finance and industry in American society."¹³

But the defeat of the South by the North was a defeat of agrarianism by industrialism, a defeat of the land by the machine; and the New South, which emerged after reconstruction was a South that looked

away from the land toward the city and the smoke stack as signs of "progress," and toward progress as improvement.

But progress did not necessarily bring happiness. A vague discontent haunted industrial society, a discontent that arose out of the working man's nostalgia for the land which he had left for the factory. As John Crowe Ransom has explained the phenomenon, "The agrarian discontent in America is deeply grounded in the love of the tiller for the soil. . . . In proposing to wean men from this foolish attachment, industrialism sets itself against the most ancient and the most humane of all the modes of human livelihood."¹⁴

The solution to this problem of discontent was not an easy one, however. Even those men who remained on the land seemed to have lost their sense of communion with it. Farming itself became industrialized so that the farmer's contact was with machines rather than with the land, and the produce which he wrested from the land was sent away to factories so that he could have the money to buy what the factories produced. The man no longer loved the land. Instead it became his enemy, an enemy with whom he was in constant conflict. And man became intent not on enjoying the land nor even on possessing the land but on conquering it or, if that failed, on escaping from it.

And the lure of industrialism steadily increased with the promise of ease and sophistication, and the power of industrialism became so strong that the value of the land was almost forgotten even though the land itself never completely relinquished its hold on man. And

then in the 1930's in the South the members of the Fugitive Group sought almost militantly to reassert the power and worth of agrarianism and to reinstill in man the virtues which they associated with the land and with Southern tradition.

Reacting, not without bitterness, to Northern industrialism, these agrarians practically shouted their love of the land and of the South. Stark Young said in I'll Take My Stand, "I am not sure that one of the deep mysteries, one of the great, as it were, natural beauties of the heart, does not lie in one's love for his own land."¹⁵ And Donald Davidson offered a special plea for the preservation of the Southern agrarian culture: "The South, past and present, furnishes a living example of an agrarian society, the preservation of which is worth the most heroic effort that men can give in a time of crisis."¹⁶

In 1925, Howard Odum, who felt that the South should make the most of the possibilities offered by industrialism and should industrialize farming, lamented the lack of Southern leadership in every "aspect of human endeavor";¹⁷ and he especially deplored the low rank of the South "in creative effort, in writing worthwhile literature."¹⁸ He attributed the failure to the fact that the South was "not willing to pay the price for an achievement which many reliable critics believe lies within the grasp of Southern talent."¹⁹

But as Odum was writing, the Fugitive Group was maturing; and William Faulkner was in New Orleans, not yet paying the price, but, nevertheless, preparing to pay the price to become one of America's

greatest writers so that by the time Donald Davidson wrote in 1930 that "only in an agrarian society does there remain much hope of a balanced life, where the arts are not luxuries to be purchased but belong as a matter of course in the routine of his living";²⁰ and by the time the other agrarians wrote their paeans to the land and to the South, Faulkner, firmly rooted in the soil which had nurtured him, had written, in addition to several inferior works, two of his great books, Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury in 1929.

CHAPTER II

THE LAND AND SOUTHERN LITERATURE

The land has played a vital role in the economic, political, and social development of the South; but more important to the purposes of this study is the role that the land has played in the development of culture, particularly literature, in the South. Howard W. Odum has pointed to the time when "nearly all of the South consisted of the rural folk with their rugged individualism and their struggle with land and climate";¹ and he has said that "the way of the South has been and is the way of the folk, symbolic of what the people feel, think, and do as conditioned by their cultural heritage and the land which Nature has given them."²

With such a strong rural folk heritage, then, it is undeniable that the Southern Renaissance, which is embodied in the towering figure of William Faulkner, owes its origin and its vitality, at least in part, to the land. Faulkner and those writers who have lived in his shadow--writers who in the company of a lesser man would be casting long shadows of their own, writers such as Flannery O'Connor, Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, William Styron, and many others--all owe their debts to the land.

But even though the land was always present to nourish writers, it was not until the twentieth century that writers took advantage of their heritage and began to produce the great literature which brought prestige to the South. Late in the nineteenth century, Thomas Nelson Page quoted the Encyclopedia Britannica's description of the failure of Southern culture: "The hothouse fruit of wealth and leisure, it has never struck its roots deeply into native soil."³ The reasons behind this failure are difficult to ascertain. Allen Tate has said that the literature was restricted because "the Negro slave was a barrier between the ruling class and the soil."⁴ Consequently, those who had the time and intellect to write were separated from the land which could have nourished them; and early Southern literature was largely a "hothouse variety" with little strength. It was primarily of a romantic nature, but it partook of the weaknesses rather than the strengths of romanticism; and, according to Tate, its weakness lay especially in its "feeble hold upon place and time. The roots were not deep enough in the soil."⁵

Perhaps the reason that the roots were not deep enough was that no one had thought to cultivate them. The land was a commodity which was largely taken for granted. There was plenty for all, and the power was available in the form of slaves to make the land productive. Indeed, there was little need for the aristocracy ever to come into direct contact with the soil. Aristocrats really never needed to dirty their hands in the soil which could have strengthened them.

And so prior to the War Between the States there seemed to be a general unconscious acceptance of the land such as Bruce Catton describes in his Short History of the Civil War:

The American people in 1860 believed that they were the happiest and luckiest people in all the world, and in a way they were right. Most of them lived on farms or in very small towns, they lived better than their fathers had lived, and they knew that their children would do still better. The landscape was predominantly rural, with unending sandy roads winding leisurely across a country which was both drowsy with enjoyment of the present and vibrant with eagerness to get into the future. The average American then was in fact what he has been since only in legend, an independent small farmer, and in 1860--for the last time in American history--the products of the nation's farms were worth more than the output of its factories.⁶

Such drowsy contentedness might have continued forever, and Southern literature might never have risen above the art of telling tall folk tales or flowery romances if abrupt disruption had not taken place. The disruption was the Civil War, which left the land blown to bits and the people bewildered. But even though the war brought sweeping surface changes, it failed in its attempt to change the fundamental makeup of Southerners and their society. In fact, Donald Davidson has pointed out how Southerners after the war became more determined than ever in their resistance to change:

Defeated and ravaged in war, the South put up fierce underground resistance to the Reconstruction and thus emerged at the turn of the century, poor in money and what money will buy, but rich in what money can never buy, in what no science can provide, for the South was still a traditional society, injured but very much alive, and by this time wise and experienced in ways of staying alive. The advocates of a New South of industrialism

and mass education, though eloquent and powerful, and heavily backed by Northern money, were not able to alter the traditional South very much.⁷

Thus, the South was beginning to recognize the need to preserve a traditional society, a rural society, which had formerly been taken for granted; and attempts to perpetuate that society were carried out with zeal and considerable success. As late as 1967 Robert L. Brandfon was saying, "From the very first, southerners have been defending themselves against the homogenizing tendencies of American history; at a terrible price in lives and regional wealth they have been largely successful in maintaining their exclusiveness."⁸ And even in 1972 an NBC reporter wondered on the evening news whether the election of a new governor in Mississippi would have any impact in bringing the state out of its "self-imposed isolation."

One of the prices that the South has had to pay for its exclusiveness and its isolation is deprivation of a sort that is abominable to the sociologist. During the period when many of the writers of the Southern Renaissance were maturing, the South ranked at the bottom of the sociologist's cultural statistics. Howard W. Odum's sociological measurements, reported in his book American Regionalism, seem to reveal in the South a deplorable if not desperate cultural deficiency. In 1920 the South was in the lowest quartile in the nation when per capita wealth was measured. And in 1930 the South had less than thirty per cent of its total population in urban

areas and only 14.6 per cent in metropolitan districts. In every area from plumbing to public libraries the South was sadly lacking when compared to the rest of the United States. Only five per cent of the farms in Southern states had water piped into the house, and Mississippi spent only slightly over seven cents per capita for libraries. In fact, in the whole South no state spent as much as twenty-five cents per capita on public libraries. Education was similarly neglected. Mississippi and Georgia spent less for public education than any other states, and throughout the South the average length of the school term was shorter, and the average number of days which pupils attended schools was lower than in any other region of the country.⁹

But in spite of the bleak outlook presented by these figures, the Southerner refused to lie down and die. The tables and charts were little more to him than a few ink marks on paper. What was real was what he could do or what he had done. Charts and graphs could not reveal the true condition of the South; they could not reveal the whole situation; and so the Southerner did not feel bound to submit to their findings. Instead, as Weaver points out, "The Southerner prefers to take in this whole through a kind of vision, in which the dominant features are a land and a sky of high color, a lush climate, a spiritual community, a people inclined to be good humored even in the face of their eternal 'problems' and to adapt themselves to the broad rhythms of nature."¹⁰

Thus, while the rest of the country was concerning itself with "scientific" measurements of such factors as per capita wealth and plumbing, the writers of the South were attempting to bring themselves into step with the "broad rhythms of nature"; they were becoming consciously aware of the land and of the rivers and of the sky. And out of this consciousness came three qualities which Randall Stewart has pointed out as the qualities which have been and will continue to be the strength of Southern writers: "Confidence in one's inheritance, belief in one's instinctive knowledge, [and] faithfulness to one's artistic vision."¹¹

The relationship between the land and these qualities and literature has been recognized by many writers. Eudora Welty has said, "It is by the nature of itself that fiction is all bound up in the local. The internal reason for that is surely that feelings are bound up in place."¹² And John Crowe Ransom has avowed that "out of so simple a thing as respect for the physical earth and its teeming life comes a primary joy, which is an inexhaustible source of arts and religions and philosophies."¹³

Some have maintained that the rural nature of the South retarded its development in literature, that literature could have flourished earlier in metropolitan centers of culture; but John Maclachlan refutes such contentions: "In the metropolis the realities of life are too much shut up, closed away, put behind walls and barriers. Birth and death occur in remote, aseptic caves. The earth is captive beneath

pavement, behind rails and hedges, regimented and disciplined in parks and subdivisions. The seasons of the year are hid behind heating systems and cooling vents, the sun and rain above roofs and canopies."¹⁴ Maclachlan contends that literature can flourish only where it can be firmly rooted in the land, far removed from artificiality. Richard Weaver has expressed a similar idea in pointing out the difference between the North and the South: "There is no more eloquent sectional contrast than the fact that whereas the South has the farms, New England has the insurance companies. It has not helped New England to have the insurance companies, except to grow rich; and it has helped the South to have the farms, as can be shown by its biological and imaginative fertility, and by the fortitude of its people."¹⁵

Imaginative fertility and human fortitude seldom find their way into the sociologist's charts, however; and outsiders often tend to look on Southerners as little better than peasants. But even this attitude does not dismay the Southerner. Allen Tate regards the peasantry as the best foundation for a solid culture because the peasant is close to the soil. In fact, Tate says, "The peasant is the soil"; and "all great cultures have been rooted in peasantries, in free peasantries, I believe, such as the English yeomanry before the fourteenth century: they have been the growth of the soil."¹⁶ Even though a peasantry may provide the foundation for a great culture, however, it is not itself great; and the problem of what brought about

the change from the rustic folk culture to the culture which produced the highly sophisticated form and subject matter of Southern Renaissance literature remains to be explored.

The contention of this paper is that the high form of literature could never have developed in the South if it had not developed from strong and close association with the soil. At the same time, however, a close association with the soil cannot of itself produce great literature. The catalyst that brought about the development was the change from agrarianism to industrialism in the South, a change that Randall Stewart describes as "something at once progressive and precarious,"¹⁷ and he might have added "slow." For even though the Civil War seemed to bring an abrupt change, actually the change was so slow that even after a century it had not been completely accomplished. Allen Tate has said, "The rise of new Southern points of view, even now in the towns, is tied still to the image of the land. Where else does so much of the reality of the ancient land-society endure, along with the infatuated avowal of beliefs that are hostile to it? Where in the world today is there a more supine enthusiasm for being amiable to forces undermining the life that supports the amiability."¹⁸

Thus, the Southerner is caught up in a great dilemma. In order to be a part of the modern world, he must deny his land-oriented heritage; and he must deny it joyfully. Yet every time that he denies the land, he denies a part of himself. He is in much the same

position as the adolescent who must attempt to establish his own identity and his independence and who at the same time becomes painfully aware of the debt which he owes to his parents and of the ease and comfort which he must leave behind to make his own way. And the Southerner loves his lands as the adolescent loves his parents because they have given him birth and sustained him. But the Southerner also hates his lands, again as the adolescent hates his parents, because he feels that they bind him and keep him from enjoying the fruits of an unexplored, unknown life. And thus, the Southerner and the adolescent attempt to reconcile their conflicting points of view; and thus, they become painfully conscious of the alternatives; and they know what they have been told to do and what they feel that they ought to do; but none of the choices coincides with what they want to do.

This dilemma is not new in the South. It occurs in the life of every human being, and it has occurred at the periods of greatest literary achievement. Donald Davidson has pointed to the phenomenon in Greece of the fifth century B. C., in the late republic of Rome, in Dante's Italy, and in sixteenth-century England. He could just as well have included the English Victorians and the American writers of the New England Renaissance when he says that "all give us examples of traditional societies invaded by changes that threw them slightly out of balance without first achieving cultural destruction. The invasion seems always to force certain individuals into an examination of their total inheritance that perhaps they would not otherwise have

undertaken. . . . Their glance is always retrospective, but their point of view is always thoroughly contemporary. . . . This is what I mean by the moment of self-consciousness. It is the moment when a writer awakes to realize what he and his people truly are in comparison with what they are being urged to become."¹⁹

Numerous people in the South awakened to realize the discrepancy between what their heritage had made them and what modernism and industrialism were trying to make them, and many of these people chose the medium of literature to voice their concern. The Fugitive group sought an economic return to agrarianism, and they proposed a political union with other sections of the country to achieve their purpose. Upon occasion they used their writing to propogandize; but whether they were producting propoganda or art, their genuine love of the physical earth was evident. And as the Fugitive leaders showed the way, a host of Southern writers followed; and the man who had the closest and deepest ties with the land, William Faulkner, emerged as the most honored of them all.

CHAPTER III

THE LAND AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

It was inevitable that William Faulkner, a product of the South, should love the land and draw strength from it. Those people who knew him best have spoken of his nearness to the land, and critics have hinted at the importance of the land in his writing. Most importantly of all, Faulkner himself has testified of his devotion to the land. The purpose of this chapter is to explore Faulkner's association with the land as it is evidenced in the remarks of his friends, in the comments of critics, and in the words of Faulkner himself.

With the aid of his lawyer friend Phil Stone, Faulkner published his first volume of poems, The Marble Faun, in 1924. In the preface to that early work, Stone wrote of Faulkner's ties to the land. Speaking of the poems in the volume, Stone said, "They are drenched in sunlight and color as is the land in which they were written, the land which gave birth and sustenance to their author. He has roots in this soil as surely and inevitably as has a tree."¹ And before Stone finished his brief preface, he restated the intense relation between Faulkner and the land: "The author of these poems is a man steeped in the soil of his native land."²

In 1925, Faulkner left his homeland of Mississippi to go to New Orleans. While he was in New Orleans, he met Sherwood Anderson; and they became friends. Anderson recognized Faulkner's talent and encouraged him. And, in turn, Faulkner admired Anderson and looked to him as an inviting model for his life. To Faulkner it seemed that Anderson had only to write a few hours in the morning and then spend the rest of the day--afternoon and evening--strolling through New Orleans, talking. After observing Anderson's apparently leisurely life, Faulkner reports that he decided, "'If this is what it takes to be a novelist, then that's the life for me''";³ and he subsequently secluded himself for six weeks to write his first novel, Soldier's Pay. According to the legend which Faulkner perpetuated, Anderson said that if Faulkner would not make him read the novel, he would have his publisher publish it. And so Anderson gave Faulkner very practical help in getting his writing career started.

But Anderson gave Faulkner advice also, the earliest advice that he received from a professional man of letters; and that advice was for him to look to the land from which he had come. Faulkner reports that Anderson advised him, "'You have to have somewhere to start from: then you begin to learn. . . . It dont matter where it was, just so you remember it and aint ashamed of it. Because one place to start from is just as important as any other. You're a country boy; all you know is that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started from. But that's all right too. It's America too.'"⁴

Anderson's advice was sound advice, but Faulkner did not heed it immediately. His first novel, Soldier's Pay, which appeared in 1926, and his second book, Mosquitoes, which appeared in 1927, neglected the wealth of the land in favor of forced urbanity and wit. Critics generally regarded Soldier's Pay as just one more contribution to the stream of weak literature which poured out after World War I, and they regarded Mosquitoes with even less favor than Soldier's Pay. Fortunately, in his next books--Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury in 1929, As I Lay Dying in 1930, and Sanctuary in 1931--Faulkner began to be aware of the land and to use it consciously; but he was not for some time able to make full use of all that the land had to offer.

Thus in 1931 Phil Stone wrote to Louis Cochran, expressing his concern about Faulkner's failure to realize fully his natural source of strength. Stone wrote, "As to his [Faulkner's] having his roots in this soil, . . . I am sure about this. My present discouragement about him is as to whether or not this part of him will ever be articulate in prose."⁵ If Stone could have looked ahead to the flowing lyrical prose descriptions of the land in The Hamlet, he could have ended his discouragement.

But Faulkner produced only one book, Light in August in 1932, before Stone was called on to write three articles about him for the Oxford Magazine in 1934. Since Faulkner had not yet attracted worldwide admirers, and since Stone was writing primarily for a local

audience who generally regarded Faulkner as a somewhat puzzling local character who wrote, he chose to write a rather simple description of Faulkner the man instead of Faulkner the man of letters; and in his description Stone remarked, "This will not be the portrait of a man of mystery or romance, nor that of a withdrawn and sardonic cynic. It is the likeness of a man who loves his native soil and prefers its people to all others. It is the likeness of a simple-hearted country boy leading the life of a country squire except for the vice of spoiling good white paper with little black marks."⁶

Even when worldwide acclaim did finally come, it failed to change Faulkner's basic nature. Thirty years after Phil Stone wrote his description of Faulkner, Stone's nephew, William Evans Stone V, reminisced about the writer: "He considered himself to be foremost a farmer. . . . His courtly and refined manner was a heritage from his Southern aristocratic forebears." And the younger Stone remarked that it seemed only natural for the descendant of early British colonists to "follow British customs and manners, and love the land, and have pride of family."⁷

That Faulkner loved the land and that he had the pride of family which William Stone reported is obvious. He exhibited his pride of family by choosing family stories and characters as the foundation for much of his work. Faulkner drew heavily from family lore as well as regional folklore in peopling and dramatizing his Yoknapatawpha saga. Critics have examined in some detail the relationship between

real events and characters and Faulkner's fictionalized ones; but scholars have failed to give adequate attention to another powerful force at work in Faulkner's writings, the physical land.

Critics have recognized in a general way that the physical land has played a significant role in Faulkner's work, but they have failed to explore that role adequately. Their concern has been primarily with the land as it represents a geographical, or a historical, or a sociological region--the South; and they have not probed in depth the importance of the physical land. Critics have been concerned primarily with the concept of "the land" which encompasses moral systems, ideological systems, traditions, nostalgia, and all that makes up the myth of the South; and they have failed to look at the soil from which these systems and myths have arisen.

Malcolm Cowley, whose Portable Faulkner helped to focus serious literary attention on Faulkner after many years of antipathy and neglect by the critics and the general public, was among the first to describe the importance of the land to Faulkner. Cowley comments, in his introduction to The Portable Faulkner, that Faulkner "has a brooding love for the land where he was born and reared and where, unlike other writers of his generation, he has chosen to spend his life."⁸ Cowley is speaking of "the land" in its broadest sense, which includes the people and customs of the area; but Cleanth Brooks has said that the land to which Cowley refers also includes "the physical land as seen in all seasons and weathers."⁹

Although most of the critics' comments about the importance of the land to Faulkner refer to the region, the South, a very real part of that South, the physical earth, must not be ignored. It is the rich soil which existed before even the Indians inhabited it and which has, without complaint, supported in their turns animal and plant wildlife, primitive Indians, white settlers, large plantation owners, small tenant farmers, Negro slaves, and most recently the great factories of industrialization. And Faulkner's strong attachment to such a land has given him a sense of place; and even more than a "sense" of place, it has given him a literal place to stand; and his talent has given him the lever which he placed on the fulcrum of his hard work to move the literary world. Irving Howe has said that it is Faulkner's sense of place, which has come out of his association with the land of a particular area, that has enabled him to speak powerfully about the human condition: "One of Faulkner's great subjects, human rootlessness in the modern world, is a subject made possible by the rootedness of his own life in the one part of the country which, at least until recently, could still be called a region. . . . Even when Faulkner twists his language into knots or drives his action into a violent confusion, the sense of place remains true."¹⁰

That Faulkner's land is located in the southern United States seems to be especially fortunate. Howard W. Odum has illustrated how the sociologist has looked on the South as an extremely backward

area, and Donald Davidson has facetiously used Faulkner as an example to discredit Odum and perhaps even the whole study of sociology. Davidson has examined Odum's statistics and concluded, "The cultural factors described by Mr. Odum either had a causal influence on William Faulkner or they did not."¹¹ If the factors did not have any effect on the development of Faulkner, then the sociologist's studies can be considered worthless to the literary critics or historians and perhaps worthless to everyone. On the other hand, if the statistics do indicate that measurable sociological forces play a role in determining creative literary ability, then they do not indicate that only "cultural centers" produce culture. According to Davidson's interpretation of Odum's study,

the way for a society to produce a William Faulkner is to have him born in a thoroughly backward state like Mississippi, of a chivalrously inclined, feudal-minded, landed Southern family that was ruined by the Civil War and later dipped, not very successfully, into modern business. In other words, a prevalence of rural society, devoted to cottongrowing, afflicted by sharecropping, rather poverty-stricken, conservative in religion and politics, prone to love the past rather than the future, chockful of all the prejudices and customs of the South-- that is what it takes to produce a William Faulkner.¹²

But Davidson's remarks cannot be fully accepted. His formula is not necessarily the recipe for producing "a William Faulkner" if "a William Faulkner" is taken to be any great man of letters. Davidson's formula does reveal, however, a great deal about how "the William Faulkner" of twentieth-century American literature came into being;

and it illustrates the power of the land in forming a literary giant from the earth.

Another student of Faulkner's situation who has reached somewhat the same conclusion as Davidson--i.e., that Faulkner could not have developed in a sophisticated urban climate away from the land--has expressed his views a little more positively than Davidson did. John Maclachlan has said,

Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County is a far place. There is nothing between its folk and the elemental forces of the universe, no canopies, walls, clinics, ranks of professionals and bureaucrats to stand between them and life and death. . . .

There is no formula, no line, because the cultural forces which beget them are not there. There is no overwhelming manmade technology, because the doings of man are dwarfed, let it be said, in a different fashion from the minuscule of the city. Here a man, one man, stands alone in a field, and has it out with the elements.¹³

One thinks readily of the prisoner in "Old Man" having it out with the elements, the flooded river which is really an extension of the land; and one thinks of Mink Snopes, who curses the land every day for the struggle in which it constantly engages him.

In characters such as the prisoner and Mink Snopes, Faulkner exhibits his ambivalent feeling for the land of the South, a feeling which Cowley described in his introduction to The Portable Faulkner: "on the one side, an admiring and possessive love; on the other, a compulsive fear lest what he loves should be destroyed by the ignorance of its native serfs and the greed of traders and absentee landlords."¹⁴

Friends can describe Faulkner's love of the land, and critics can probe his works for evidence of that love; but Faulkner himself offers the final proof of his devotion. Faulkner learned much from Sherwood Anderson, so much that he far surpassed his early mentor in literary achievements; but perhaps the most important lesson that Faulkner learned from Anderson was to look to what he knew best as the basis for his writing. And Faulkner came to recognize early, as he says, that "my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and that I would never live long enough to exhaust it."¹⁵ And he quickly gave evidence that his postage stamp of soil was not just a background against which characters moved and actions evolved; the soil itself was for Faulkner a vital and vibrant part of literature and of life. In his 1931 review of Erich Maria Remarque's The Road Back, Faulkner states his concept that the land is one of the few things which can give man sustenance; and he says that defeat is good because it "turns [man] back upon that alone which can sustain him: his fellows, his racial homogeneity; himself; the earth, the implacable soil, monument and tomb of sweat."¹⁶

Faulkner's ties to the soil were so strong that even after he had crowned his achievements with the Nobel Prize for Literature and won worldwide recognition as a writer, even after he had supported himself for many years by his writing, his first love remained the land. He remarked at the University of Virginia on April 30, 1957, that "with few exceptions, the artist in America is something else, too.

Like me, he's a farmer, or he's a lawyer like Edgar Masters, or a doctor like William Carlos Williams."¹⁷ And at West Point on April 20, 1962, fewer than three months before his death, Faulkner again expressed his love of his homeland and everything associated with it when he said, "I don't like the hot summers. I have said for sixty-five years I'd never spend another summer there, and yet I am going back in June";¹⁸ and soon he did return to his home where he died July 6, 1962. But before he died, he had reaped a rich harvest from his native soil.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAND AND FAULKNER'S WRITING

Faulkner's love of the land is so intense that it permeates his writings. He tells not merely the story of the people who live in Yoknapatawpha County but also the story of the creation and development of the very land itself. He describes the early stages of creation when all that existed was "the steamy chiaroscuro, untimed unseasoned winterless miasma not any one of water or earth or life yet all of each, inextricable and indivisible."¹ The land at the beginning of creation is "one boiling moil of litter from the celestial experimental Work Bench."² When the young land finally becomes distinguishable as an entity, it is wrapped in "steamy-green swaddling clothes"³ and populated by "pea-brained reptilian"⁴ animals.

The early steamy stage of the land's development is followed by the inundation of the ice which sweeps over the land, freezing all life before it "with infinitesimal speed, scouring out the valleys, scoring the hills"⁵ before it vanishes in its turn. After the shaping of the general topographic features of the land by the ice, "the earth tilted further to recede the sea rim by necklace-rim of crustacean husks in recessional contour lines like the concentric whorls within the sawn stump telling the tree's age, bearing south by

recessional south toward that mute and beckoning gleam the confluent continental swale."⁶ Thus were formed the broad lowlands which cover more than what comes to be twenty states when man establishes their boundaries. But the land of these twenty states is "established and ordained for the purpose of manufacturing one [state],"⁷ the state of Mississippi.

From this vast area of broad lowlands "the ordered unhurried whirl of seasons, of rain and snow and freeze and thaw and sun and drouth . . . aerate and slack the soil, the conflux of a hundred rivers into one vast father of rivers carrying the rich dirt, the rich garnering, south and south, . . . flooding the Mississippi lowlands, spawning the rich alluvial dirt layer by vernal layer, raising inch by foot by year by century the surface of the earth"⁸ until "the rich deep black alluvial soil"⁹ is formed which is so rich that it "would grow cotton taller than the head of a man on a horse."¹⁰

The land cannot be separated from its inhabitants; and Faulkner does not fail to record the first residents of the land, the "unalien shapes--bear and deer and panthers and bison and wolves and alligators and the myriad smaller beasts."¹¹ In addition to these inhuman beings who dwell in the land, there are "unalien men to name them too perhaps."¹² These first people are the "nameless though recorded predecessors who built the mounds to escape the spring floods and left their meagre artifacts."¹³ They become, in time, "the obsolete and the dispossessed, dispossessed by those who were dispossessed in turn

because they too were obsolete."¹⁴ The original Indian inhabitants are replaced by "the wild Algonquian, Chickasaw and Choctaw and Natchez and Pascagoula,"¹⁵ who are in turn dispossessed and made obsolete by the Frenchmen and Spaniards who come over the land in "a tide, a wash, a thrice flux-and-ebb of motion so rapid and quick across the land's slow alluvial chronicle as to resemble the limber flicking of the magician's one hand before the other holding the deck of inconstant cards."¹⁶

After the French and Spaniards, "came the Anglo-Saxon, the pioneer, the tall man, roaring with Protestant scripture and boiled whiskey, Bible and jug in one hand and (like as not) a native tomahawk in the other."¹⁷ The pioneer made his way "into the trackless infested forest, . . . scattering his ebullient seed in a hundred dusky bellies through a thousand miles of wilderness."¹⁸ This pioneer with his "over-revved glands"¹⁹ was "innocent and gullible, without bowels for avarice or compassion or forethought either, changing the face of the earth: felling a tree which took two hundred years to grow, in order to extract from it a bear or a capful of wild honey."²⁰

The pioneer continues his ways until he, like his Indian and French and Spanish predecessors, is "obsolete too: still felling the two-hundred-year-old tree when the bear and the wild honey were gone and there was nothing in it any more but a raccoon or a possum whose hide was worth at the most two dollars, turning the earth into a howling waste from which he would be the first to vanish, not even

on the heels but synchronous with the slightly darker wild men whom he had dispossessed, because, like the, only the wilderness could feed and nourish him."²¹ The ghost of the pioneer remains in the form of the highwayman who can be found "haunting the fringes of the wilderness which he himself had helped to destroy"²² until "one day someone brought a curious seed into the land and inserted it into the earth, and now vast fields of white not only covered the waste places which with his wanton and heedless axe he had made, but were effacing, thrusting back the wilderness even faster than he had been able to, so that he barely had a screen for his back when, crouched in his thicket, he glared at his dispossessor in impotent and incredulous and uncomprehending rage."²³

After carefully laying his background from the very formation of the land through the earliest inhabitants, Faulkner concentrates on the fate of the land at the hands of its various owners. The first of the Indians to assume the rights of private ownership of property was Ikkemotubbe, who came to be called Doom. As Faulkner reveals in the story "Red Leaves," Doom was merely a subchief, one of three children on his mother's side of the family. As a young man he went to New Orleans and met the Chevalier Sœur Blonde de Vitry, who became his patron. Under the tutelage of the Chevalier, Ikkemotubbe "passed as the chief, the Man, the hereditary owner of that land which belonged to the male side of the family; it was the Chevalier de Vitry who called him du homme, and hence Doom."²⁴

Doom returns from New Orleans to claim what is not rightfully his with the aid of a basket of puppies and a small box full of white powder which kills the puppies instantly when it is administered to them. Shortly after Doom's return, his uncle, who is the Man, the chief of the tribe, and his son die mysteriously. Doom's remaining uncle refuses the chieftainship, and Doom comes to be the owner of "ten thousand acres of matchless parklike forest where deer grazed like domestic cattle."²⁵ Along with the assumption of the title of the Man and the acquisition of the land, Ikkemotubbe acquires slaves and begins "to cultivate some of his land, as the white people did."²⁶

Before Ikkemotubbe's treachery, the Indians had held the land communally; but Ikkemotubbe had seized the land and recognized it as a saleable commodity. Faulkner accepts the idea that "Ikkemotubbe cease[s] to own the land as soon as he realizes that it is saleable."²⁷ Thus, Ikkemotubbe and the Indians are doomed from the moment when they begin to try to adopt the white man's ways that they do not understand and adapt to his customs. They try to adopt the slavery which seems profitable to the white men; but by the time Ikkemotubbe dies when his son, Issetibbeha, is nineteen years old, the new Man, Issetibbeha, has a difficult problem to deal with: "He became proprietor of the land and of the quintupled herd of blacks for which he had no use at all."²⁸ The Indians do not know how to use the Negroes. The only solution they can find is to "raise more Negroes by clearing more land to make corn to feed them, then sell them."²⁹ The solution

seems fortunate, for the Indians can sell the Negroes for money. The most serious drawback to their plan is that they cannot figure out what to do with the money they receive any more than they could figure out what to do with the slaves. Thus the Indians have been tainted by the white man, and the land which the white men receive from the Indians has in turn been tainted.

From the time of Doom's treachery, the story of the land is a sad story, a story which is not mere fiction but the depiction of a very real way of life. Howard Odum has discussed the importance of the land to Southern life, and everything that he says about Southern land and Southern attitudes toward the land is reflected in Faulkner's writing. Odum points to the land as the "rural symbol of life,"³⁰ and he speaks of "the glorification of the land as the chief reality of life and location."³¹ In spite of the glorification of the land, however,

in the southern heritage the story of the land is again one of contradiction. There was the very abundance of lands that set the incidence for the building of plantations and estates and for the pioneering on ever new frontiers, West and South. Yet the greater cultural tradition of the South has been one of exploitation of the land and its resources. Great pine forests which in later years would have reflected astronomical values in dollars and cents were sold for fifty cents an acre and wasted beyond the measure of the needs of the region. And the erosion of soil has been so great that the South has become symbolic of wasted lands. And, finally, the exploitation of the land with the one-crop system of cotton and tobacco did more than anything else to fix the nature of the South's culture and economy.³²

What Odum recognized from a sociological point of view, Faulkner realized from a humanitarian and a literary point of view. He used his literary skill to tell the story of the men who came to a virgin land, claimed it for their own, and then raped it mercilessly. Faulkner tells the stories of five great aristocratic families who settled in Yoknapatawph County, bought or obtained by trickery their land from the Indians, and wrested their fortunes from the rich land. The rise and fall of these families--the Greniers, the Compsons, the Sutpens, the McCaslins, and the Sartorises--is reflected in the rise and fall of the condition of the land which they obtain. When the founders of the families come to the land, they are young. The young land which they tame pours forth unlimited wealth. But as the families pass through generations and grow old, the land also grows old and desolate. The chapters which follow reveal the history of Yoknapatawpha County as it is told in the story of the fate of different sections of the land--Frenchman's Bend, Compsons' Domain, the McCaslin land, Sutpen's Hundred, and the Sartoris land.

CHAPTER V

FRENCHMAN'S BEND

Frenchman's Bend is an area of over a thousand acres located twenty miles southeast of Jefferson. It lies partly in Yoknapatawpha County and partly in the adjacent county. Louis Grenier, who was among the first three white men to establish homes in the county, chose this section of rich river-bottom land as the site of his plantation. Like those who soon followed him, Grenier came to the country to carve a kingdom for himself out of the wilderness; like his successors, he had a dream. His dream was a dream of conquering the land and wresting from it its wealth; and Grenier was successful in accomplishing his immediate goal; but when he died, his dream died with him. The people who took the land after Grenier, took with it the dust into which his dreams disintegrated.

Throughout the history of the area the land reflects the dreams and ambitions of its owners. With Grenier in possession of the land, it pours forth its wealth; but after his death, his heirs do not protect their inheritance; and the land falls prey to a grasping horde that pours into the area. Neither adventurous nor powerful enough to clear land for themselves, the newcomers seek out the abandoned corners of Grenier's plantation and try simply to eke out a meager living.

They continue the devastation of the land which Grenier had already begun.

Among this horde one man emerges who is a little more grasping and a little stronger than his fellows; and that man, Will Varner, begins to reassemble Grenier's holdings. Over a period of forty years Will Varner accumulates land until he owns most of the same land which Grenier originally claimed. Unlike Grenier, Varner himself does not attempt to farm the land. Instead, he doles it out to the same kind of people who followed Grenier onto the land, people who lack initiative and who are slaves both to the land and to Will Varner even though they call themselves free men.

Among this second horde another man emerges just as Will Varner emerged from the first group. The man is Flem Snopes, who becomes Varner's son-in-law and acquires just enough of Frenchman's Bend for just long enough to achieve his dream. Flem's dream is to leave behind forever his ties to the land as a farmer and go to Jefferson, where he can make money.

Except for the momentary discomfort which Flem Snopes and his kinsmen cause in the community, the land and its inhabitants remain peacefully under the control of Will Varner and subsequently his bachelor son Jody, who, in their rapacity, allow the farmers to ravage the land violently in order to draw from it whatever little remains of its original richness. By the 1940's only one Grenier remains on the land. Slightly retarded, he lives in a tattered tincan, cardboard

tent of a house which portrays both the ultimate degeneration of his forefather's dream and the final destiny of the land which Grenier first ravished in order to achieve his dream. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the history of Frenchman's Bend as it is reflected in the relationship between its land and the people who own it.

The original owner of the land, Louis Grenier, was "the Huguenot younger son who brought the first slaves into the country and was granted the first big land patent and so became the first cotton planter."¹ Accompanying Alexander Holston and Doctor Samuel Habersham, neither of whom wanted to own land in the new territory, Grenier "crossed the mountains from Virginia and Carolina after the Revolution and came down into Mississippi in the seventeen nineties."²

He entered the county "back in that dark time in Mississippi when a man had to be hard and ruthless to get a patrimony to leave behind himself and strong and hard to keep it until he could bequeath it."³ Apparently Grenier was strong and hard and ruthless, for he established a large patrimony for his children and kept it intact until they could inherit it.

Grenier came to the country on horseback and thus brought few possessions with him. He was, however, a man of wealth; and he sent back for his luxuries when he was ready for them. He had at his disposal riches which could only multiply in the rich land to which he migrated; and he soon established his dynasty which even contained its own settlement so that he had little need ever to make a journey

to Jefferson. Although Grenier's plantation was stunning during his lifetime, a hundred years after his death nothing remains of him or his dream "but the name of his plantation and his own fading corrupted legend like a thin layer of the native ephemeral yet inevitable dust on a section of country surrounding a little lost paintless crossroads store."⁴

Although Grenier bequeaths a patrimony to his heirs, they neglect it and soon lose their place on the land to the swarm of newcomers who sweep over it "in battered wagons and on muleback and even on foot."⁵ Unlike Grenier, these people have no financial backing; and they lack both the energy and the intellect to accomplish what Grenier did with the land. They have few possessions: "what they did bring most of them could (and did) carry in their hands."⁶ Although Grenier had financial resources to help him make the best use of the land, the people who follow him have little besides the "flintlock rifles and dogs and children and home-made whiskey stills and Protestant psalmbooks,"⁷ which they bring with them. Such items are of little value in taming the land.

In the shadow of Grenier's ruined mansion and on the grounds from which he drew splendor and magnificence, one-room and two-room cabins spring up to house the new settlers. The settlers cannot comprehend Grenier's elaborate house (they never even bother to paint their homes), and they cannot comprehend growing the vast expanses of cotton which increased and assured Grenier's wealth.

Grenier's successors try simply to eke out a bare living by growing patches of cotton in the river bottom land and corn in the neighboring hills.

The steady decline of Grenier's plantation continues from the time of his death in the 1830's until some time around the Civil War when a young man, Will Varner, appears. He is different from his neighbors only in the degree of his rapacity and in his surpassing shrewdness. He is one of the "nameless horde of speculators in human misery, manipulators of money and politics and land, who follow catastrophe and are their own protection as grasshoppers are and need no blessing and sweat no plow or axe-helve and batten and vanish and leave no bones, just as they derived apparently from no ancestry, no mortal flesh, no act even of passion or even of lust."⁸

Varner begins to acquire land throughout the area which had once been occupied by Grenier's plantation, and by the beginning of the twentieth century his property includes roughly the same area as Grenier's original empire. By the time that Varner reaches the zenith of his power, Grenier has already faded from memory: "his name was forgotten, his pride but a legend about the land he had wrested from the jungle and tamed as a monument."⁹ Only the fallow land and the ruined house remain: "his dream and his pride [are] now dust with the lost dust of his anonymous bones."¹⁰ The only relation that remains between the land and its original owner is the vague name, Frenchman's Bend, which comes to identify Varner's new kingdom; and about the

only relation between the land which Will Varner owns and the land which Louis Grenier owned is that it occupies approximately the same area.

Although Grenier cleared the land and made it productive, Varner neglects the land and allows his tenants to neglect it so that "some of the once-fertile fields . . . reverted to the cane-and-cypress jungle from which their first master had hewed them."¹¹ Much of the land that Varner owns is so worn out that "nobody else except a man who had nothing would undertake, let alone hope, to wrest a living from [it]."¹² Consequently, most of the people who come to live in the area are dejected, bitter men like Mink Snopes and Henry Armstid. The irony of their situation is that in their desperation, they put their hopes in a land that is utterly desolate. They are forced to a wretched existence in a land without hope.

Will Varner either owns the title or the mortgage on most of the land in the area, and for his living he depends not on the land but on the people who try to farm it. He is of a more practical nature than Grenier; but Varner also has his dream, a dream fashioned along more plebian lines than Grenier's dream but a dream, nevertheless, that includes ownership of vast lands and the possession of power, both economic and political, over the people who inhabit his land. Varner's empire grows steadily, and he becomes known as "a farmer, a usurer, a veterinarian," and more importantly as "the chief man of the country."¹³

His control of the land gives him extensive political and economic control of the county. He is simultaneously the beat supervisor in one county into which his land spreads, the Justice of the Peace in the other county, and the election commissioner in both counties. He also owns the store, the gin, the grist mill and the blacksmith shop which are essential to the lives of the inhabitants of the area; and all residents clearly understand that they are to use his facilities. Although Varner is as strong, hard, and ruthless as Grenier, he gives the appearance of a calm and placid man. It has been said of him that "a milder-mannered man never bled a mule or stuffed a ballot box."¹⁴

In spite of his outwardly calm appearance, however, Varner gets what he wants. By gradually acquiring holdings throughout the area, a small farm here and a new pasture there, he completely displaces even the memory of Grenier in the county. Grenier is gone, and gone with him are "his family and his slaves and his magnificence. His dream, his broad acres were parcelled out now into small shiftless mortgaged farms for the directors of Jefferson banks to squabble over before selling finally to Will Varner, and all that remained of him was the river bed which his heirs-at-large had been pulling down and chopping up . . . for firewood."¹⁵

Faulkner does not give a detailed analysis of what happens to each of the small parcels of land on the original plantation; but he does reveal what happens to the Old Frenchman's place, the house and

gardens which were Grenier's home. By the time Varner is at his peak at the beginning of the twentieth century, the only physical evidence of Grenier's dreams is the "gutted shell of an enormous house with its fallen stables and slave quarters and overgrown gardens and brick terraces and promenades."¹⁶

One of Varner's greatest pleasures is to go out to the Old Frenchman's place and sit in his homemade chair "against his background of fallen baronial splendor."¹⁷ He sits there, his neighbors believe, dreaming pleasantly of his next foreclosure; for foreclosures are the substance of which his dreams are made. Varner himself claims, however, that he spends his time there thinking about the kinds of dreams that could have motivated the original owner of the place. He confides to V. K. Ratliff, the travelling sewing machine salesman, "'I like to sit here. I'm trying to find out what it must have felt like to be the fool that would need all this . . . just to eat and sleep in.'"¹⁸ The satisfaction of his basic physical needs is Varner's primary concern; and the splendid houses and lands have no place in his fancy. In fact, Varner acts as though the house and its accompanying property are a great burden because he cannot contrive a way to get any revenue from them. He tells Ratliff, "'This is the only thing I ever bought in my life I couldn't sell to nobody.'"¹⁹

In spite of this one disappointment, however, Varner seems to have fulfilled his dreams and to be enlarging them peacefully and steadily, expanding them only after he has already accomplished them.

It almost seems that Varner has achieved most of what Grenier himself wanted. He has property, security, wealth, and a position of honor in his own kingdom. In addition, he has an heir, a crown prince, the ninth of his sixteenth children, Jody Varner, an invincible bachelor, who has devoted himself to helping Varner oversee his holdings and increase them. Jody is, like his father, quietly rapacious; but the son lacks his father's finesse.

The difference between father and son becomes quickly evident when, shortly after the Varners acquire a new farm, a stranger arrives and introduces himself to Jody: "My name is Snopes. I heard you got a farm to rent."²⁰ Jody learns that the man, Ab Snopes, has a reputation as a barn burner; and Jody is quickly siezed by the dream of using Ab and the land to make a free crop for the Varners. He agrees to rent the land to Snopes and expects to blackmail him into leaving after he makes his crop but before he harvests it. Jody quickly learns, however, that Ab is not a man who can be frightened. In fact, Jody becomes convinced that Ab will burn the Varner property of his choosing at the slightest provocation; and in order to insure himself against Ab's wrath, Jody offers the only bribe he has, the land, to enlist the aid of Ab's son Flem.

Jody promises Flem all the land that he wants to farm, but Flem is not interested in farming. He tells Jody, "Aint no benefit in farming. I figure on getting out of it soon as I can."²¹ Flem has a dream of wealth and reputation, and he does not want to spend forty

years as the Varners have done trying to wrest that wealth and reputation from the land. Flem can see no intrinsic value in the land. His dreams of prosperity and respectability urge him toward the town of Jefferson rather than to the land of Frenchman's Bend. He is interested in Frenchman's Bend as a stepping stone to Jefferson and in the surrounding land as a highway to the good life, the urban life.

Flem finds that he is able to get out of farming perhaps even more quickly than he could have thought, for Jody immediately establishes him in the Varner store. With unbelievable rapidity Flem gains control of the store, the gin, the blacksmith shop, and even the school. In addition, V. K. Ratliff, who makes it his business to know the business of his neighbors checks at the Chancery Clerk's office and finds "some two hundred acres of land, with buildings, recorded to Flem Snopes."²²

Flem's power increases so steadily that he replaces Will Varner in his chair in front of the Old Frenchman's place just as he has replaced him or at least come to have an equal share with him in his business dealings. Even the Old Frenchman's place itself comes into Flem's possession when he marries Eula Varner, Will's youngest daughter, who becomes pregnant without a husband and without any prospect of one.

The Old Frenchman place is Eula's dowry, but it has so little actual cash value that one wonders how Flem was persuaded to take it.

It has become by the time of Eula and Flem's marriage "a plantation of barely accessible worn-out land containing the weed-choked ruins of a formal garden and the remains (what the neighbors had not pulled down plank by plank for firewood) of a columned colonial house--a property so worthless that Will Varner gave it away, since even as ruthless an old pirate as Will Varner had failed in a whole quarter-century of ownership to evolve any way to turn a penny out of it."²³ Will Varner uses the old house and the land around it to pay for covering Eula's shame and protecting her honor, and his use of the worthless plantation shows "what value he held that honor at."²⁴ This land is nothing more to Varner than a nuisance just as his daughter and her lost virtue are simply minor nagging problems.

Like Will Varner, Flem Snopes views the land and the wife that he acquires at the same time as though they are of equal value. He knows how little that value is, but he is confident that he can add to the value of both to serve his own ends. Eula provides the wife whom he needs for respectability, and her already accomplished pregnancy provides the impotent Flem with the child that he cannot otherwise have. Thus Flem brings to the marriage the ability to preserve, at least to a degree, Eula's good name; but more importantly the marriage provides in return the wife and child that respectable people have and that Flem wants.

Flem's mere acquisition of the land enhances its value in the eyes of some people. V. K. Ratliff has always regarded it as

valuable, but he has been unable to determine the source of its worth: "He had never for one moment believed that it had no value. He might have believed this if anyone else had owned it. But the very fact that Varner had ever come into possession of it and still kept it, apparently making no effort to sell it or do anything else with it, was proof enough for him. He declined to believe that Varner ever had been or ever would be stuck with anything; that if he acquired it, he got it cheaper than anyone else could have, and if he kept it, it was too valuable to sell."²⁵ Henry Armstid apparently discovers where the value for the land lies when he finds that Flem has been digging secretly around the place at night. He believes that Flem is about to uncover the buried treasure which is reported to have been buried there by Grenier "when Grant overran the country on his way to Vicksburg."²⁶ Although Grenier had been dead for thirty years when Grant swept through the area, the rumor about the treasure began some time after the war and persisted and grew until the Old Frenchman's place became some of the best tilled soil in the whole area. People who would not farm their own land swarmed over the place seeking the treasure and "easy" money which it promised even though the amount of energy that they expended would have been more than sufficient to have ensured them of a good living if they had spent it in farming their own land. Ratliff discusses the situation: "'Dont you know folks have been looking for that money for thirty years? That every foot of this whole place has been turned over at

least ten times? That there aint a piece of land in this whole gountry that's been worked as much and as often as this here little shirt-tail of garden? Will Varner could have raised cotton or corn either in it so tall he would have to gather it on horseback just by putting the seed in the ground."²⁷

In spite of his knowledge of repeated failures by men looking for the money, however, Ratliff rationalizes that the money has just been buried too deeply to be found in the quick diggings that would have been permitted between Will Varner's appearances on the place. When he learns that Flem has been seen digging on the grounds, Ratliff readily believes that the digging explains the apparent mystery behind Varner's keeping the place and Flem's acquiring it:

"There's something there. I've always knowed it. Just like Will Varner knows there is something there. If there wasn't, he wouldn't never bought it. And he wouldn't a kept it, selling the balance of it off and still keeping that old house, paying taxes on it when he could a got something for it. . . . And I knowed it for sho when Flem Snopes took it. When he had Will Varner just where he wanted him, and then he sold out to Will by taking that old house and them ten acres that wouldn't hardly raise goats."²⁸

Thus, with the promise of easy money and the vain hope of being able to have the better end of a bargain with Flem Snopes, V. K. Ratliff, Henry Armstid, and Homer Bookwright pool their resources and, after finding the money that Flem salts on the place, buy the land. In exchange for the land, "Ratliff gave a quit-claim deed to his half of the side-street lunch-room in Jefferson. Armstid gave a mortgage

on his farm, including the buildings and tools and live-stock and about two miles of three-strand wire fence; Bookwright paid his third in cash."²⁹

It is not until the three men have spent several nights in a vain search for the buried treasure that Bookwright and Ratliff discover that the buried money which they originally uncovered was minted after the Civil War; some was dated 1879, and some was dated even later. The only value that the land has is the few dollars that Flem himself buried on it.

Bookwright and Ratliff recognize their failure and accept it philosophically. Flem Snopes has used what appeared to be the most worthless property in the Frenchman's Bend area to move a big step toward the realization of his dream. With the money which Bookwright has given him and the title to half of the lunch-room in Jefferson which Ratliff has given him, Flem passes by the Old Frenchman's place for the last time, moving toward Jefferson with his wife Eula and her daughter Linda loaded into a wagon. As they pass by, they can see Henry Armstid clawing determinedly at the dirt. He will not surrender his dream. He has remained for days after all hope of discovering the treasure is gone, digging mechanically and crazily and unceasingly "back into that earth which had produced him to be its born and fated thrall forever until he died."³⁰

Thus the land has passed from Louis Grenier with his expansive dreams and his ability to realize, at least momentarily, those dreams

to a swarm of haggard, worn-out farmers who must try to make a living on the destitute, worn-out land; and the very land upon which his home was built has passed into the hands of three men who foolishly hope to find in a lump the wealth which he had to draw mercilessly from the whole area of his plantation.

The numerous farmers continue to live on the land and pay homage to Varner and his son; and the ten acres that Armstid, Bookwright, and Ratliff buy is gradually neglected and forgotten. Armstid finally is committed to the insane asylum in Jackson; Bookwright is arrested, tried, and convicted of murdering the man who has tried to lure his daughter away from him; and Ratliff returns to his casual business of selling sewing machines to the women of the neighborhood and keeping himself informed about his neighbors' business, especially if it has anything to do with the Snopeses.

The abandoned house and lands decay undisturbed until a boot-legger named Lee Goodwin moves into the old house with his wife and child and his gang and sets up his headquarters there from which he serves Jefferson and the surrounding territory his moonshine. The house has become "a gutted ruin rising gaunt and stark out of a grove of unpruned cedar trees . . . cotton fields and gardens and lawns long since gone back to jungle."³¹

The decay of the land portrays again the decadence of the people who inhabit it. The Old Frenchman's place is the scene of the brutal rape of Temple Drake and the murder of Tommy by the perverted Popeye.

The people who live on the land have a complete disregard for it just as they have complete disregard for other human beings. The house is "surrounded by abandoned grounds and fallen outbuildings. But nowhere was any sign of husbandry-plow or tool; in no direction was a planted field in sight--only a gaunt weather-stained ruin in a sombre grove through which the breeze drew with a sad, murmurous sound."³²

All of the original splendor which Louis Grenier brought to the land and drew from the land is gone just as Grenier himself is gone. But two of Grenier's descendants still remain in the area as sad reminders of a once proud name, although the name has undergone the same erosion which has taken place on the land. One of the survivors is "old Dan Grinnup, a dirty man with a tobacco-stained beard, who was never quite completely drunk, who had no official position in the stable, partly because of the whiskey maybe but mostly because of his name, which was not Grinnup at all but Grenier: one of the oldest names in the county until the family went to seed."³³ As late as 1905, Dan Grinnup survives by hanging around the Priest livery stable in Jefferson and extracting what kindness he can from those who remember Louis Grenier. Sometimes, when he has reached the proper "cold and scornful pitch of drink," old Dan reminds anyone who will listen that "once Greniers led Yoknapatawpha society; now Grinnups drove it."³⁴

Dan Grinnup has a distant relative, "idiot nephew or cousin or something," who lives "in the river jungle beyond Frenchman's Bend

which had once been a part of the Grenier plantation."³⁵ The relative's name is Lonnie Grinnup, a corruption of the original Louis Grenier's name; and his house is a "conical hut with a pointed roof, built partly of mildewed canvas and odd-shaped boards and partly of oil tins hammered out flat."³⁶ Lonnie Grinnup "had never even known he was Louis Grenier."³⁷ He is mentally retarded, "'touched,' they said, but whatever it was, had touched him lightly, taking not very much away that need be missed."³⁸ He lives "in almost the exact center of the thousand and more acres his ancestors had once owned"³⁹ with a deaf-and-dumb orphan whom he befriends.

Grinnup never knows his real name, and he never realizes that his ancestors once owned the land where he lives. Of all the people who ever claim the land or live on it, only Lonnie Grinnup, whom Gavin Stevens calls a "'Poor damned feeb,'"⁴⁰ has what Faulkner seems to feel is the ideal relationship with the land. Stevens says that even if Grinnup had known that the land once belonged to his forefathers, "he would not have cared, would have declined to accept the idea that any one man could or should own that much of the earth which belongs to all, to every man for his use and pleasure--in his own case, that thirty or forty square feet where his hut sat and the span of river across which his trotline stretched, where anyone was welcome at any time, whether he was there or not, to use his gear and eat his food as long as there was food."⁴¹

By the 1940's, when Grinnup is killed by a greedy neighbor, the decay of the land is complete as the decay of the Grenier family and name is. The family has come full cycle from the rich and powerful Louis Grenier, who did as he pleased with the land, to his feeble-minded heir and namesake Lonnie Grinnup, who also does what he pleases with the land. The difference between the men is that Grenier chose to tame the land and reap its wealth, leaving ruin in his wake. On the other hand, Grinnup, who inherits the land by possession if not by legal title, chooses not to place limits on the land but to share it with all who can use it with him. Even though he has little to offer (the land is completely worn out), Grinnup makes his offering with a free hand. His death brings the end of the Grenier family and the end of any kind of possession or ownership of the land. With the death of Lonnie Grinnup, the land returns at least symbolically to a natural state, largely unowned as it was before the Indians were persuaded to sell it. Unfortunately, however, the mere passing of the land out of man's control cannot restore it to its virgin greatness. The land outlasts man who has tried to tame it, but man leaves behind as a reminder of his sojourn an indelible scar upon it.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMPSON DOMAIN

Shortly after Alexander Holston, Doctor Samuel Habersham, and Louis Grenier arrive to begin the settlement which becomes known as Jefferson and the settlement on Grenier's plantation which evolves into Frenchman's Bend, the first Compson, Jason Lycurgus Compson, appears in Jefferson. In the history of Jefferson which is included in Requiem for a Nun Faulkner reveals simply that "a man named Compson . . . had come to the settlement . . . with a racehorse, which he swapped to Ikkemoutubbe . . . for a square mile of what was to be the most valuable land in the future town of Jefferson."¹

The Compsons from whom the original Jason has descended are neither farmers nor aristocrats, and Jason's association with the land is unique among the first great families of the county. Jason's ancestors are gamblers and losers, not necessarily in that order; and never in the history of the Compson family does one of the Compsons even attempt to farm. Nevertheless, the land plays an important role in the development of the Compson family history.

Jason's grandfather, Quentin Maclachan Compson, the son of a Glasgow printer, has to flee from Scotland to Carolina after fighting in a losing cause against the King of England. Quentin's son, Charles

Stuart Compson, is also a loser. His first loss is sustained as a member of the British army in the American revolution, and his second loss comes when he helps to lead a "plot to secede the whole Mississippi Valley from the United States and join it to Spain."² Before his co-conspirators finally force him to flee the country, Charles Stuart Compson exhibits the conflicting natures which characterize all the Compsons. He attempts for a period to be a school teacher, but he is finally forced to become "the gambler he actually was and which no Compson seemed to realize they all were provided the gambig was desperate and the odds long enough."³

Jason, Charles Stuart's son, is the only one of the Compsons who recognizes his ability as a gambler, capitalizes on it, and becomes a winner. Jason's grandfather came to America with little more than a "claymore and the tartan he wore by day and slept under by night,"⁴ and Jason comes to the Natchez Trace in 1811 with only "a pair of fine pistols and one meagre saddlebag on a small light-waisted but stronghocked mare."⁵ What Jason lacks in background and wealth, he makes up in shrewdness coupled with his ability as a gambler. In a movement remarkably like Flem Snopes's rise in the Varner store, Compson becomes the clerk for the Indian agent Ratcliffe within six months after his arrival in Jefferson; and within a year he is Ratcliffe's partner in the Indian trading post.

Compson's arrival is notably different from the arrivals of his predecessors in the county just as his association with the land

is different. The first settlers--Habersham, Holston, and Grenier--had been "first guests and then friends of Ikkemotubbe's Chickasaw clan."⁶ These first guests were followed, however, by "an Indian agent and a land-office and a trading-post, and suddenly Ikkemotubbe and his Chickasaws were themselves the guests without being friends of the Federal Government; then Ratcliffe, and the trading-post was no longer simply an Indian trading-post though Indians were still welcome, of course (since, after all, they owned the land or anyway were on it first and claimed it)."⁷ Compson arrives in the area with neither slaves to clear the land as Grenier had, nor merchandise to offer as Ratcliffe brought, nor services to render such as Doctor Habersham offered. Compson brings merely his race horse, but it is as alluring to the Indians as the merchandise of Ratcliffe and the medicine of Habersham. Compson readily agrees to race his horse against the horses of the young Indian men, and he is "always careful to limit [the race] to a quarter [of a mile] or at most three furlongs."⁸ Through skillful use of his mare, "Compson began to own the Indian accounts for tobacco and calico and jeans pants and cooking-pots on Ratcliffe's books (in time he would own Ratcliffe's books too) and one day Ikkemotubbe owned the race horse and Compson owned the land itself."⁹

Within a year of his arrival in Jefferson, Compson has not only become Ratcliffe's partner but also traded his mare to Ikkemotubbe for "the solid square mile of land which someday would be

almost in the center of the town of Jefferson."¹⁰ The land which Ikkemotubbe "granted out of his vast lost domain" is "a solid square mile of virgin North Mississippi dirt as truly angled as the four corners of a cardtable top."¹¹ Compson now owns at least six hundred forty acres, "some of which the city fathers would have to buy from him at his price in order to establish a town."¹²

Although the land which Compson obtains is apparently as rich and fertile as any of the land on which plantations are founded, Compson's dream does not include the physical labor which clearing a wilderness and planting a plantation involve. The land which he gets is forested, and it is "still forested twenty years later though rather a park than a forest by that time."¹³ Compson keeps the land, making no attempt to keep up with the progress around him, allowing the neighboring land to be cleared while his land remains forested and untouched. Apparently operating on the assumption that "good things come to him who waits," Compson merely keeps his land waiting until someone wants or needs it more than he does.

The want and the need arrive some twenty years after he obtains his land when Alexander Holston's fifteen pound lock disappears from the town. The lock normally protected the town's mail pouch, but it disappears after it is put on a makeshift jail in order to hold a band of desperados who have been captured. The pony express rider, Thomas Jefferson Pettigrew, threatens to bring the wrath of the United States government down on all the men in the settlement if

the lock is not found or paid for. No amount of cajolery or persuasion will change Pettigrew's mind, and it is Compson who finally identifies Pettigrew's trouble: "'He's a damned moralist.'"14

Working from this assumption, Doc Peabody, who has come as old Doc Habersham's replacement in the settlement, devises a solution to the problem. A town will be established, and it will be named Jefferson, supposedly after the bachelor Pettigrew. Such a flattering move will "corrupt" Pettigrew so that he will be willing to overlook the loss of the lock or at least let the federal government pay for it itself.

The move is successful; and Compson, who displays the Compson ability to lead whether or not he is going in the right direction, replaces the aging Alec Holston as the town leader and presides over "the settlement's first municipal meeting."¹⁵ The first task which is appointed to the citizens of the newly established town is the building of a real jail since the captives of the former lean-to have escaped, removing one entire wall and taking with them the fifteen-pound lock which was supposed to be holding them. The men of the new town throw themselves into their work with determination, and within two days the jail is completed. On the morning of the second day's work, a small group gathers before sunrise to mouth the name of the town and marvel at its existence:

"By God. Jefferson."

"Jefferson, Mississippi," a second added.

"Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi," a third corrected; who, which one, didn't matter this time either

since it was still one conjoined breathing, one compound dream-state, mused and static, well capable of lasting on past sunrise too.¹⁶

The men are caught up in a dream, and Compson is on hand to inspire them in their dream and to capitalize on their dreaming. He is "the gnat, the thorn, the catalyst"¹⁷ who keeps the men at work and who keeps the dream alive. "'It aint [Jefferson] until we finish the goddamned thing,' Compson said. 'Come on. Let's get at it.' So they finished it that day."¹⁸

With the jail finished, the town quickly demands a courthouse; and when the first formal survey is made, it reveals that "the courthouse would have been only another of Compson's outbuildings had not the town Corporation bought enough of it (at Compson's price) to forfend themselves being trespassers."¹⁹ Thus Jason has gambled a quarterhorse into a section of land and speculated the section of land into a fortune. Like Grenier, Compson draws a fortune from the land; but unlike Grenier, Compson has neither to turn a clod nor clear a bush to realize his dream. Apparently his original grant was larger than a literal square mile, for he sells the land to the town for a courthouse and still retains the square mile intact to bequeath to his son.

With the money which he receives from the sale of his land, Compson is able to establish an estate with a magnificence which is equal to the grandeur of the neighboring plantations. The Compson property soon has "its slavequarters and stables and kitchengardens

and the formal lawns and promenades and pavilions . . . [and a] columned porticoed house furnished by steam boat from France and New Orleans";²⁰ and the land becomes known as "the Compson Domain . . . since now it was fit to breed princes, statesmen and generals and bishops."²¹ Then Jason Compson, the leading citizen of Jefferson, becomes the father of Quentin Maclachan Compson II, who becomes the leading citizen of the state; and the house becomes known as "the Governor's house," and the land retains its name of "the Old Governor's even after it had spawned (1861) a general."²²

The General, Brigadier Jason Lycurgus Compson II, is another in the long line of Compson failures; he "failed at Shiloh in '62 and failed again though not so badly at Resaca in '64."²³ In spite of his failures, however, General Compson is in many ways a better man than his forefathers and his descendants. Even though the Compson dream begins to crumble steadily around General Compson and he can do nothing to stop its decay, he does give his help to two other people--a young man, Thomas Sutpen, and a boy just barely reaching maturity, Isaac McCaslin--as they seek desperately to accomplish their dreams through the land. It is General Compson who befriends the lonely and bitter and desperate Thomas Sutpen and in whom Sutpen confides his bitter history, and it is General Compson who lends Sutpen the seed with which he plants his first crop.²⁴

After Sutpen loses his land to Major De Spain, General Compson is one of the members of the hunting party which goes each summer

and winter to Major De Spain's hunting camp in the wilderness. The camp, located thirty miles from Jefferson, is the scene of the gloriously ceremonial hunting and killing of wild game which is so plentiful that turkeys are shot to feed the hunting dogs and even does are fair game for the hunters.

It is General Compson who draws the first blood from the cunning bear Old Ben, who is the abiding and enduring target of the annual hunt, but even this triumph is incomplete and cannot be counted as a true success among the failures of General Compson. The blow which Compson strikes seems like his life itself to mark "the beginning of the end of something."²⁵

General Compson sees his world crumbling around him, but he sees in the young Isaac McCaslin a hope of a better way of life; and he yields to the younger man who promises to succeed where he has failed. It is General Compson who gives up his place on the mule Katie, who will not spook in the presence of Old Ben, so that Ike McCaslin can have his chance at Old Ben the year after Compson has wounded him.²⁶ And it is General Compson who stands at the head of Lion's grave after Old Ben has killed him and speaks "as he would have spoken over a man."²⁷ It is General Compson who understands enough to allow Ike to stay behind in the camp with Sam Fathers when the hunters leave so that Ike can be with Sam at his death and see to his burial. When Ike's cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, insists that Ike must leave the camp so that he can return to school, it is Compson

who gainsays him: "'And you shut up, Cass,' he said, though McCaslin had not spoken. 'You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank.'"²⁸ In the speech that follows, Compson reveals his belief that life is more than banks and farms and insists that Ike knows more than he can learn from books or banks or farms. He says to Edmonds, "'You aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe without being afraid.'"²⁹ He feels that the knowledge which Ike has surpasses the knowledge which can be learned from books and farms, and the kind of person that Ike is, "that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark,"³⁰ is superior to the people who make their living by farming and banking.

General Compson is an idealist and an aristocrat who is untainted by work or practical considerations. Since he does not see the value of farming, Compson is not able to turn to the land for strength and renewal after the Civil War depletes his fortune. He cannot or will not farm, and so he makes his fatal mistake. He is finally guilty of a failure that is irreversible, a failure that is more disastrous to his descendants than his failures at Shiloh and Resaca: he "put the first mortgage on the still intact square mile

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to a New England carpetbagger in '66 after the old town had been burned by the Federal General Smith and the new little town . . . had begun to encroach."³¹ While General Compson is playing the role of the leisurely aristocrat and hunting game in the wilderness with his cronies and deprecating the value of farming to Isaac McCaslin, the encroaching town proceeds to "nibble at and into" his estate so that "the failed brigadier spent the next forty years selling fragments of it off to keep up the mortgage on the remainder: until one day in 1900 he died."³²

Thus by the dawn of the twentieth century, the Compson property has dwindled like Grenier's plantation; and the Compson dream has floundered and degenerated and become wasted like Grenier's dream. Although the Compsons outlast Grenier himself by over a hundred years, they have little more control over their land than does the dead Grenier. They still have a small part of their original grant, but what they have is in ruin; and only a shred of their dreams remains. The governor has been forgotten, and the old general is remembered only for his failures. "What was left of the old square mile was now known merely as the Compson place--the weedchoked traces of the old ruined lawns and promenades, the house which had needed painting too long already."³³

General Compson's son, Jason III, an inept lawyer, finally is forced to sell "the last of the property, except that fragment containing the house and the kitchengarden and the collapsing stables

and one servant's cabin in which Dilsey's family lived, to a golfclub for the ready money with which his daughter Candace could have her fine wedding in April and his son Quentin could finish one year at Harvard and commit suicide in the following June of 1910."³⁴ The selling of the pasture for the building of a golf course means that the land which once served a useful purpose, important to life, has been converted into a purely recreational area. The land no longer serves man's basic needs. It serves instead his vanity. And the money which is obtained from the sale is likewise used in an attempt to fulfill the vain dreams of the Compsons.

Benjy, the idiot son of Jason III, loves the pasture. In fact, it is one of the only three things that he does love. In addition to his pasture, Benjy loves only his sister and the "sight of an open fire."³⁵ But Benjy's love of the land is not enough to save it just as his love of his sister is not enough to save her; and the pasture is sold so that Quentin III, the brooding eldest son of Jason III, can receive a Harvard education.

The only hope of the family for salvation is through the first-class education of their son, and they sacrifice the last of their land to help him attain it. Like General Compson, the last of the Compsons prefer to sell their land rather than farm it. They are determined to maintain their aristocratic pose even though they have always been gamblers rather than true aristocrats. The Compsons' sacrifice to respectability is, however, a vain one. Quentin is

driven to despair by the thought of his sister's impurity and her unhappy marriage, and he commits suicide. Before his death he ponders the vanity of his father's dream: "I have sold Benjy's pasture and I can be dead in Harvard . . . because Harvard is such a fine sound forty acres is no high price for a fine sound. A fine dead sound we will swap Benjy's pasture for a fine dead sound. It will last him a long time because he cannot hear it unless he can smell it."³⁶ Quentin realizes that the "fine dead sound" is all that remains of the Compson family and their land.

Part of the money from the sale of the land is used to finance a wedding for Caddie. But, like Quentin's Harvard education, Caddie's wedding is nothing more than a fine dead sound. She has already been seduced by Dalton Ames before she marries the Indiana banker, Sydney Herbert Head; and no amount of splendor in the wedding ceremony can make Caddie a happy bride or a happy wife.

With the sale of the pasture, the Compson holdings practically cease to be; and the Compson family soon dies out. The Compsons have succeeded in their generations in America

from the expatriate who had to flee his native land with little else except his life yet who still refused to accept defeat, through the man who gambled his life and his good name twice and lost twice and declined to accept that either, and the one who with only a clever small quarterhorse for tool avenged his dispossessed father and grandfather and gained a principality, and the brilliant and gallant governor and the general who though he failed at leading in battle brave and gallant men at least risked his own life too in the failing, to the cultured dipsomaniac who sold the last of his patrimony not to buy

drink but to give one of his descendants at least the best chance in life he could think of.³⁷

But the best chance he can think of is not good enough. The dreams of the early Compsons and the dreams of Jason Compson III and his children crumble to dust. Jason IV feels robbed because the pasture is sold and he receives none of the benefit from it. Quentin III, for whom the property is sold, is miserable through one year at Harvard before he commits suicide. And Caddie, who receives a wedding from the proceeds of the sale, finds her marriage ended within a year and then is in turn the wife of "a minor movingpicture magnate, Hollywood California"³⁸ and then the mistress of a Nazi general. Caddie never makes any claims on her birthright, and even her daughter Quentin, whom she brings home for her family to bring up, runs away from Jason's cruelty. Benjy has no understanding of the land although he has an instinctively close relationship with it. Thus the loss of the ownership of the land never troubles him. To him "the pasture was even better sold than before,"³⁹ and he takes pleasure in seeing the golfers play although he is always upset when they call "Caddie."

The small amount of property that remains to the Compsons becomes known as the "Old Compson place even while Compsons were still living in it."⁴⁰ The title, which is generally reserved for property of which the former owners are dead or have at least relinquished their title, illustrates the decay which the Compsons have experienced. They cease to exert any control over their property. The place

retains its name "long after all traces of Compsons were gone from it"⁴¹ just as the Old Frenchman's place keeps for over a hundred years the shadow of its original owner.

The last of the Compsons to own the land is Jason IV, who takes over the property when his father dies. Jason's sister Caddie relinquishes her claim to the land by running away, and his brother Quentin has committed suicide. Since the remaining brother Benjy is an idiot, the land falls naturally to Jason. In The Sound and the Fury Faulkner says that Jason waited until his mother died and then committed Benjy to the State Asylum in Jackson. In 1933, as soon as Jason has Benjy safely taken care of, he chops up the Compson house into apartments and sells it with the remaining land "to a countryman who operated it as a boarding house for juries and horse- and muletraders."⁴² Jason's reason for selling the property is that he wants "to free himself forever not only from the idiot brother and the house but from the Negro woman too."⁴³

Jason has no appreciation for the land or the people who farm it. He sees the farmers as contemptible people even though they earn an honest living by hard work while the Compsons degenerate in their psychoses and neuroses. In spite of the depths to which the Compsons have fallen, however, Jason tries to maintain a superior attitude toward his neighbors. He is suspicious of what the townsmen think of him and his family: "I could see them watching me like a hawk, waiting for a chance to say Well I'm not surprised I expected

it all the time the whole family's crazy. Selling land to send him to Harvard and paying taxes to support a state University all the time."⁴⁴ In retaliation, Jason lashes out at the farmers on whom he has to depend for his living: "I says my people owned slaves here when you all were running little shirt tail country stores and farming land no nigger would look at on shares."⁴⁵

Jason rejects the land and everything associated with it. He is a mechanical man, and he puts machinery above both the land and his family. He insists on driving his car even though the gas fumes give him unbearable headaches, and he takes better care of his car than he does of his family. He refuses to chase Miss Quentin through the streets of Jefferson because they are too rough: "I think too much of my car; I'm not going to hammer it to pieces like it was a ford."⁴⁶ When he finally tracks Quentin down in the country, he has to go across a plowed field to try to reach her. In a typical rage, he remarks that the plowed field is "the only one I had seen since I left town"; and he has to walk across it "with every step like somebody was walking along behind me, hitting me on the head with a club."⁴⁷

With his hatred of the land, Jason is interested in it only as it can offer him a chance to make money. In The Mansion Faulkner reveals the ultimate fate of the Compson Domain under Jason's direction. Jason, like Will Varner and practically everyone else in Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson, finally encounters Flem Snopes and comes away a

loser: "in 1943 the town suddenly learned that Flem Snopes now owned what was left of the Compson place. Which wasn't much."⁴⁸

According to the story that the townspeople tell in the 1940's, Benjy "had set himself and the house both on fire and burned up in it"⁴⁹ in the 1930's. The local legend says that Jason had finally gotten rid of Benjy, he thought, by "persuading his mother to commit him to the asylum only it didn't stick, Jason's version being that his mother whined and wept until he, Jason, gave up and brought Benjy back hom, where sure enough in less than two years Benjy not only burned himself up but completely destroyed the house too."⁵⁰

According to the story that Faulkner tells in The Mansion, Jason does not sell the old Compson property. Instead when the municipal golf links move out to the country club in 1929, Jason buys the original pasture back. Then when Benjy burned down the house, "Jason took the insurance and borrowed a little more on the now vacant lot and built himself and his mother a new brick bungalow up on the main street to the Square. But the lot was a valuable location; Jefferson had already begun to surround it."⁵¹

No one is especially surprised to learn that "Jason had bought back into the original family holding the portion which his father had sacrificed to send his older brother to Harvard."⁵² Those who inquire into the matter, however, such as Gavin Stevens, are surprised to learn that Jason has paid cash for the abandoned golf course; but he has not paid off the mortgage on the lot which is the

site of the old Compson home. He pays the interest on the mortgage promptly to Flem Snopes's bank each time that it comes due, but he never pays off the mortgage. He, like Jody Varner, whom he resembles in many ways, attempts to lay a trap for Flem.

When the attack on Pearl Harbor comes, Jason feels that the time has also come for him to get the best of Flem Snopes. In the spring of 1942, Jason leads everyone in town to believe that "he not only had advance unimpeachable information that an air-training field was to be located in Jefferson, he had an unimpeachable promise that it would be located nowhere else save on that old golf links."⁵³ Jason believes that he can trick Flem into buying what he (Jason) believes is the worthless hilly old pasture and thus get the mortgage on the valuable downtown property paid off without being out any money.

Just as Jason had expected and hoped, Flem "called in the note his bank held on Jason's mortgage. All amicable and peaceful of course."⁵⁴ Jason names his price for the old golf-course-pasture, just as his great-great-grandfather, Jason I, had named his price for the land on which the courthouse was built. Feeling confident and superior to Flem, Jason attaches only one request to his sale of the property. He reserves "only the right to hope that the finished flying field might be christened Compson Field as a monument not to him, Jason, but to the hope that his family had had a place in the history of Jefferson at least not to be ashamed of, including

as it did one governor and one brigadier general, whether it was worth commemorating or not."⁵⁵ After the negotiations are completed in January, 1943, "Jefferson learned that Mr Snopes--not the bank; Mr Private Individual Snopes--now owned the Compson place."⁵⁶ He has gotten from Jason "a plot of land extending a quarter of a mile in both directions except for a little holding in one corner owned by a crotchety old man named Meadowfill."⁵⁷

Jason feels a fleeting moment of satisfaction, and he goes around town mocking Flem and referring to the old Compson place as "Snopes Field . . . after even the ones who didn't know what an airfield really was, had realised there would not be one here."⁵⁸ The terrain is much too hilly for an airfield, and the government designates the flatter country to the east and the west as sites for flight training. Nevertheless, Jason's satisfaction is short-lived. Flem has allowed him to "overreach himself out of his ancestral acres";⁵⁹ and Jason realizes his mistake: "maybe as soon as he signed the deed and before he even cashed the check, it may have occurred to him that Flem Snopes had practiced shrewdness pretty well too, to be president of a bank now from even less of a stake than he, Jason, who at least had had a house and some land where Flem's had been only a wife."⁶⁰

In a panic, Jason tries repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get Gavin Stevens to find a flaw in the title even when there is none. In a typical rage he tries "to find some way, any way to overturn or

even just shake Snopes's title, with a kind of coldly seething indefatigable outrage like that of a revivalist who finds that another preacher has stepped in behind his back and converted the client or patient he had been working on all summer."⁶¹ The title is unshakable, however; and even Jason finally has to give up. In the same week that Jason surrenders, Wat Snopes appears to convert the Compson carriage house, which was detached from the main house and thus escaped the fire, into a small two-storey house; and a month later another Snopes, Orestes, comes to live in it.

Flem allows his kinsman to live on the land, which is now fenced into small lots, and carry on his business of "buying and selling scrubby cattle and hogs."⁶² Flem allows the business to continue while he waits for the war to be over so that he can sell his newly acquired property to those who live through the war and come to bring up their families. Thus, "in September of '45, Jason's old lost patrimony was already being chopped up into a subdivision of standardised Veterans' Housing match-boxes."⁶³ The official name of the subdivision is not Compson Field or even Snopes Field, but Eula Acres, in honor of Flem's unfaithful dead wife who in spite of her infidelity, or perhaps because of it, helped Flem to achieve his goal of being a "respectable" citizen of Jefferson.

The building on the land continues rapidly so that "by Christmas it was already dotted over with small brightly painted pristinely new hutches as identical (and about as permanent) as squares of

gingerbread or teacakes, the ex-soldier or -sailor or -marine with his ruptured duck pushing the perambulator with one hand and carrying the second (or third) infant in the other arm, waiting to get inside almost before the last painter could gather up his dropcloth."⁶⁴ By New Year's Day, 1946, a new highway has been planned and surveyed which will run the length of the subdivision. In one of the few times, perhaps the only time, that Flem is ever bested in a deal, Gavin Stevens forces him to give the land which adjoins the corner owned by old man Meadowfill to Meadowfill's daughter. She, in turn, sells her newly-acquired property and her father's orchard to an oil company that plans to build a service station on it; and with the money she receives, she and her new ex-marine husband settle into one of the new veteran's houses in Eula Acres.

In little more than a century, the rich virgin square mile of forest which Jason Compson I received from the Indians in exchange for his quarterhorse mare has been steadily sold off and completely ravaged. The towering trees which took hundreds of years to grow have been cut down and made into the shabby little houses that cover the land almost as densely as the original trees. The land with its asphalt and cement covering has little or no power left out of its original strength and fertility.

The situation of the Compson family parallels that of their land. The last of the Compsons, Jason IV, gambles away the last of the Compson property. It is lost as it was originally won. Like

the land, Jason seems powerless to protect himself from the people who prey on him. He is a weak, ineffectual man whose only power lies in the violent, impotent rages with which he harangues anyone who will listen. The Compson family has come full circle in Yoknapatawpha County from Jason I, who arrived with practically nothing and quickly acquired a rich patrimony to leave his descendants, to Jason IV, who has neither patrimony nor heirs. In the end, the Compson family comes to the "unvarying nil: stalemate of dust and desire"⁶⁵ which Jason Compson III regards as the end of every man.

CHAPTER VII

THE MCCASLIN PLANTATION

Shortly after Jason Compson arrives in Yoknapatawpha County, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin brings his family to the area from their home in Carolina. Upon his arrival, he buys an unspecified amount of land which is located seventeen miles northeast of Jefferson. He acquires the land from Ikkemotubbe, the chief who readily traded a square mile of virgin land for Compson's quarterhorse. McCaslin is an opportunist, a man who, his great-grandson McCaslin Edmonds says, "saw the opportunity and took it, bought the land, took the land, got the land no matter how, held it to bequeath, no matter how, out of the old grant, the first patent, when it was a wilderness of wild beasts and wilder men, and cleared it, translated it into something to bequeath to his children, worthy of bequeathment for his descendants' ease and security and pride and to perpetuate his name and accomplishments."¹ Like his contemporaries--Grenier, Compson, Sutpen, and Sartoris--Carothers McCaslin has a dream based on the ownership of land which can be bequeathed to his descendants who can perpetuate it as a monument to his name and memory.

Old Carothers McCaslin takes his land and clears it for farming. It is land which is "bought with white man's money from the wild men whose grandfathers without guns hunted it."² Not satisfied with the state of the land which he obtains, McCaslin immediately sets about making the land productive by taming it and bringing order out of what he views to be chaotic nature. He "tamed and ordered or believed he had tamed and ordered it for the reason that the human beings he held in bondage and in the power of life and death had removed the forest from it and in their sweat scratched the surface of it to a depth of perhaps fourteen inches in order to grow something out of it which had not been there before and which could be translated back into the money he who believed he had bought it had had to pay to get it and hold it and a reasonable profit too."³

Perhaps even more than his predecessors in the area, Compson and Grenier, Carothers McCaslin dreams of the land primarily as a source of financial profit. The profit which he seeks, however, can be realized only through the exploitation of both the land and the people who work it. McCaslin erroneously believes that he has tamed the land, and he believes that because he paid money for the land and because he has "tamed" the land, the land is "his to hold and bequeath since the strong and ruthless man has a cynical foreknowledge of his own vanity and pride and strength and a contempt for all his get."⁴

It is in telling the story of Carothers McCaslin and his descendants that Faulkner emphasizes the futility of man's attempting

to own the land. McCaslin believes that he owns the land because he has paid money for it and because he has "tamed" it, and he believes that he can transfer to his descendants both his ownership of the land and his belief in that ownership. Upon McCaslin's death, however, his heirs immediately begin a long process of rejecting the ownership of the land which their father leaves them as their inheritance.

McCaslin dies on June 27, 1837, leaving his land to his twin bachelor sons, Theophilus (Uncle Buck) and Amodeus (Uncle Buddy), who are thirty-eight years old. In addition to the legal heirs to his land, Carothers McCaslin also leaves other descendants. He has a white daughter and a black daughter Tomasina (Tomey), who is also the mother of McCaslin's black son, Terrel Beauchamp (Tomey's Turl). Being a strong and ruthless man, McCaslin does not acknowledge either his female heir or his black progeny any more than he acknowledges any of the other slaves who have helped him in the accomplishment of his dream.

McCaslin's only recognition of his black descendants is in his will which offers ten acres of land to Thucydus, one of McCaslin's slaves whom he brought with him from Carolina, and one thousand dollars to Tomey's Turl when he reaches the age of twenty-one. Thucydus is the husband of Eunice, a slave whom McCaslin bought in New Orleans in 1807, who becomes the mother of his daughter Tomasina (Tomey). In a feeble attempt to right his wrong, McCaslin offers the wronged husband the ten acres of land and the son one thousand dollars. The

offer seems to McCaslin to cancel any debt he might have or any responsibility that he might encounter as the parent of Tomey and Tomey's Turl. He does not attempt to settle the account while he is alive, however. He chooses rather to wait until his death when the price of paying the debt will come not out of his holdings any more but out of the holdings of his sons. Thucydus refuses the land, however; and he refuses the twins' cash offer of two hundred dollars for the land. He stays and works for over four years to earn two hundred dollars which he uses to set up a blacksmith shop. Like Thucydus, Tomey's Turl never claims the thousand dollars which McCaslin bequeaths him.

Even though Carothers McCaslin seems to feel little moral obligation to either the land or the people with whom he comes in contact, his sons have a strong moral and ethical inclination which causes them to set about trying to negate what their father has done. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy are fair-minded and progressive thinkers who immediately begin to try to compensate for some of the injustices which their father has done to the slaves, and to relinquish the inheritance both good and bad which they have received from their father.

The first thing that the twins refuse is the grand house which McCaslin left behind him with his land. The house is a "tremendously-conceived, . . . almost barn-like edifice which he had not even completed,"⁵ a house "which people said was still one of the finest

houses in the country when they [Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy] inherited it."⁶ As soon as their father is buried, the twins move out of the house "into a one-room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it, refusing to allow any slave to touch any timber of it other than the actual raising into place the logs which two men alone could not handle."⁷ The old house is not ignored, however. The twins "domiciled all the slaves in the big house some of the windows of which were still merely boarded up with odds and ends of plank or with the skins of bear and deer nailed over the empty frames."⁸

The arrangements remain the same until Uncle Buck finally marries Sophonsiba Beauchamp and moves "back into the big house, the tremendous cavern which old Carothers had started and never finished, cleared the remaining negroes out of it and with his wife's dowry completed it, at least the rest of the windows and doors and moved into it, all of them save Uncle Buddy who declined to leave the cabin he and his twin had built."⁹

Prior to the wedding, however, Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy implement their progressive ideas. They are concerned not merely with seeing that justice is done the slaves, but also with seeing that the proper attitude is displayed toward the land: "They believed that land did not belong to people but that people belonged to land and that the earth would permit them to live on and out of it and use it only so long as they behaved and that if they did

not behave right, it would shake them off just like a dog getting rid of fleas."¹⁰ Not only did Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy attempt to set right the wrongs done to the slaves, they also encouraged collective farming in an attempt to help their poor white neighbors who were often in greater hardship than the slaves: "Uncle Buck and Buddy had persuaded the white men to pool their little patches of poor hill land along with the niggers and the McCaslin plantation, promising them in return nobody knew exactly what, except that their women and children did have shoes, which not all of them had had before, and a lot of them even went to school."¹¹ The practices which they encourage are so far ahead of their time that they have no name, but they are effective; and they win many friends for the two men.

Thus, during the lifetime of the twins, the black McCaslins and the white McCaslins and the black and white non-McCaslins' history is recorded in the ledger which the brothers keep at their commissary. The book contains the history "of the land which they had all held and used in common and fed from and on and would continue to use in common without regard to color or titular ownership."¹²

And when Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy die within the same year, 1879, there are actually three sets of heirs: McCaslin (Cass) Edmonds, the grandson of Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy's sister; Isaac McCaslin, the son of Uncle Buck; and the black Tomey's Turl and his three children. Isaac is only twelve years old at the time of his father and uncle's death; and, consequently, his cousin Cass assumes most of the

responsibility for the land. The black descendants again have no claim to the land. Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy do, however, increase Tomey's Turl's untouched thousand dollar inheritance to one thousand dollars for each of his three children, a legacy which can be claimed by each child when he reaches the age of twenty-one.

From his youth, Isaac McCaslin shows no interest in extending his control over the land. He is tutored in the ways of the wilderness by the old man Sam Fathers, who is half Indian and half Negro and whom Carothers McCaslin got from Ikkemotubbe in exchange for "an underbred trotting gelding."¹³ Sam Fathers becomes Ike's spiritual father even as Ike's cousin Cass Edmonds becomes his practical father. In his youth, when Ike is Sam Father's student, he regards himself not as an owner of the land but as a guest on the land: "although it had been his grandfather's and then his father's and uncle's and was now his cousin's and someday would be his own land which he and Sam hunted over, their hold upon it actually was as trivial and without reality as the now faded and archaic script in the chancery book in Jefferson which allocated it to them and . . . it was he, the boy, who was the guest here and Sam Father's voice the mouthpiece of the host."¹⁴

Even though Ike is the only direct white male descendant of the original McCaslin, Carothers, he renounces his birthright when he reaches his twenty-first birthday, and he refuses to accept the land which his father and uncle have bequeathed to him. Although

Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy did not believe in the ownership of the land, they nevertheless maintained possession of it by their presence on it. Ike, however, refuses to own it in any way and relinquishes his rights to it to his cousin Cass Edmonds.

Ike also attempts with partial success to deliver the thousand dollar inheritances to each of the children of Tomey's Turl. The first of Tomey's Turl's children, James Thucydus Beauchamp, disappears on the night of his twenty-first birthday; and although Ike traces him to Jackson, Tennessee, he loses him there and so returns to Jefferson with the thousand dollar legacy which he gives to McCaslin Edmonds, who is to remain its trustee. Ike follows Tomey's Turl's daughter Fonsiba and her husband to Arkansas, where he finds them in a destitute condition; but the husband proudly refuses the money, and Ike has to arrange with the banker there to keep the thousand dollars and give Fonsiba three dollars each month for almost twenty-eight years until the money is exhausted. The last of the children, Lucas Beauchamp, comes to Ike on his twenty-first birthday to claim his money. He has it deposited in the bank where he steadily adds to it throughout his life.

On his own twenty-first birthday, Ike goes to his cousin McCaslin Edmonds to relinquish his rights to the land. Cass cannot understand Ike's refusal of the land and tries to persuade him against it: "'You, the direct male descendant of [Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin] Not only the male descendant but

the only and last descendant in the male line and in the third generation."¹⁵

Ike tries to explain his actions. He is not really relinquishing the land or repudiating his inheritance, since he feels that actually there has never been any inheritance to be bequeathed: "I cant repudiate it. It was never mine to repudiate. It was never Father's and Uncle Buddy's to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never Grandfather's to bequeath them to bequeath me to repudiate because it was never old Ikkemotubbe's to sell to Grandfather for bequeathment and repudiation. Because it was never Ikkemotubbe's fathers' fathers' to bequeath Ikkemotubbe to sell to Grandfather or any man."¹⁶ Although one might wonder how the original inhabitants could have failed to own the land, Ike explains his ideas: "on the instant when Ikkemotubbe discovered, realised, that he could sell it for money, on that instant it ceased ever to have been his forever, father to father to father, and the man who bought it bought nothing."¹⁷

Ike turns to the Bible to explain why man cannot own the land. He says that God created the earth "and looked at it and said it was all right, and then He made man."¹⁸ And the man that He created was to oversee the earth and the animals who lived on the earth, and man was to care for it and keep it in God's name, "not to hold for himself and his descendants inviolable title forever, generation after generation, to the oblongs and squares of the earth, but to

hold the earth mutual and intact in the communal anonymity of brotherhood."¹⁹ God, like any other landowner, must collect his rent or his fee; but "all the fee He asked was pity and humility and sufferance and endurance and the sweat of his face for bread."²⁰

Cass Edmonds will not accept Ike's argument, however. He insists that Carothers McCaslin did own the land and that he was not the first who owned it. From the earliest man Adam, man has owned the land even though he has been repeatedly dispossessed. Adam was dispossessed of Eden, and the process of possession and dispossession has continued "down through the tedious and shabby chronicle of His chosen sprung from Abraham, and of the sons of them who dispossessed Abraham."²¹ And the process has continued through the rise of the Roman Empire, "the five hundred years during which half the known world and all it contained was chattel to one city as this plantation and all the life it contained was chattel and revokeless thrall to this commissary store and those ledgers yonder during your grandfather's life."²² And the process continued during "the next thousand years while men fought over the fragments of that collapse until at last even the fragments were exhausted and men snarled over the gnawed bones of the old world's worthless evening until an accidental egg discovered to them a new hemisphere."²³ And as final incontrovertible support for his argument Cass insists "that nevertheless and notwithstanding old Carothers did own it. Bought it, got it, no matter; kept it, held it, no matter; bequeathed

it: else why do you stand here relinquishing and repudiating? Held it, kept it for fifty years until you could repudiate it."²⁴ Cass further insists that if God had not been pleased with the repeated process of possession and dispossession He could have intervened: "He--this Arbiter, this Architect, this Umpire--condoned--or did He? looked down and saw--or did He? Or at least did nothing: saw, and could not, or did not see; saw, and would not, or perhaps He would not see--perverse, impotent, or blind: which?"²⁵

Ike's response to Cass's question of why God did not intervene is that God himself was dispossessed: "Not impotent: He didn't condone; not blind, because He watched it."²⁶ Ike says that God Himself was dispossessed of Eden, of Canaan, and of the lands of the Roman empire and the confusion which followed its fall and that He remained dispossessed "until He used a simple egg to discover to them a new world where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another."²⁷ Following this speech, Ike does momentarily admit that Carothers McCaslin owned the land with God's permission: "And Grandfather did own the land nevertheless and notwithstanding because He permitted it, not impotent and not condoning and not blind because He ordered and watched it."²⁸ Isaac says that God permitted his grandfather to own the land because the Indians had allowed a curse to come to the land, the curse of slavery. God had given the white man a new world, "had vouchsafed them out of pity and sufferance,

on condition of pity and humility and sufferance and endurance.'" And because there was no hope for the land as long as Ikkemotubbe and his descendants held it "'in unbroken succession,'" God felt that He had to remove the blood of Ikkemotubbe from the land and substitute another, a white blood, which was "'available and capable to raise the white man's curse.'"²⁹ Isaac compares God's action to that of a doctor who uses poison to counteract poison; it is in this spirit of fighting one evil with another that God allows the white man to take the land from the Indian. Ike feels that God may have specifically chosen his grandfather to own the land because he "'would have descendants, the right descendants; maybe He had foreseen already the descendants Grandfather would have, maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progenitive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of His lowly people free.'"³⁰

And so Ike McCaslin, grandson of Carothers McCaslin, who with or through his slaves tore the land from the Indians and from the wilderness, rejects the land because it is, he feels, cursed: "'Cursed': . . . the land, the fields and what they represented in terms of cotton ginned and sold, the men and women whom they fed and clothed and even paid a little cash money at Christmas-time in return for the labor which planted and raised and picked and ginned the cotton, the machinery and mules and gear with which they raised it and their cost and upkeep and replacement--that whole edifice intricate

and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even yet with at times downright savagery not only to the human beings but the valuable animals too, yet solvent and efficient and, more than that: not only still intact but enlarged, increased."³¹ Of all the original large plantations of Yoknapatawpha County, only the McCaslin plantation comes through the Civil War completely intact; and only the McCaslin plantation increases after the war.

In one last attempt to make Ike claim his inheritance, Cass Edmonds rationalizes that if Ikkemotubbe ceased to own the land when he realized that he could sell it, it passed to his son Sam Fathers and through Sam Fathers to Ike, "'co-heir perhaps with Boon [Hogganbeck], if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?'" But Ike's response is, "'Yes. Sam Fathers set me free.'"³² It was Sam Fathers who instructed Ike in the ways of the wilderness and in the ways of the hunter. He never gave Ike explicit directions about the property which was to be his; but, through his association with Sam Fathers, Ike is able to affirm his belief that the land should to be for the use of all and the possession of none.

Thus, Isaac McCaslin "owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man's but all men's, as light and air and weather were; who lived still in the cheap frame bungalow in Jefferson which his wife's father gave them on their marriage."³³ His wife never understands his relinquishing of the land, and she does

everything within her power to make him claim what she feels is rightfully his and, with their marriage, hers also. On one occasion before their marriage, she questions Ike about the land:

"Papa told me about you. That farm is really yours, isn't it?" and he

"And McCaslin's:" and she

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

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

"You are the same as second cousins and that's all you ever will be. But I don't suppose it matters:" and they were married, they were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable, living in a rented room still but for just a little while.³⁴

Just before Ike and his partner and his wife's father finish building the little house in town which is to be the home for Ike and his bride, she makes her last desperate effort to make him reclaim his land by offering her body with a plea for "'The farm. Our farm. Your farm''";³⁵ and for the only time in their marriage she allows Ike to see her naked body, and they engage in the most passionate love-making of their marriage. After the love-making is over, however, Ike still refuses to claim his birthright; and his wife rejects him completely: "'And that's all. That's all from me. If this don't get you that son you talk about, it won't be mine:' lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing."³⁶ And so Ike can only carry

with him the memory of "the first and last time he ever saw her naked body, himself and his wife juxtaposed in their turn against that same land, that same wrong and shame from whose regret and grief he would at least save and free his son and, saving and freeing his son, lost him."³⁷ Ike relinquishes his land at the price of forfeiting any heirs, and so he passes into old age without any children, "uncle to half a county and father to no one";³⁸ and he refuses steadfastly to own any property, not just the McCaslin plantation, which he feels is cursed as all the land is by slavery, but even the home he has shared with his wife in town, "which his wife had willed to him at her death and which he pretended to accept, . . . but which was not his."³⁹

Those who see Ike around town think of him only as the man who has "turned apostate to his name and lineage by weakly relinquishing the land which was rightfully his to live in town on the charity of his great-nephew."⁴⁰ But it is only Ike McCaslin of all the people who ever come into contact with the land who ever really has any land. Even in the 1940's when the land has been denuded and spoiled for the timbering and cotton interests and the wilderness has receded for two hundred miles from Jefferson, it is only of Ike McCaslin that Faulkner says, "This was his land."⁴¹ The land is Ike's "although he had never owned a foot of it. He had never wanted to, not even after he saw plain its ultimate doom, watching it retreat year by year before the onslaught of axe and saw and log-lines and then dynamite

and tractor plows, because it belonged to no man. It belonged to all; they had only to use it well, humbly and with pride. Then suddenly he knew why he had never wanted to own any of it, arrest at least that much of what people called progress, measure his longevity at least against that much of what people called progress, measure his longevity at least against that much of its ultimate fate. It was because there was just exactly enough of it."⁴²

And so the land passes not to the only direct white male descendant of Carothers McCaslin, but to McCaslin Edmonds, "old Cass a McCaslin only on his mother's side and so bearing his father's name though he possessed the land and its benefits and responsibilities."⁴³ But even if Cass is descended through the female side, he still has "enough of old Carothers McCaslin in his veins to take the land from the true heir simply because he wanted it and knew he could use it better and was strong enough, ruthless enough, old Carothers McCaslin enough."⁴⁴

Thus, in exchange for a pension of thirty dollars a month which he takes little or no consideration of, Ike gives McCaslin Edmonds the plantation and becomes a carpenter in the manner of Christ, renouncing all worldly possessions except his tools. And "McCaslin Edmonds now had the land, the plantation, in fee and title both, relinquished to him by Isaac McCaslin, Theophilus' son, for what reason, what consideration other than the pension which McCaslin and his son Zachary and his son Carothers still paid to Isaac in his little

jerry-built bungalow in Jefferson, no man certainly knew. But relinquished it certainly was, . . . relinquished, repudiated even, by its true heir . . . who had retained of the patrimony, and by his own request, only the trusteeship of the legacy which his negro uncle [Lucas Beauchamp] still could not quite seem to comprehend was his for the asking."⁴⁵

McCaslin Edmonds acquires the property intact, one of the few plantations to remain so after the Civil War. It is not only intact but "enlarged and increased and would continue so, solvent and efficient and intact and still increasing so long as McCaslin and his McCaslin successors, lasted, even though their surnames might not even be Edmonds then."⁴⁶ Then the land passes from McCaslin Edmonds intact to his son Zachary and from Zachary intact to Carothers Edmonds, who owns the land in the 1940's and who seems less of a man than his father or grandfather and certainly less of a man than old Carothers McCaslin. The fact that Carothers Edmonds retains the original McCaslin's name does not mean that Roth is like his ancestor in any other way. In fact, Lucas Beauchamp, the black grandson of the original McCaslin, who also bears a corrupted form of the first McCaslin's name (Lucas for Lucius), feels that Edmonds is even less of a man than he, "since it was not Lucas who paid taxes insurance and interest or owned anything which had to be kept ditched drained fenced and fertilised or gambled anything save his sweat, and that only as he saw fit, against God for his yearly sustenance."⁴⁷ The

last Edmonds has little better to do with his time on Sunday afternoon than "looking at other men's cotton and adding his voice to the curses at governmental interference with the raising and marketing of it."⁴⁸

Thus, even though the McCaslins, through the Edmonds branch, seem to have come closer than any of the other families to achieving their dreams, they are in reality no longer the master of the land to which they have title. Instead, the federal government has taken control. Ironically, only Ike McCaslin, who has rejected all legal title to the land, truly owns any land. At least, only Ike of the white McCaslins has land of his own. Lucas Beauchamp, like Ike a grandson of old Carothers McCaslin but unlike Ike a black grandson, owns his land also.

There is some discrepancy about whether Lucas Beauchamp ever has a true legal title to the land on which he lives. In the 1940's when Lucas is arrested and almost lynched for the murder of a white man which he did not commit, Chick Mallison recalls "how [Roth] Edmonds' father had deeded to his Negro first cousin and his heirs in perpetuity the house and the ten acres of land it sat in--an oblong of earth set forever in the middle of the two-thousand-acre plantation like a postage stamp in the center of an envelope--the paintless wooden house, the paintless picket fence."⁴⁹ In Go Down, Moses, however, Faulkner suggests that the only ownership which Lucas has of the land is that which comes through his farming it and living on it

from the time of his birth. He is the only one of Tomey's Turl's children who remains on the McCaslin land; and he remains there, not merely accepting whatever the McCaslins or Edmondses feel like granting him but demanding what he feels is rightfully his as a direct male descendant, only two generations removed from Carothers McCaslin. Faulkner says of the farm which Lucas tilled, "But it was his own field, though he neither owned it nor wanted to nor even needed to. He had been cultivating it for forty-five years, since before Carothers Edmonds was born even, plowing and planting and working it when and how he saw fit."⁵⁰ Lucas has additional claims to the land, too: "He had been born on this land, twenty-five years before the Edmonds Roth who now owned it. He had worked on it ever since he got big enough to hold a plow straight; he had hunted over every foot of it during his childhood and youth and his manhood too, up to the time when he stopped hunting."⁵¹

From the time of his birth in 1874 until his death, Lucas Beauchamp chooses to remain on the land. Thus, he is on the land when it passes from Uncle Buck and Buddy through Ike to Cass Edmonds. He and Cass are "coevals in more than spirit, . . . old Cass a McCaslin only on his mother's side and so bearing his father's name though he possessed the land and its benefits and responsibilities; Lucas a McCaslin on his father's side though bearing his mother's name and possessing the use and benefit of the land with none of the responsibilities."⁵²

From the time of Cass Edmonds, Lucas remains on the land and watches it pass into the possession, in turn, of Cass's son Zachary (Zack) and his grandson Carothers (Roth) Edmonds; and with each exchange Lucas's feeling of superiority to the white man who owns the land grows. He feels that Cass is a better man than his son, Zack; and Zack, in turn, is a better man than his son, Roth. The greatest honor that Lucas ever extends to Zack Edmonds is his attempt to kill him when Zack takes Lucas's wife Aunt Molly into his home to care for his infant son after the boy's mother dies in childbirth. It is under these conditions that Lucas for the first time acknowledges Zack as any kind of man or McCaslin. In the confrontation between the two men, Lucas expresses his feelings about his heritage:

"You thought I wouldn't [shoot you], didn't you?" Lucas said. "You knowed I could beat you, so you thought to beat me with old Carothers, like Cass Edmonds done Isaac: used old Carothers to make Isaac give up the land that was his because Cass Edmonds was the woman-made McCaslin, the woman-branch, the sister, and old Carothers would have told Isaac to give in to the woman-kin that couldn't fend for herself. And you thought I'd do that too, didn't you? You thought I'd do it quick, quicker than Isaac since it aint any land I would give up. I aint got any fine big McCaslin farm to give up. All I got to give up is McCaslin blood that rightfully aint even mine or at least aint worth much since old Carothers never seemed to miss much what he give to Tomey that night that made my father. And if this is what that McCaslin blood has brought me, I dont want it neither. And if the running of it into my black blood never hurt him any more than the running of it out is going to hurt me, it wont even be old Carothers that had the most pleasure."⁵³

The confrontation takes place in 1898, and Lucas fires at Zack with the intention to kill him. After the gun misfires, Zack returns

Aunt Molly to Lucas's home; and the two men live in relatively peaceful enmity until Zack dies, leaving the land to his son Roth some time before the 1940's. By the 1940's Lucas has become "the oldest living McCaslin descendant still living on the hereditary land, who actually remembered old Buck and Buddy in the living flesh."⁵⁴ Isaac McCaslin is still alive; but he "lived in town, supported by what Roth Edmonds chose to give him, who would own the land and all on it if his just rights were only known, if people just knew how old Cass Edmonds, this one's Roth's grandfather, had beat him out of his patrimony."⁵⁵

But Lucas remains on the land and continues to farm in the periods when he is not occupied with running his still or hunting for buried treasure or acting superior to the white men who own the land. He takes pleasure in his farming: "He had liked it; he approved of his fields and liked to work them, taking a solid pride in having good tools to use and using them well."⁵⁶ Even though he takes pride in his land and in using good tools, however, Lucas is never a progressive farmer: "There were the years during which Lucas had continued to farm his acreage in the same clumsy old fashion which Carothers McCaslin himself had probably followed, declining advice, refusing to use improved implements, refusing to let a tractor so much as cross the land which his McCaslin forbears had given him without recourse for life, refusing even to allow the pilot who dusted the rest of the cotton with weevil poison, even fly his laden aeroplane through the air above it."⁵⁷ Thus, Lucas continues to live

on the land which has become his by occupation but not by legal title. Under this arrangement, he is free of any responsibility for it, but he has all the rights that accompany both possession of the land and of the McCaslin blood. He gets his supplies at the commissary "as if he farmed, and at an outrageous and incredible profit, a thousand acres, having on the commissary books an account dating thirty years back which [Roth] Edmonds knew he would never pay for the good and simple reason that Lucas would not only outlive the present Edmonds as he had outlived the two preceding him, but would probably outlast the very ledgers which held the account."⁵⁸

Like Louis Grenier and Jason Compson, Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin still has descendants living in Yorknapatawpha County more than a hundred years after he first comes to make a home in the area. These descendants are like the descendants of Grenier and Compson in that they (Carothers Edmonds and Lucas Beauchamp) bear some form of the name of the founder of their family in the county. The McCaslin descendants reveal a dichotomy that is lacking in the Greniers and the Compsons, however. The Greniers, apparently unknowingly, allow their land holdings to dissipate and their empire to crumble. The Compsons, on the other hand, knowingly sell off their estate, a piece at a time, in order to maintain their social position in the community.

The McCaslins in some way represent what happened in both the Grenier and the Compson family, although the McCaslins actively make

the decisions which determine their fate whereas the Greniers and the Compsons seem to allow fate to determine their destiny. Isaac McCaslin actively, and without remuneration, renounces all claims to the land. The Edmonds branch of the family, however, takes the land and through a combination of scrupulous honesty and ruthlessness is able to make the land productive and profitable long after the Greniers and Compsons have wasted their land. Perhaps Lucas Beauchamp has the most rewarding relationship of all with the land; he has all of its privileges and none of its responsibilities.

CHAPTER VIII

SUTPEN'S HUNDRED

On a Sunday morning in June, 1833, the most desperate and ruthless of all the original plantation owners arrives in Jefferson, "a man named Sutpen . . . a big gaunt friendless passion-worn untalkative man who walked in a fading aura of anonymity and violence like a man just entered a warm room or at least a shelter, out of a blizzard, bringing with him thirty-odd slaves even wilder and more equivocal than the native wild men, the Chickasaws."¹ Although the people of the settlement are very curious about Sutpen, he makes no friends and reveals himself to no one until he gradually unfolds something of the history of his past to General Compson, who befriends him and helps him.

Sutpen is the son of a poor hill country man who has never owned property and who can never even comprehend the fact that land can be owned. According to Quentin Compson, who reconstructs the story of Sutpen for his Harvard roommate Shreve McCannon in 1910, Sutpen comes from "where he had never even heard of, never imagined a place, a land divided neatly up and actually owned by men who did nothing but ride over it on fine horses or sit in fine clothes on the galleries of big houses while other people worked for them."²

The idea of ownership of property is incomprehensible to the young boy Sutpen, "because where he lived the land belonged to anybody and everybody and so that man who would go to the trouble and work to fence off a piece of it and say 'This is mine' was crazy."³

When Sutpen is young, his family moves out of the hills to the area of the Tidewater plantations, and Sutpen quickly comes into contact with the concept of ownership of property and all the privileges which such ownership entails. One day he is sent to the plantation house with a message from his father, only to be turned away by the Negro butler and told to go to the back door. The experience clearly points out to Sutpen that those who have no property will be quickly and thoroughly and ruthlessly trampled and despised by those who have, and even by the servants who own nothing themselves but derive a certain power and superiority by their mere association with the people who own the land. Sutpen, who is angry and hurt, realizes that the only way to deal with the problem, a problem not of his own making but a problem of his survival, is "to have what they have that made them do what the man did. You got to have land and niggers and a fine house to combat them with."⁴ Thus, the attainment of the land and the slaves and the fine house becomes the obsessive guiding force, the power behind Sutpen's actions which are directed toward the fulfillment of his grand design, the bringing into solid form his dreams.

Sutpen first goes to the South Seas to build his dynasty, but his plans are frustrated by a rebellion of the slaves there and by the taint of black blood which the wife whom he marries there carries. Consequently, Sutpen leaves the South Sea islands with the slaves that he brings with him to Jefferson and comes to the town "out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion, apparently out of nothing."⁵ The land which he chooses for his property is rich river bottom land located to the northeast of Jefferson, in the opposite direction from Louis Grenier's already thriving plantation; and Sutpen seems "bent on establishing a place on an even more ambitious and grandiose scale than Grenier's."⁶

Of all the original plantation holders, Sutpen receives the most thorough analysis by Faulkner. One learns only snatches here and there of the Frenchman, Louis Grenier, of Jason Compson, and even of the ruthless Carothers McCaslin. Thomas Sutpen, however, is analyzed and probed and discussed from the points of view of many characters. Some of the people who comment on him, such as General Compson and Miss Rosa Coldfield, have known Sutpen personally; others such as Bayard Sartoris, the son of Colonel John Sartoris, and Quentin Compson, the grandson of General Compson know Sutpen primarily or exclusively from the reports of him that they have heard from people who did know him; and some, such as Shreve McCannon, look at Sutpen completely from an outsider's point of view, one who has known neither Sutpen nor the kinds of circumstances which created and nourished his

brooding design. One has the opportunity, then, to view Sutpen's impact on the land and the people around him, and one is also provided a probing analysis of Sutpen's inner life.

To his neighbors, Sutpen remains mysterious and uncouth. As Bayard Sartoris describes the attitude of Yoknapatawpha County residents toward Sutpen, "He was underbred, a cold ruthless man who had come into the country about thirty years before the War, nobody knew from where except Father said you could look at him and know he would not dare to tell. He had got some land and nobody knew how he did that either, and he got money from somewhere--Father said they all believed he robbed steamboats, either as a card sharper or as an out-and-out highwayman--and built a big house and married and set up as a gentleman."⁷ And so to his contemporaries Sutpen seemed little more than a man who was not a gentleman, pretending and even trying to be a gentleman.

To Miss Rosa Coldfield, Sutpen offers a frightening dimension: "Colonel Sutpen. Who came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land with a band of strange niggers and built a plantation--(tore violently a plantation, Miss Rosa Coldfield says)--tore violently."⁸ And to Quentin Compson, who has descended from what he feels to be a long line of aristocrats, and who learns Sutpen's story more than fifty years after it actually has transpired, Sutpen takes on an almost God-like power: "Then in the long unamaze Quentin seemed to watch them Sutpen and his slaves overrun suddenly the hundred square

miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the Be Sutpen's Hundred like the olden-time Be light."9 No matter who describes Sutpen and his entry into the county, however, the picture that emerges is that of a man who enters the county and proceeds coldly, deliberately, and violently to try to tear both wealth and reputation from the waiting innocent land.

Sutpen's situation is ironic because his quest for honor and respectability is so ruthless and cold that he induces fear and even hatred among his neighbors instead of the respect which he desperately wants. His plan is grandiose, but it leaves out all human feelings; and so he is recognized by Miss Rosa, his sister-in-law, as "a man who fled here and hid, concealed himself behind respectability, behind that hundred miles of land which he took from a tribe of ignorant Indians, nobody knows how, and a house the size of a courthouse where he lived for three years without a window or door or bedstead in it and still called it Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been a king's grant in unbroken perpetuity from his grandfather--a home, position."¹⁰

Sutpen deals through the Chickasaw Indian agent in obtaining his land; and he spends his last money, a gold Spanish coin, to pay for his deed or patent to the land. He wakes the County Recorder

on a Saturday night to record the deed, and it is not until the transaction is finished that "the town learned that he now owned a hundred square miles of some of the best virgin bottom land in the country. . . . But he owned land among them now and some of them began to suspect what General Compson apparently knew: that the Spanish coin with which he had paid to have his patent recorded was the last one of any kind that he possessed."¹¹

Sutpen apparently does not need money to accomplish his dream, however. He moves rapidly forward with the help of his ruthlessness: "inside of two years he had dragged house and gardens out of virgin swamp, and plowed and planted his land with seed cotton which General Compson loaned him. Then he seemed to quit. He seemed to just sit down in the middle of what he had almost finished, and to remain so for three years during which he did not even appear to intend or want anything more."¹² For awhile he sits back "getting rich good and steady now";¹³ and his worth increases until "he was the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county now, attained by the same tactics with which he had built his house--the same singleminded unflagging effort and utter disregard of how his actions which the town could see might look and how the ones which the town could not see must appear to it."¹⁴

Then, when Sutpen's financial worth reaches a satisfactory level, he takes steps to complete the implementation of his grand design. He furnishes the house, which was designed by a French

architect whom Sutpen kept a prisoner until its completion and which is larger than even the courthouse in Jefferson; and Sutpen takes a wife, Ellen Coldfield, the daughter of a respectable if not especially prosperous merchant in Jefferson; and he becomes the father of a son and a daughter, Henry and Judith. When Henry comes of age, Sutpen sends him to the state university, where he can meet other young men of a similar background, men who "only in the surface matter of food and clothing and daily occupation [were] any different from the negro slaves who supported them--the same sweat, the only difference being that on the one hand it went for labor in fields where on the other it went as the price of the spartan and meager pleasures which were available to them because they did not have to sweat in the fields: the hard violent hunting and riding."¹⁵

At the state university, Henry meets Charles Bon, a man who is older and more polished than the rude country youths who make up the rest of the student body; and Henry adopts him as his brother, and not just as his brother but as his older brother even though Bon tells Henry, "'No son of a landed father wants an older brother."¹⁶ Henry takes Bon home with him for a visit, and Ellen Coldfield Sutpen immediately begins to make plans for a wedding between Bon and her daughter Judith.

Sutpen learns that Charles Bon is his son by his first wife and forbids the marriage. Not knowing the cause for his father's action, Henry "abjured his father and renounced his birthright and the roof

under which he had been born"¹⁷ and rides away with Bon to New Orleans, leaving his mother prostrate. The land and property which his father has accumulated mean less to Henry than a brother, the brother for whom he has taken Bon. Henry is willing to have an older brother even though such a relation would mean his losing his inheritance; or if Bon cannot marry into the family and thus become Henry's brother-in-law, Henry is willing to renounce his birthright and go with Bon.

Thus, Sutpen's dreams begin to crumble; and as the Sutpen family begins to experience upheaval, the entire South begins to suffer the same fate: "Because the time now approached (it was 1860 . . .) when the destiny of Sutpen's family which for twenty years now had been like a lake welling from quiet springs into a quiet valley and spreading, rising almost imperceptibly and in which the four members of it floated in sunny suspension, felt the first subterranean movement toward the outlet, the gorge which would be the land's catastrophe too, and the four peaceful swimmers turning suddenly to face one another, not yet with alarm of distrust but just alert."¹⁸ Now the land seems ready to cleanse itself of Sutpen, to disgorge him and free itself of his oppression.

Henry and Bon join a regiment of Confederate soldiers which is formed at the University, and Sutpen himself joins the regiment which is founded by John Sartoris and even replaces Sartoris as the leader of the regiment a year after it is formed. Miss Rosa describes Sutpen's role in the fighting: "fiend blackguard and devil, in Virginia

fighting, where the chances of the earth's being rid of him were the best anywhere under the sun, yet Ellen and I both knowing that he would return, that every man in our armies would have to fall before bullet or ball found him."¹⁹ Henry and Thomas Sutpen leave the plantation to fight in the war; Ellen Coldfield Sutpen dies; and Goodhue Coldfield dies so that Miss Rosa is left alone in town, and Judith is left alone with her black half sister Clytemnestra on the plantation. Although Miss Rosa is younger than Judith, she goes to the plantation to be with Judith and help her and Clytie during the war. "Judith still had those abandoned acres to draw from, let alone Clytie to help her, keep her company";²⁰ but Miss Rosa goes to be with the other two women; and to keep themselves alive, Miss Rosa explains how they "grew and tended and harvested with our own hands the food we ate, made and worked that garden just as we cooked and ate the food which came out of it: with no distinction among the three of us of age or color but just as to who could build this fire or stir this pot or weed this bed or carry this apron full of corn to the mill for meal with least cost to the general good in time or expense of other duties."²¹ The women stay on Sutpen's Hundred during the Civil War and keep it going just as thousands of women during the period stay on their land and keep themselves alive.

While the women stay at home, drawing what living they can from the land, the men--Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon and Thomas Sutpen--are fighting in the war. Henry and Bon seem almost to have resolved to

let the war itself decide whether or not Bon will marry Judith: if Charles lives through the war, he will marry her. But just when the problem seems solved, Thomas Sutpen comes to see his son near the end of the war and reiterates and re-emphasizes his position that Charles must not marry Judith. Shreve and Quentin reconstruct the conversation as they imagine it must have taken place: Henry says,

And now, and now it wont be much longer now and then we wont have anything left: honor nor pride nor God since God quit us four years ago only he never thought it necessary to tell us; no shoes nor clothes and no need for them; not only no land to make food out of but no need for the food and when you dont have God and honor and pride, nothing matters except that there is the old mindless meat that dont even care if it was defeat or victory, that wont even die, that will be out in the woods and fields, grubbing up roots and weeds.--Yes. I have decided, Brother or not, I have decided. I will. I will.²²

Henry has decided that incest can be no greater burden to bear than the total destruction which the entire South is experiencing, and he has resolved to let Charles marry his sister Judith. It is only when Sutpen reveals that Charles Bon has negro blood that Henry has second thoughts; and although he takes no immediate action (he even allows Bon to return to Sutpen's Hundred to claim Judith), Henry shoots Bon when they arrive at the gate to the Sutpen house and has to flee so that when Sutpen returns he has no son to whom he can leave his property. Thus, when Sutpen returns from the war, it is evident that "a tragedy had happened to Sutpen and his pride--a failure not of his pride nor even of his own bones and flesh, but of the lesser

bones and flesh which he had believed capable of supporting the edifice of his dream."²³

Sutpen loses "everything in the War like everybody else, all hope of descendants too (his son killed his daughter's fiance on the eve of the wedding and vanished) yet he came back home and set out singlehanded to rebuild his plantation."²⁴ It seems somewhat strange that Sutpen would devote the same unflagging energy to the recreation of his dream that he had devoted to the creation of his dream thirty years earlier because after the war "he had no friends to borrow from and he had nobody to leave it to and he was past sixty years old, yet he set out to rebuild his place like it used to be."²⁵ But the determination which he exhibits is no less forceful than that he showed when he first tore the plantation from the wilderness. He does not even seem to be present when he eats or sleeps at the house with Miss Rosa and Judith and Clytie: although he is 'not absent from the place, the arbitrary square of earth which he had named Sutpen's Hundred: not that at all. He was absent only from the room and that because he had to be elsewhere, a part of him encompassing each ruined field and fallen fence and crumbling wall of cabin or cotton house or crib."²⁶

When Sutpen returns from the war, "he would not even pause for breath before undertaking to restore his house and plantation as near as possible to what it had been."²⁷ As Quentin's roommate Shreve describes Sutpen's actions, he "came back home and found his chances

of descendants gone where his children had attended to that, and his plantation ruined, fields fallow except for a fine stand of weeds, and taxes and levies and penalties sowed by United States marshals and such and all his niggers gone where the Yankees had attended to that, and you would have thought he would have been satisfied: yet before his foot was out of the stirrup he set out to try to restore his plantation to what it used to be."²⁸ Sutpen returns immediately from the war and goes to work unceasingly to restore his dream or to try to rebuild his dream out of the crumbled ruins that the war and his pride have left.

In addition to the ruined land which Sutpen has to contend with, there are the carpetbaggers and scalawags, who are typified by "Redmond, the town's domesticated carpetbagger, symbol of a blind rapacity almost like a biological instinct, destined to cover the South like a migration of locusts."²⁹ Miss Rosa tells how, during the winter following the war, "we began to learn what carpet-bagger meant and people--women--locked doors and windows at night and began to frighten each other with tales of negro uprisings, when the ruined, the four years' fallow and neglected land lay more idle yet while men with pistols in their pockets gathered daily at secret meeting places in the towns."³⁰

Although the town and the county's outstanding citizens involve themselves in dealing violently with the carpet baggers, Sutpen refuses to take part in vigilante activities. His refusal is not a

result of cowardice; he has a commendation of his bravery from Robert E. Lee. And his refusal is not the result of repulsion of violence; he has fought bravely in a violent war, and even before the war he took pride and pleasure in wrestling savagely naked with his wild Negro slaves. Sutpen will not participate in the vigilante actions of his neighbors because his only concern is with his land and the restoration and preservation of it, but Sutpen's refusal offends his neighbors. Miss Rosa recalls, "I remember how one night a deputation called, rode out through the mud of early March and put him to the point of definite yes or no, with them or against them, friend or enemy: and he refused, declined, offered them (with no change of gaunt ruthless face nor level voice) defiance if it was defiance they wanted, telling them that if every man in the South would do as he himself was doing, would see to the restoration of his own land, the general land and the South would save itself."³¹

Bayard Sartoris, son of Colonel John Sartoris, somewhat respectfully tells the same story by recounting how the neighbors had told the story of Sutpen:

they told how he was too busy to bother with politics or anything; how when Father and the other men organised the nightriders to keep the carpet baggers from organising the Negroes into an insurrection, he refused to have anything to do with it. Father stopped hating him long enough to ride out to see Sutpen himself and he (Sutpen) came to the door with a lamp and did not even invite them to come in and discuss it; Father said, "Are you with us or against us?" and he said, "I'm for my land. If every man of you would rehabilitate his own land, the country

will take care of itself" and Father challenged him to bring the lamp out and set it on a stump where they could both see to shoot and Sutpen would not. "Nobody could have more of a dream than that."³²

In the midst of the strongest possible opposition from his neighbors, Sutpen confines his attention to his land and to his solitary and frustrating efforts to rebuild his empire. Miss Rosa tells, "'Oh yes, I watched him, watched his old man's solitary fury fighting now not with the stubborn yet slowly tractable earth as it had done before, but now against the ponderable weight of the changed new time itself as though he were trying to dam a river with his bare hands and a shingle."³³

But Sutpen's struggle is a vain one; and in spite of his valiant efforts, he cannot keep his holdings intact. As Miss Rosa points out, the land has not changed, but the times have; and Sutpen cannot fight the times. As a symbol of his loss of power and of the vanity of his dreams, Sutpen's appearance changes: "The flesh came upon him suddenly, as though what the negroes and Wash Jones, too, called a fine figure of a man had reached and held its peak after the foundation had given away and something between the shape of him that people knew and the uncompromising skeleton of what he actually was had gone fluid and, earthbound, had been snubbed up and restrained, balloonlike, unstable and lifeless, by the envelope which it had betrayed."³⁴ Sutpen continues his fight, however, knowing that he must lose some but determined to keep all that he can of his land

until "on the very day when he established definitely that he would be able to keep at least some of his land and how much, he approached her [Miss Rosa] and suggested they breed a couple of dogs together."³⁵

When Sutpen determines that he can salvage something to pass on to an heir, he sets about just as determinedly to get an heir as he set out to restore his land; and he proposes to Miss Rosa, the sister of his dead wife Ellen. Miss Rosa succumbs to Sutpen's power, not his charm and certainly not his kindness, but simply to his gigantic power. Later, in speaking of her succumbing, Miss Rosa tries to rationalise and justify her actions even though she says, "I do not plead myself."³⁶ She cannot, however, deny that she was at the time "a young woman emerging from a holocaust which had taken parents security and all from her, who had seen all that living meant to her fall into ruins about the feet of a few figures with the shapes of men but with the names and statures of heroes."³⁷ Of all the men with names and statures of heroes, she is forced into daily contact with one, Thomas Sutpen, because she has come to make her home on Sutpen's Hundred by the time Sutpen returns from the war. Thus, she explains that she was

thrown into daily and hourly contact with one of these men who, despite what he might have been at one time and despite what she might have believed or even known about him, had fought for four honorable years for the soil and traditions of the land where she had been born. And the man who had done that, villain dyed though he be, would have possessed in her eyes, even if only from association with them, the stature and shape of a hero too, and now he also emerging from the same holocaust in which she had suffered, with

nothing to face what the future held for the South but his bare hands and the sword which he at least had never surrendered and the citation for valor from his defeated Commander-in-chief.³⁸

Sharing with Sutpen his love for the land and his sense of loss at the destruction and desolation of the land for which so many people have fought, Miss Rosa accepts Sutpen's proposal until he extends the condition that again reaffirms his ruthless determination to achieve his dream. He and Rosa will attempt to have a child; and if they succeed in having a son to whom Sutpen can leave what he salvages of his land, Sutpen will marry Miss Rosa. She is outraged by this proposition and refuses coldly. After being denied by Miss Rosa, Sutpen, according to Shreve, "didn't even need to be a demon now but just a mad impotent old man who had realized at last that his dream of restoring his Sutpen's Hundred was not only vain but that what he had left of it would never support him and his family and so [he began] running his little crossroads store."³⁹ In his dorm room at Harvard, Quentin thinks about the degradation that accompanied Sutpen's loss of his land. He sees Sutpen as he was, "the ancient varicose and despairing Faustus . . . running his little country store now for his bread and meat, haggling tediously over nickels and dimes with rapacious and poverty-stricken whites and negroes, who at one time could have galloped for ten miles in any direction without crossing his own boundary."⁴⁰ The once proud Sutpen is reduced to tending a small store in order to try to keep himself and what is left of his family alive. He continues to eke

out his meagre existence from the store instead of from the land until he is finally killed by the poor white, Wash Jones, whose granddaughter Sutpen scorns after she bears his child as the result of his last effort to leave behind him an heir.

Sutpen dies in 1869; and with him die Wash Jones, his granddaughter, and the unnamed infant so that what little Sutpen has left of his estate goes to his daughter Judith since Clytemmestra, like the black descendants of Carothers McCaslin, has no right to an inheritance. Judith ekes a living out of the land and out of the store until she sells the store at last and spends the money "for a tombstone."⁴¹

Before his death, Sutpen, like General Compson, has to sell a part of his land. The land which he sells includes Wash Jones's place, a fishing camp. Sutpen sells this part of his property to Major De Spain, who appears in the county after having served valiantly in the war. The rest of the land, including Sutpen's house which he manages to salvage, is passed to his daughter Judith at his death in 1869 because Henry is exiled, no one knows where, because of his murder of Charles Bon. For awhile Judith and Clytie carry on the business of farming the best that they can until Charles Bon's son, Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, a twelve-year-old boy, comes to live with them in 1871. Then Clytie and the son take over the farming responsibilities: "the two of them linked by the savage steel-and-wood male symbol, ripping from the prone rich female earth

corn to feed them both."⁴² This arrangement continues until Charles E. St.-Velery Bon disappears and returns with a Negro wife in 1881 to rent a "parcel of land from Judith."⁴³ Although Judith tries to get him to set aside his marriage, even offering to get General Compson to sell some of the precious land to help him if he chooses to do so, or trying to get him at least to go into some of the Northern cities where his marriage will not matter, Charles refuses and stays on the land; and he "farmed on shares a portion of the Sutpen plantation, farmed it pretty well, with solitary and steady husbandry within his physical limitations."⁴⁴

When smallpox brings about the death of Judith and Charles Bon's son in 1884, there remains no legal heir to the land. Clytie has no more legal claim to it than Lucas Beauchamp had to the McCaslin property, and so the "domain . . . had reverted to the state and had been bought and sold and bought and sold again and again and again."⁴⁵ Although they have no legal title to the land, however, Clytie remains on the property with Jim Bond, the idiot son of Charles E. St.-Velery Bon; they live in the old Sutpen house until 1910 when Miss Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson, grandson of General Compson, go to the house and find that Henry has returned, old and sick; and Clytie is caring for him. When Miss Rosa tries to bring help and take Henry to town for treatment, Clytie, who thinks that they have come to punish Henry for murdering Charles Bon, sets fire to the house; and she and Henry, the last of Sutpen's descendants

except for the idiot Jim Bond perish in the fire. With the burning of the house, the empire which Thomas Sutpen tore violently from the land returns violently to complete desolation and waste.

Before the fire begins to destroy the house, however, it has deteriorated, just as the houses of Grenier and Compson have. Quentin and his father see the Sutpen place one day when they are shooting quail: "the cedars beyond which, beyond the ruined fields beyond which, would be the oak grove and the gray huge rotting deserted house half a mile away."⁴⁶ Shreve marvels at Quentin's experience: "You have seen the rotting shell of the house with its sagging portico and scaling walls, its sagging blinds and plank-shuttered windows, set in the middle of the domain."⁴⁷ By the time that Miss Rosa and Quentin discover Henry and Clytie, the plantation is little more than "brier-choked old fields."⁴⁸

Although a small part of Sutpen's Hundred merely falls into disuse and remains in the possession of Sutpen's daughters and miscellaneous heirs, a large part of his plantation is sold to Major De Spain; and the fate of that part is carefully outlined. Major De Spain buys the part of Sutpen's plantation that is still a wilderness and takes his friends into the region yearly in the summer and winter to hunt. From the time when Isaac McCaslin is ten years old in 1877, he hears "the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document:--of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any fragment of it, of

Indian ruthless enough to pretend that any fragment of it had been his to convey; bigger than Major de Spain and the scrap he pretended to, knowing better; older than old Thomas Sutpen of whom Major de Spain had had it and who knew better; older even than old Ikkemotubbe, the Chickasaw chief, of whom old Sutpen had had it and who knew better in his turn."⁴⁹ When Ike is twenty-one, he thinks again of the land and the futile attempts of men to own it and to pass it on to their children, "just as, knowing better, Major de Spain and his fragment of that wilderness which was bigger and older than any recorded deed: just as, knowing better, old Thomas Sutpen, from whom Major de Spain had had his fragment for money: just as Ikke-motubbe, the Chickasaw chief, from whom Thomas Sutpen had had the fragment for money or rum or whatever it was, knew in his turn that not even a fragment of it had been his to relinquish or sell."⁵⁰

Even in Ike's youth, however, the wilderness is doomed just as the Indian who first sold it and the white man who first bought it were doomed; and even as a boy, Ike has an unconscious knowledge of "that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another in the land where the old bear had earned a name."⁵¹ The distinction between the wilderness and the land around it which has been cleared for farming is abrupt and obvious. As the men move toward the wilderness on their way to the hunt, they move "through the skeleton stalks of

cotton and corn in the last of open country, the last trace of man's puny gnawing at the immemorial flank, until, dwarfed by that perspective into an almost ridiculous diminishment, the surrey itself seemed to have ceased to move";⁵² but their progress continues until they reach the camp: "The camp--the clearing, the house, the barn and its tiny lot with which Major de Spain in his turn had scratched punily and evanescently at the wilderness--faded in the dusk, back into the immemorial darkness of the woods."⁵³ Then, when the hunters leave the wilderness, "they would emerge, they would be out of it, the line as sharp as the demarcation of a doored wall. Suddenly skeleton cotton- and corn-fields would flow away on either hand, gaunt and motionless beneath the gray rain."⁵⁴

When the hunts first begin, the hunters enter the wilderness "where no axe save that of the hunter had ever sounded";⁵⁵ but after Old Ben is killed in 1883, Major de Spain sells the "timber-rights to a Memphis lumber company"⁵⁶ and never returns to the wilderness himself. General Compson is among the men who come up with a plan to incorporate themselves "into a club and lease the camp and the hunting privileges of the woods--an invention doubtless of the somewhat childish old General"⁵⁷ because they hope that they can lure Major de Spain back to the woods and persuade him to stop the violation of the wilderness by the lumber company; but the plan fails. Ike McCaslin returns to the wilderness one time after Old Ben is killed, "before the lumber company moved in and began to cut the timber."⁵⁸

Then, after he learns that Major de Spain has sold the timber-rights, Ike requests permission to return for the last time. When he arrives, he "looked about in shocked and grieved amazement even though he had had forewarning and had believed himself prepared: a new planing-mill already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails."⁵⁹ From his sale of the land to the lumber company, Major de Spain reserves only one small area, the area which contains the graves of Sam Fathers and Lion. When Ike returns to the spot, he passes

one of the four concrete markers set down by the lumber company's surveyor to establish the four corners of the plot which Major de Spain had reserved out of the sale, then he stood on the crest of the knoll itself, the four corner-markers all visible now, blanched still even beneath the winter's weathering, lifeless and shockingly alien in that place where dissolution itself was a seething turmoil of ejaculation tumescence conception and birth, and death did not even exist. After two winters' blanketings of leaves and the floodwaters of two springs, there was no trace of the two graves anymore at all. But those who would have come this far to find them would not need headstones but would have found them as Sam Fathers himself had taught him to find such.⁶⁰

By the 1940's when Ike makes his last trip to the wilderness, no trace remains of what was once Sutpen's grand plantation. In a self-destructive move, typical of the actions of the whole Sutpen family, Clytie has burned up the Sutpen house along with herself and her half-brother Henry. The land which Sutpen cleared for farming falls into disuse and complete ruin; and the land which he did not

wrest from the wilderness is finally destroyed by the lumber companies, which are stronger than even the savage and ruthless Thomas Sutpen. The wilderness which was once as close to Jefferson as Thomas Sutpen and then Major de Spain's land has retreated from the slaughter by man until in the 1940's "there was some of it left, although now it was two hundred miles from Jefferson when once it had been thirty."⁶¹ The wilderness has at last been erased from Thomas Sutpen's original grant, but the land has not been tamed and claimed for useful service. It has merely been stripped and beaten and violated and left in a helpless state to die.

CHAPTER IX

THE SARTORIS PLANTATION

After Frenchman's Bend begins to fall into ruin, and after the Compson Domain is taken by Jason Lycurgus Compson from Ikkemotubbe, and after the McCaslin plantation is established by "another new-comer in the county, a man named John Sartoris, with slaves and gear and money too like Grenier and Sutpen."¹ Sartoris is the first, and the last, of the true aristocrats who come to the county. He has the polish which none of his neighbors has; and combined with his sophistication, he has a forceful will, an indomitable quality which will not be denied. He comes to the country as a balance for Sutpen, and he is "an even better stalemate to Sutpen than Grenier had been because it was apparent at once that he, Sartoris, was the sort of man who could even cope with Sutpen in the sense that a man with a sabre or even a small sword and heart enough for it could cope with one with an axe."² Probably no statement is more representative of the attitudes which the two men exhibit toward the land than is this quotation. Sutpen wades into the virgin forest, wielding an axe mercilessly; and Sartoris, although he is just as ruthless a man as Sutpen, attacks his problem with more dignity and refinement, with "a small sword and heart." Ironically, Sartoris and his

descendants, who have a somewhat friendly relationship with the land, are able to maintain their position on the land and their possession of it, remaining on it and deriving sustenance from it, long after Sutpen and his immediate descendants have vanished.

The Sartorises, unlike their predecessors in Yoknapatawpha County, do not feel the need to rape the wilderness violently and physically in order to establish a dynasty. Although Sartoris does establish a plantation, a plantation that in many ways is founded on no less a grand design than that of Sutpen or Grenier or McCaslin or even Compson, Sartoris, like Grenier, has an inner confidence and a natural superiority that readily manifest themselves. John Sartoris and his descendants seem to have the most harmonious relationship with the land of any of the early settlers and their families. If the Sartorises have any quarrels, and they do, their quarrels are with their fellow man, not with the land.

The Sartorises do not come to the land as farmers, and they bring to the county poise and foolhardiness rather than proper implements for working the land. Although they receive sustenance and strength and sometimes peace from the land, the Sartorises are not true farmers. Fifty years after Colonel Sartoris's death, his son Bayard finds a rapier in an old chest: "It was just such an implement as a Sartoris would consider the proper equipment for raising tobacco in a virgin wilderness it and the scarlet heels and the ruffled wristbands in which he broke the earth and fought his

stealthy and simple neighbors."³ Perhaps it is this kind of naivete about the land that enables the Sartoris family to keep its land longer than any of the other original families.

If John Sartoris farms with one eye on the land, he always keeps the other eye looking for excitement and more adventure than is supplied by farming. Consequently, it is he who stands in 1861 "in the first Confederate uniform the town had ever seen, while in the Square below the Richmond mustering officer enrolled and swore in the regiment which Sartoris as its colonel would take to Virginia as a part of Bee, to be Jackson's extreme left in front of the Henry house at first Manassas."⁴ Sartoris prefers fighting to farming, but the war does not free him from his responsibility to his family and to the land; and Sartoris and thousands of other Southern soldiers during the war can be found, as Colonel Sartoris's son Bayard says, "actually almost sneaking home to spend two or three or seven days performing actions not only without glory (plowing land, repairing fences, killing meat for the smokehouse) and in which they had no skill but the very necessity for which was the fruit of the absent occupations from which returning, they bore no proof--actions in the very clumsy performance of which Father's whole presence seemed . . . to emanate a kind of humility and apology, as if he were saying, 'Believe me, boys; take my word for it: there's more to it than this, no matter what it looks like. I can't prove it, so you'll just have to believe me.'"⁵

Although the Sartoris family history spans a century, and five generations, Faulkner concentrates on the first generation, which had to participate in the Civil War, and the fourth generation which had to participate in World War I. In both generations brothers named John and Bayard Sartoris fight valiantly and foolishly in wars, and in both cases one of the brothers is killed. Also in both cases the remaining brother comes back to his own Sartoris land to seek strength and solace. And although both find temporary comfort in the land, neither can find permanent happiness simply through his relationship with the powerful land.

The first of the Sartorises to seek solace from the land is Colonel John Sartoris, who founded the plantation. After Second Manassas his regiment holds an election and makes Sutpen its leader in place of Sartoris. After this crushing disappointment, Sartoris returns home to oversee "the making and harvesting of a crop on his plantation."⁶ Such a move must have been prompted partially by necessity and partly by the need to gather his thoughts and find a certain amount of peace. Farming, however, soon becomes too tedious for Sartoris, and "he got bored and gathered up a small gang of irregular cavalry and carried it up into Tennessee to join Forrest."⁷

Sartoris, with his dauntless forays against the Yankee army, is a constant torment to the Northern forces; and they finally take revenge by ravaging his home. Chasing Sartoris from his own porch the Yankees sweep across his land, leaving desolation behind them,

and burning the Sartoris home so that Sartoris's mother-in-law, Rosa Millard, and his son Bayard have to move into the slave quarters, which have been abandoned by the slaves who leave to follow the Yankee army.

When the war is finally over and Sartoris returns to his plantation, he finds it in ruins just as Sutpen finds his; and, like Sutpen, he begins to rebuild what he can. Sartoris "rebuilt the house too, on the same blackened spot, over the same cellar, where the other had burned, only larger, much larger."⁸ Like Sutpen, Sartoris attacks his task with a desperate kind of fury; but unlike Sutpen, Sartoris cannot confine his attentions just to the restoration of his own land.

The land cannot hold Sartoris long; he soon turns again to violence as he takes part in the raids of the night-riders who band together to keep the carpet-baggers from organizing the Negroes. Declining Sutpen's advice to leave the carpet-baggers alone and tend to his land, Sartoris joins his neighbors and even leads them as they expend their energies in nourishing hatreds and spreading fear rather than in developing their land. Sartoris, more farsighted than Sutpen, realizes that a new kind of life must emerge after the war. Thus, while Sutpen tries desperately to restore the old plantation system, Sartoris looks to the new industrialism that begins to emerge; and with Ben Redmond he establishes a railroad. Sartoris clings to certain of the ante-bellum values (he kills the carpet-bagger

ancestors of Joanna Burden in order to keep the Negroes from voting), but he also recognizes and is ready to capitalize on the industrialism which is replacing agrarianism. Thus, Sartoris is able to restore his plantation and his position after the war while Sutpen and his lands rapidly deteriorate until they finally disintegrate completely.

Along with the change from agrarianism to industrialism in which John Sartoris participates, he experiences an inner change; he decides that legal maneuvers, not violence, must henceforth be used to settle disputes among men. After the Sartoris fortunes seem to be waxing, and Colonel Sartoris has sent Bayard to the University of Mississippi to study law, he confides in Bayard something of his philosophy: "'I have not needed you in my affairs so far, but from now on I shall. I have now accomplished the active portion of my aims in which you could not have helped me; I acted as the land and the time demanded and you were too young for that, I wished to shield you. But now the land and the time too are changing; what will follow will be a matter of consolidation, of pettifogging and doubtless chicanery in which I would be a babe in arms but in which you, trained in the law, can hold your own--our own. Yes, I have accomplished my aim, and now I shall do a little moral house-cleaning. I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity nor the end.'"⁹ Thus, when Colonel Sartoris goes to meet his former partner Ben Redmond, with whom he has been steadily developing a competitive hatred, he carries his derringer in his sleeve; but he makes no attempt to use it and thus allows Redmond to kill him.

With Colonel Sartoris's death, the land passes to his son Bayard, who has less violence in his nature than his father had and perhaps a deeper and closer relationship with the land and a greater love for it as a physical entity than his father experienced. Bayard's association with the land stems from his youth. When he is thirteen years old, Bayard, his grandmother, and his Negro companion Ringo are forced to flee from the Sartoris plantation to escape the approaching Yankee army. During their flight, Bayard trades his most prized possession, the buckle that he and Ringo shot off a Yankee soldier's saddle, for a little bit of Sartoris earth that Ringo has brought with him. Bayard's love for the land continues throughout his young manhood. When he is returning from the university after learning of his father's death, he thinks of "the nights when before I became a man and went to college to law Ringo and I, with lantern and axe and crokersack and six dogs . . . would hunt possum in the pasture."¹⁰ Bayard has an intimate acquaintance with the land, not so much from the labor which he has expended upon it as from the pleasure which he has derived from it.

Colonel Sartoris's death requires Bayard to become a man and to decide immediately what kind of a man he will be. He behaves, when the time comes, like many of his neighbors. Like the unknown heirs of Louis Grenier, like the twentieth-century Quentin Compson, like Ike McCaslin, and like Henry Sutpen, Bayard Sartoris repudiates his heritage. The heritage which Bayard repudiates, however, is not the

land which sustains him and his family but the violence which has brought about the death of his father in a senseless murder, the death of his Uncle Bayard in a foolhardy attempt to steal anchovies from behind federal lines in the war, and the death of his grandmother in her attempt to help her neighbors obtain stock during the war so that they would be able to carry on their farming. Bayard repudiates the killing even though his father's second wife Drusilla Hawk tries to inspire him to take revenge for his father's death.

Bayard feels that Sutpen has had the proper philosophy about how men should attempt to lift themselves up after the war by caring for their land, and he feels that Sutpen's dream is even superior to the dream of Colonel Sartoris. Drusilla argues, however, that "his Sutpen's dream is just Sutpen. John's is not. He is thinking of this whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps, so that all the people, black and white, the women and children back in the hills who don't even own shoes--Don't you see?"¹¹ Drusilla even argues that the loss of human life in the accomplishment of dreams is insignificant: "A dream is not a very safe thing to be near. . . . It's like a loaded pistol with a hair trigger: if it stays alive long enough, somebody is going to be hurt. But if it's a good dream, it's worth it. There are not many dreams in the world, but there are a lot of human lives. And one human life or two dozen . . . [are not worth anything]."¹² Bayard turns his back on violence as the means of accomplishing dreams, however; and although he goes

to face Redmond as Drusilla and his neighbors expect him to, he goes unarmed. And although Redmond fires at Bayard, he misses and leaves town immediately.

Thus, Bayard is able to live in peace and to leave a heritage of peace to his children. He rises in the town until he founds a bank and becomes its president, but he never leaves his association with the land. He maintains his home on the Sartoris land, four miles north of Jefferson; and he keeps in his office at the bank mementoes of farming. Even after he becomes an old man, he continues to ride over his land in the afternoons: "Then together they spent the afternoon going quietly and hurriedly about the meadows and fields and woods in their seasonal mutations--the man on his horse and the ticked setter gravely beside him, while the descending evening of their lives drew toward its peaceful close upon the kind land that had bred them both."¹³

In 1919 and 1920, the last two years of Bayard's life, the condition of the Sartoris land sharply contrasts to the remains of the Grenier, the Compson, the McCaslin, and the Sutpen plantations. Although the McCaslins (through the Edmonds branch) still hold their land, they seem to feel an animosity toward it which is absent in the Sartoris family; and all of the other plantations have either fallen into complete ruin or been transformed as the Compson Domain has into shabby housing developments or business property. As Bayard approaches his home every day after work, his land presents a peaceful

contrast to that of the Compsons, the Sutpens and the Greniers. Bayard can see where "behind laborious plows viscid shards of new-turned earth glinted damply in the sun."¹⁴ The land which makes up the Sartoris holdings is not the river bottom country which most of the other settlers chose, but "upland country, lying in tilted slopes against the unbroken blue of the hills."¹⁵ And unlike the river bottom country which fell into disuse and returned to its wild state, the Sartoris property well into the twentieth century is "a valley of good broad fields richly somnolent in the leveling afternoon."¹⁶

It is to this kind of peaceful scene that one of Bayard's grandsons, young Bayard, returns after fighting in World War I. Like the Greniers, the Compsons, and the McCaslins, the Sartoris family has completed a full cycle. The family's earliest members are two brothers, John and Bayard, who behave with recklessness and unnecessary daring in the Civil War until one of them, Bayard, is killed. The family ends with twin brothers, John and Bayard, who fight with reckless and unnecessary daring in World War I until one of them, John, is killed in a plane crash. The original Colonel John Sartoris returns to a ravaged land after the Civil War and begins to rebuild it and to adapt to the changing times. Young Bayard returns to a land of peace and plenty after World War I and sets out to fulfill his old inherited self-destructive urge and to adapt to what again is a completely new era. Although industrialism began to sweep the United

States after the Civil War, it was not until after World War I that the full impact of the movement swept through the South. And young Bayard represents the destructive power of industrialism in the South.

Young Bayard Sartoris, who has just returned from a mechanical war in which he has seen his twin brother John shot down in an airplane, returns to the peaceful existence of his grandfather old Bayard Sartoris and his old great-great aunt, Jenny Du Pre. He returns to a world which is basically untouched by the world-wide conflict, an existence which is still primarily rural. Nevertheless, Bayard, like his great-grandfather Colonel Sartoris, cannot reacclimate himself to a calm bucolic existence; and he insists on returning to machinery in the form of a car which he drives at break-neck speeds through the country, terrorizing women, children, animals, and Negroes indiscriminately. The juxtaposition of the machine and the land occurs frequently in the story. Often as Bayard tears around the country one can feel the conflict between his car and the surrounding countryside: "The sound of the unmuffled engine crashed into the dust and swirled it into lethargic bursting shapes and faded across the planted land."¹⁷

In the midst of his violent turmoil, Bayard undergoes a brief period of calm, which is marked by his return to a close contact with the earth:

For a time the earth held him in a hiatus that might have been called contentment. He was up at sunrise,

planting things in the ground and watching them grow and tending them; he cursed and harried niggers and mules into motion and kept them there, and put the grist mill into running shape and taught Caspey to drive the tractor, and came in at mealtimes and at night smelling of machine oil and of stables and of the earth, and went to bed with grateful muscles and with the sober rhythms of the earth in his body and so to sleep.¹⁸

But Bayard can never achieve complete unity with the land. He attunes himself to the rhythms of the land, but his direct contact is limited. He uses a tractor, and he uses the Negro, Caspey, to drive it so that he never comes in with just the clean smell of earth on him, but always he smells "of machine oil and of stables and of the earth."

Since his reunion with the earth is incomplete, he does not find permanent happiness through his association. Miss Jenny and Old Bayard realize that Bayard's outward calm does not accurately reflect his condition: "Nevertheless young Bayard improved in his ways. Without being aware of the progress of it he had become submerged in a monotony of days, had been snared by a rhythm of activities repeated and repeated until his muscles grew so familiar with them as to get his body through the days without assistance from him at all. He had been so neatly tricked by earth, that ancient Delilah, that he was not aware that his locks were shorn, was not aware that Miss Jenny and old Bayard were wondering how long it would be before they grew out again."¹⁹

Old Bayard and Miss Jenny do not completely comprehend the agony that Young Bayard is undergoing, but they are aware that his peace is temporary. They do not realize the nightmares which haunt his sleep and in which the very land in which he is submerging himself looms as a terrible threat. Bayard often awakens unexpectedly to the horrors of the air warfare in which he participated and which killed his brother. In this warfare man must escape the earth; he must avoid a crash into the earth at all costs. In his nightmares Bayard sees himself, and as a part of himself his twin brother John, as "a trapped beast in the high blue, mad for life, trapped in the very cunning fabric that had betrayed him who had dared chance too much, and he thought again if, when the bullet found you, you could only crash upward, burst; anything but earth."²⁰

In a desperate effort to "crash upward," young Bayard soon rejects the land and even his new wife and returns to driving his car furiously about the country until he has an accident when his grandfather is with him, and old Bayard dies of a heart attack. Once more Bayard flees to the land, to the rural people, the MacCallums, for sustenance and solace. Even among these old friends, however, Bayard soon feels compelled to return to the world of the machine; and he ultimately dies testing an airplane which he knows will not fly.

With Bayard's death there remains only one heir to the land, his infant son Benbow, who is born on the day that Bayard dies. In spite of Miss Jenny's insistence that he be called John in the family

tradition, his mother names him Benbow Sartoris after her own family. Although little is learned of the fate of the remaining Sartorises or the Sartoris land, Benbow Sartoris, his mother Narcissa Benbow Sartoris, and Aunt Jenny Du Pre continue to live peacefully on the Sartoris land for a number of years. When Benbow is seventeen, he is known as "one of the best bird shot in the county."²¹

One suspects that the Sartoris land, like the Sartoris family, comes to a very peaceful old age. In the last of the known Sartorises, Benbow, the strong Sartoris blood seems to have been diluted with the mild Benbow blood until Benbow is at least in spirit a Benbow instead of a Sartoris. In some ways the Sartoris family is the luckiest of the old aristocracies; they just fade quietly away. Their demise is not completely divorced from violence, but their downfall, nevertheless, does not entail the malignancy and bitterness and hatred and decay, which bring the violent ends to the Compson and Sutpen dynasties. The Sartoris land under old Bayard settles into a quiet productivity, appropriate to a man who has made peace with his fellow man and with the land; and it passes from old Bayard to Benbow Sartoris (young Bayard never returns to the land after his grandfather's death), who apparently will continue the peaceful tradition in the midst of the rapacity which surrounds the Sartoris land and which has claimed most of the neighboring land as its victim.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

In the first third of the nineteenth century, five major families claim vast areas of Yoknapatawpha County for themselves as they attempt to give solid forms to their dreams of grandeur. Coming to a virgin land, somewhat as a young man approaches a bride, these early settlers have to make a choice of how they will treat the land which they have claimed. Louis Grenier, approaches the land with strength and determination and forces it into rapid and fruitful production. Jason Lycurgus Compson comes to the land as a gambler and obtains his land by gambling his quarterhorse into a square mile of virgin timber. After his acquisition of the land, Compson manipulates his neighbors until they come into the position which makes it necessary for them to buy a part of his land at his price in order to establish the town they want. Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin takes the land ruthlessly, and savagely tears his plantation from it, dying before he has completed his dream but not before he has left a confusion of black and white heirs to claim his land. Thomas Sutpen comes to the land even more savagely and ruthlessly than McCaslin and tears from the land with great violence the most magnificent of the plantations. John Sartoris

uses the land with sophistication and power more than with rude strength or skill. Although Sartoris lives violently and dies a violent death, he bequeaths to his descendants an appreciation for peace; and from this bequest they are able to live fruitful, productive lives upon the land.

The coming of the Civil War takes its toll on all the large families. The Grenier plantation begins to fall into the hands of the rapacious Will Varner, who exploits both it and the people upon it far into the twentieth century. The Compson land is mortgaged by General Compson, who is neither a successful soldier nor businessman; and it dwindles steadily until by the twentieth century only a fragment of the land remains. The Compson family and power dwindle in direct proportion to the loss of their land. The McCaslin property remains intact through the holocaust; and through the unusual management of Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy, it is operated on a humanitarian basis. After the death of the twin brothers, however, the land passes to the Edmonds side of the family, the descendants of Carothers McCaslin's daughter; and under their direction it is parceled out into small farms which are farmed on the shares. Such an arrangement is beneficial and profitable to the Edmondses, but the tenants have for the most part niggardly lives. Although most of Sutpen's land dies with him after the Civil War, his descendants occupy a part of it until his black daughter Clytie burns up the house and her half brother and herself in the early part of the

twentieth century. After a brief period of violence following the war, the Sartorises make their peace and continue to live a somewhat peaceful life on a peaceful land. Their calm existence lasts into the twentieth century when even they have to contend with the encroaching industrialism which follows World War I.

By the 1940's the entire area has fallen prey to the power of industrialism and to the homogenizing force of the federal government. The stately mansions are almost all gone, and most of the land has fallen victim to man's rapacity. Lands that were once rich with virgin forests have been stripped until only the naked land remains, a helpless victim of the ravages of the weather. Rich farm land has been worn out and left to provide only the meagerest of existences for the poorest of people. The land, in spite of its difficulties, endures, however. It outlasts the last and feeblest of the Greniers; it outlasts the Sutpens; and it outlasts Jason Compson. Only the Edmondses and the Sartorises remain with any claim to the land, and Roth Edmonds seems, like Benbow Sartoris, to be the last of the line. Man has had his opportunity to strut and fret his brief hour over the land, but the land finally exhibits its superiority by outlasting the men who have tried to tame it.

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⁶Andrew Nelson Lytle, "The Hind Tit" in I'll Take My Stand (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. 213.

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⁸Lytle, p. 205.

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¹²Henry Watterson, The Compromises of Life (New York, 1903), p. 289.

¹³Henry Nash Smith, "Minority Report: The Tradition of the Old South" in Literary History of the United States, ed. by Robert E. Spiller, et. al. (3rd ed., rev.; London: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 613.

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¹⁵Stark Young, "Not in Memoriam, but in Defense" in I'll Take My Stand (New York: Peter Smith, 1951), p. 345.

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²⁰Davidson, pp. 51-52.

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⁸Robert L. Brandfon, ed., The American South in the Twentieth Century (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1967), p. 183.

⁹Howard W. Odum and Harry Estill Moore, American Regionalism (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), pp. 176, 530, 164, 114, 526.

¹⁰Richard M. Weaver, "Aspects of the Southern Philosophy" in Southern Renaissance, ed. by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and Robert D. Jacobs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953), p. 16.

¹¹Randall Stewart, "The Outlook for Southern Writing: Diagnosis and Prognosis," Virginia Quarterly Review, XXXI (Spring, 1955), 256.

¹²Eudora Welty, "Place in Fiction," South Atlantic Quarterly, LV (January, 1956), 58.

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¹⁵Weaver, p. 27.

¹⁶Tate, pp. 272, 273.

¹⁷Stewart, p. 253.

¹⁸Tate, p. 269.

¹⁹Davidson, pp. 12-13.

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⁵Phil Stone, Letter to Louis Cochran, December 28, 1931, reprinted in "Appendix" to William Faulkner of Oxford, ed. by James W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 227.

⁶Phil Stone, "The Man and the Land" in William Faulkner of Oxford, ed. by James W. Webb and A. Wigfall Green (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), p. 4.

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¹⁷Ibid., p. 102.

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²⁸"Red Leaves," p. 319.

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