MYTHS, HIEROPHANIES, AND SACRAMENTS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S
YOKNAPATAWPHA FICTION

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

David H. Zimmermann, B.A., M.T.S., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1995
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Critical reactions to the religious experiences contained in William Faulkner's fiction have tended to fall within the context of traditional Christian belief systems. In most instances, the characters' beliefs have been judged by the tenets of belief systems or religions that are not necessarily those on which the characters base their lives. There has been no effort to understand the characters' spirituality as the basis of an independent religious belief system.

Mircea Eliade's methods and models in the study of comparative religion, in particular his explanation of the interaction of the sacred and the profane during a hierophany (the manifestation of the sacred), can be applied to the belief systems of Faulkner's characters to reveal the theologies of the characters' religions, the nature of the belief systems on which they base their lives. Identification of those stories associated with hierophanies in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction enables the isolation and analysis of the sacred stories and sacraments of
Yoknapatawpha County's civil religion. The storytellings examined appear in *Flags in the Dust*, "A Justice," and *Absalom, Absalom!*

The storytellers and the audiences are all a part of the Yoknapatawpha community, and the stories are drawn from a common history. The sacralization and use of particular stories to explain certain events reflects the faith life of the community as a whole, as well as that of the individual participating in the ritual. The explication of the profane experiences the myths are meant to sanctify will reveal that the individuals, and consequently, the community, are in the process of discarding their old, civil religion. As a result, they have lost the ability to adapt their ancestral myths to fit the existential crises they presently face. Unable to infuse the present with the sacred, Yoknapatawpha's younger generation is overwhelmed by the chaos that surrounds it.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: EPIPHANIES AND HIEROPHANIES

IN FAULKNER'S FICTION

Critical reactions to the religious experiences contained in William Faulkner's fiction have tended to fall within the context of traditional Christian belief systems: analyzing the influence of Christian thought on his fiction; identifying and explicating Christian imagery and symbols in his works; or comparing his structure and themes to those of Biblical stories.¹ In most instances, the characters' beliefs have been judged by the tenets of belief systems or religions that are not necessarily those on which the characters base their lives. Throughout Faulkner's works, the characters exemplify elements of spirituality, but it is not necessarily a Christian spirituality. Yet, there has been no effort to understand this spirituality as the basis of an independent religious belief system. The methods and models employed in the study of comparative religions can be applied to the belief systems of Faulkner's characters to reveal the theologies of the characters' religions, the belief systems on which they base their lives.
Although there are various approaches to the study of religions, the phenomenological method of Mircea Eliade is particularly well suited to the analysis of the religious experiences of literary figures. In order to understand how Eliade's theories complement literary criticism, it is first necessary to understand the basis of his approach to the study of religions: the definition of the sacred.

I. The Sacred

According to Eliade, the study of religious experience begins with what he terms "a total revelation of reality": Religion "begins" when and where there is a total revelation of reality; a revelation which is at once that of the sacred--of that which supremely is, of what is neither illusory nor evanescent--and of man's relationship to the sacred, a relationship which is multiple, changing, sometimes ambivalent, but which always places man at the very heart of the real. (Myths, Dreams 18)

As a total revelation of reality, the sacred encompasses all of homo religiousus', the believers', experiences. Adopting Rudolph Otto's theories of the numinous, Otto's term for the sacred, Eliade presupposes the irreducibility of the sacred: "that which is supremely is." It is an "absolutely primary
and elementary datum" (Otto 7), the ontological basis of creation for the homo religiosus. Although Otto describes the numinous, his explanation does not provide a means of identifying it. If the numinous is "sui generis," irreducible (7), then definitions which would serve to identify the sacred of various belief systems are impossible; such definitions are necessarily limiting or reductive. Indeed, the sacred "cannot be strictly defined" (7); consequently, the theory that the numinous is sui generis precludes the possibility of arriving at a group of characteristics by which the sacred can be identified. The sacred defines itself.

Without any set criterion by which the sacred can be recognized, Otto's theory poses a difficulty in the study of religious phenomenon. Lacking a set of definitive characteristics with which to identify the numinous, the comparative theologian must rely on the believer's recognition of the "total revelation of reality," of a phenomena as sui generis, for the identification of the sacred. What is perceived by homo religiosus as the ontological foundation of creation is the sacred; or to put it more simply, the sacred is that which is experienced as the sacred by homo religiosus. In order to identify the
sacred, "it is necessary to grasp the religious phenomena 'on their [the believers'] own plane of reference,' as something religious" (Allen 173). If the sacred were to be placed in some "plane of reference" other than that of the believer, it would transform what was experienced by the *homo religiosus* as an absolute, foundational truth into a partial truth that is contained in and explained by some larger, encompassing belief system. In order to avoid describing the sacred as anything other than *sui generis*, a phenomenological approach to the study of religions must adopt the believer's perception of what is sacred and what is profane. The believer's response to an experience distinguishes the sacred.

Because the identification of the sacred is based on the perception of the *homo religiosus*—"the intentionality of the sacred manifestation"—"the sympathetic effort to participate in the experience of *homo religiosus"* founds the analysis of the study of religious phenomena (170-1). Although such a sympathetic effort may be difficult for a comparative theologian, who lacks access to the thoughts and perceptions of a community of believers, the literary scholar oftentimes does have access to the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions—"the plane of reference"—of the characters. Before a "sympathetic effort" can be
undertaken, however, the religious experience must first be identified and distinguished from profane experiences.

Even though the responses of believers may vary among cultures and assume different forms, the phenomena of the experience of the sacred remain consistent: all manifestations of the sacred "present the same structure and are to be explained by the same dialectic of the sacred" (Eliade, *Myths, Dreams* 125). Eliade explicates this dialectic between the absolute and the limited, the sacred and the profane, to form a model by which sacred manifestations can be identified, regardless of the forms that such manifestations may assume. This model provides a method for analyzing the experiences of a character in order to determine if an event is perceived by that character as an encounter with the sacred, if the event is in fact a religious phenomena.

II. Hierophanies and Epiphanies

Eliade terms the encounter with the sacred, the dialectic of the sacred and the profane, a hierophany; indeed, all religious phenomena are hierophanies (*Symbolism, the Sacred* 176). A hierophany is "the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral
part of our world" (Sacred and Profane 11). The similarities between the hierophany and the epiphany make the two difficult to distinguish. Both terms originate in the same Greek verb, to make manifest, phaneroo, and refer to the sudden manifestation of something that is not a part of what reveals it. James Joyce is generally credited with introducing epiphany as a critical term (Holman and Harmon 174). In Joyce's novel Stephen Hero, Stephen defines what he means by an epiphany:

This triviality made him think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of a gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. (213)

In Epiphany in the Modern Novel, Morris Beja analyzes the various parts of Stephen's definition before suggesting his own:
a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind--the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it. (18)

Both explanations are closely related to Eliade's description of the hierophanic experience. In neither the epiphany nor the hierophany is there a rational, objective connection between the object that evokes the manifestation and that which is made manifest (Beja, "Epiphany and Epiphanies" 718). According to Beja, "the epiphany may be prepared for over long periods of time" (Epiphany in the Modern Novel 14). Likewise, the hierophany can be planned and even induced through the use of rituals, sacraments. Consequently, past hierophanies can be recalled or evoked at a later date through the use of sacraments. Beja also describes a type of retrospective epiphany "in which an event arouses no special impression when it occurs, but produces a sudden sensation of new awareness when it is recalled at some future time" (15). Hierophanies may be retrospective in a similar manner; there is the possibility that an event, which does not evoke the sacred at the time it is experienced, may bring about a hierophany when it is remembered or retold in narrative form.
The epiphany is an individual event; consequently, the catalyst is of no significance to others. Indeed, Beja posits what he terms the "Criterion of Insignificance":

The insignificance of anything that produces an epiphany is of course purely relative. The incident is important in so far as it provides a revelation, but it would seem minor to someone else, and perhaps at any other time to the person experiencing it. (16-7)

The object that evokes the epiphany is not distinguished by any particular physical attributes. Similarly, no particular physical characteristics distinguish certain objects or stories as hierophanic. "The sacred may be seen under any sort of form, even the most alien" (Eliade, Patterns 29). Sacred objects and stories are set apart only by the fact that they are or have been associated with a hierophany by a community of believers: "It is disguised for everyone else outside that particular religious community" (Symbolism, the Sacred 176). Even though the object that evokes the hierophany may be indistinguishable to an outsider, the catalyst that elicits the hierophanic moment is associated, by the community of believers, with the sacred it reveals: "The sacred tree, the sacred stone are not adored as stone or tree; they are worshipped precisely
because they are hierophanies, because they show something that is no longer stone or tree but the sacred, the ganz andere" (Sacred and Profane 12). They are associated by the community with past and future hierophanies and are, consequently, considered sacred: the community sacralizes the object, the story, the place, or even the person that evoked the hierophany. Beja's Criterion of Insignificance, then, may be applied to a hierophany--in fact, Eliade's description of the variety of religious phenomena alludes to such a possibility; a person may be unable to recognize the hierophany of a different belief system--but the catalyst of the hierophany is sacralized by a community rather than an individual.

Epiphany, in studies of comparative religions and literary studies, is a general term, which can refer to a variety of experiences, including intellectual, artistic, and religious insights: "Spiritual, for example, is shown to refer to less strictly 'religious' connotations than to those suggesting nonrational, emotional, artistic, and intuitive ones" (Beja, "Epiphany and Epiphanies" 719). Hierophany, though, is a more specific term that refers only to the manifestation of the sacred: "it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e., that something sacred shows itself to us" (Eliade, Sacred and
A hierophany is necessarily a religious experience; an epiphany is not. Eliade makes the point that hierophany is an inclusive term under which various types of manifestations may be grouped. I would suggest that epiphany is an even broader term, including a wider range of manifestations, a particular type of which are the hierophanies. The term "hierophany" refers to a type of epiphany that indicates a more specific experience than the general insight denoted by the term "epiphany."

The definitions of the two terms, however, do not provide the information necessary to distinguish between the two events; they simply support the point that the hierophany is a specific type of epiphany. It is the effect the sacred has on the believer that identifies the hierophany and differentiates it from the epiphany. The characteristics of this effect distinguish the hierophany from the epiphany and can be used to differentiate between the religious experience and the secular. Indeed, by using the term "hierophany" and Eliade's model of the hierophanic moment, it will be possible to distinguish and explicate the religious experiences of literary figures.

The experience of an absolute, and the effect this encounter has on the believer, is the essential difference between the two experiences. According to Beja, the
epiphany may, but does not necessarily, provide a sense of the absolute (*Epiphany in the Modern Novel* 25): that which is manifested by the epiphany is not essentially foundational. Beja suggests that the concept has come to seem so central because it suits the ways in which thinkers and artists in the twentieth century have often perceived reality and the processes of knowing: truth has come to be seen "psychologically", not "objectively" ("Epiphany and Epiphanies" 721).

Epiphanies, then, reveal a psychological, individual truth, which is relative and uncertain (721).

In the hierophanic moment, *homo religiosus* confronts an absolute. The believer perceives the sacred as a center, an orientation, in a world which is otherwise neutral and without a point of reference, or in Eliade's terms, "homogenous" (*Sacred and Profane* 21, 22). "The dialectic of the hierophanies" or "the dialectic of the sacred" "throws the realm of natural ordinary existence into sharp relief" (29; Allen 183), confronting the *homo religiosus* with "two orders of being" (religious and profane) and a choice between the two, "an existential crisis" (182). The existential crisis occurs because "in experiencing a hierophany he [homo religiosus] is called upon to evaluate
the two orders of being and to make a choice" (182). Epiphanies may precipitate existential crises, but not because of the revelation of an absolute that disrupts the homogeneity of all previous experiences.

The epiphany is experienced as a momentary realization of some truth (Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* 25). Although the epiphany may have some lasting effect on the person, the epiphany itself is transitory, passing. The hierophany endures, not just the knowledge or insight achieved during the hierophanic moment. During the hierophany, the sacred and profane come together (*Patterns* 29), and the profane world is subsumed by the sacred: sacred time replaces profane time, and sacred space replaces profane space. The sacred time of the hierophany, in effect, destroys and displaces profane time: "all time opens to the sacred" (397, 389). Because the hierophany is a break in profane space (*Sacred and Profane* 21), *homo religiosus* now perceives the profane world as limited and transitory, founded on the absolute and enduring sacred. As a result, the sacred times of hierophanies are linked together to form a continuity (*Patterns* 391-2): they are a series of glimpses of an eternal reality. The encounter with the absolute and the perception of *homo religiosus* during this encounter provide a clear distinction between the hierophany and the
epiphany. The epiphany is an insight. The epiphany is an internal experience and is perceived by the person undergoing the epiphany as occurring within the consciousness. Even though the hierophany is also an internal experience, it is perceived as an external event by homo religiousus. The event alters the physical world in which the believer lives. The hierophanic moment usurps time and space, making present that which was not present prior to the hierophany. During the Roman Catholic mass, a ritual that is associated with the evocation of a hierophany, the sacred may be made present for the believers in the form of the host: the physical presence of a piece of bread is replaced by the physical presence of what the Catholic holds sacred, the son of God.

Faulkner's short story "Shall Not Perish" contains an excellent example of a hierophany and the emergence of a belief community around the hierophany. In the story, an old Civil War veteran, while living at his son's home, constantly mumbles about the Civil War. When his family takes him to see a movie, a Western, the old man is transported back to the time of the War: "Then Grandpa waked up. For about five seconds he sat perfectly still. I could even feel him sitting still, he sat so still so hard. Then he said, 'Cavalry!' Then he was on his feet. 'Forrest!' he
said. "Bedford Forrest! Get out of here! Get out of the way!" (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 113). This event might be analyzed on a variety of levels—as a representation of the South's inability to overcome the losses of the Civil War, a psychological study of the South's preoccupation with the past, or simply as the senility of a lonely old man. But in order to understand it as religious experience, an encounter with the sacred, it must be assumed that the movie can function solely as a sacred event. Once again, if the sacred is to be recognized and analyzed, it must be accorded an ontological status: it cannot be explained within the context of any belief system other than the old man's.

At the movie theater, the old Confederate veteran wakes to find himself in a cavalry charge that he presumably participated in seventy-five years earlier. His cries startle his family and embarrass his son, who curses him for being a fool and making them the laughingstock of the town (113). But the mother of the narrator reprimands her husband. She appears to understand the significance of the old man's reaction to the movie:

"Fools yourselves!" Mother cried at Father and Pete and me. "He wasn't running from anybody! He was running in front of them, hollering at all clods to look out because better men than they
were coming, even seventy-five years afterwards, still powerful, still dangerous, still coming!"

(114)
The narrator's mother recognizes that the old man's participation in the charge is not simply a reliving of a past experience; instead, the movie manifests the sacred, transporting the old man back to a sacred time, a time in which the world they now inhabit was formed. His participation in this hierophany distinguishes him from the others in the theater, who do not realize the power of the images they are watching and are, consequently, only "clods."

Until the afternoon at the movie theater, the narrator does not understand the significance of his grandfather's behavior: "We didn't know what Mother thought nor even what it was, until the afternoon at the picture show" (112). The mother's angry retort provides the narrator with the necessary epiphany to understand his grandfather; he understands his grandfather's mumblings after his mother's rebuttal. This insight is not a hierophany; the narrator does not encounter the sacred when his mother reprimands his father. Instead, it is an epiphany that makes him aware of the significance of his grandfather's behavior, which in turn evokes what appears to be a retrospective hierophany.
The epiphany is his sudden realization that he shares his grandfather's experience of the sacred:

I knew them too: the men and women still powerful seventy-five years and twice that and twice that again afterward, still powerful and still dangerous and still coming, North and South and East and West, until the name of what they did and what they died for became just one single word, louder than any thunder. It was America, and it covered all the western earth. (114-5)

For the narrator, his grandfather, and mother, their ancestral heroes are those who came before them "who lasted and endured" (114). These heroes embody the power and the danger of the sacred with which they are associated; such figures are kratophanies, manifestations of the power of the sacred (Eliade, Encyclopedia of Religion 315).

Kratophanies exemplify the threat of the sacred. Although the manifestation of the sacred provides an orientation in the world, it also threatens to "annihilate one's profane existence" (315). To some extent, the old man's profane experience has been annihilated by his contact with the sacred:

It seemed to me he must have been too old even to have actually fought in the old Confederate war,
although that was all he talked about, not only when we thought that maybe he was awake but even when we knew he must be asleep, until after a while we had to admit that we never knew which one he really was. (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 111-12)

The old man is no longer a part of the profane world around him. His oddity marks him as one who has been totally “immersed” in the sacred. The danger such people pose is reflected in the attitude of the narrator’s father, who does not understand the old man’s behavior (112). He sees his father as an embarrassment, and his contempt is evident in his use of the old man as a negative example “to always prove any point he wanted to make” to his sons (111).

Recognizing the old man’s reaction to the movie as a hierophany makes it possible to explicate and understand the belief system on which the characters of the story found their lives. The historical figures from the Civil War are the ancestral heroes, the kratophanies, for the grandfather, mother, and narrator, and the sacred is the land in which they live. The formation of that land is the sacred history they look back to in order to evoke the hierophanies: such histories are termed myths.\(^5\)
III. Myths and Hierophanies

Faulkner repeatedly in his works interrupts his own or some other narrator's narrative to let a character tell a story to other characters. He creates highly skilled storytellers, such as Old man Falls, Sam Two Fathers, Quentin Compson, and V.K. Ratliff, who are able to provide an oral history of Yoknapatawpha County for both the inhabitants of the county and the readers of the novels and stories. Some of these stories act as myths. A story functions as a myth, a religious phenomena, because of its ability to manifest the sacred, to evoke a hierophany. The story becomes mythic for homo religiosus when it is associated with the manifestation of the sacred. Myths, then, are determined, or perhaps created, by the audience's response to the story:

We do not mean to say that mythologies are the "product" of the unconscious, for the mode of being of the myth is precisely that it reveals itself as myth, that is, it announces that something has been manifested in a paradigmatic manner. (Eliade, Sacred and Profane 209-10)

In participating in the telling of the myth, homo religiosus experiences the sacred on which they have based their lives: "myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic
breakthroughs of the sacred (or the 'supernatural') into the World" (Myth and Reality 6). By revealing the absolute truths on which the world is founded, the myth provides homo religiosus with an understanding of the world. They are sacraments used by the storytellers to manifest the sacred. By identifying stories that act as sacraments, I will be able to identify the hierophanies in Faulkner's literature and the sacred stories of Yoknapatawpha County.

Breakthroughs of the sacred sometimes take the form of stories of the ancestral heroes and gods who created the present world, as in the case of the Civil War veteran in "Shall Not Perish." To this degree a myth may provide a history, but it is not a history concerned with facts. The history in the myth is an ontology, providing the source of creation, and is concerned only with those acts of the past that created meaning. The myth is not an alternative or falsified history for the believer; instead, it is regarded as a "true history," because it always deals with realities" (5). As an oral record of the experiences of the sacred, "It falls to the primordial myth to preserve true history" (Sacred and Profane 102).

By narrating the actions of ancestral heroes and recalling the acts associated with the realization of the sacred, Faulknerian storytellers enable the audience to
participate in the creation of their world and become contemporaries with the figures who brought about that creation, in much the same way that the Civil War vet found himself a part of a cavalry charge that occurred seventy-five years earlier. The storyteller, in effect, transports the audience to a sacred time, the *illud tempus*, the time of origins (81). The retelling of myths, repeating accounts of the events that evoked the sacred, may come to function as the rituals necessary to make sense of the world by providing access to the sacred at important moments:

> insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures, and acquires it through that alone, there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of "history"; and he who reproduces the exemplary gesture thus finds himself transported into the mythical epoch in which its revelation took place. (Cosmos and History 35)

Myths may be records of the "paradigmatic gestures" or the telling of the myth itself may become such a gesture. In Carlos Martos's words, such rituals, sacraments, are "doors to the sacred," because they "allow a person to enter into a religious dimension of human existence" (16). However,
sacraments "do not occur . . . except at essential periods--those, that is, when the individual is truly himself: on the occasion of rituals or of important acts (alimentation, generation, ceremonies, hunting, fishing, war, work)" (Eliade, *Cosmos and History* 35).

In fact, a person will not necessarily experience a hierophany every time a myth is told. Even though a story has been identified as a myth, the narrative will not always serve to evoke the sacred; that is, it will not always function in a mythic manner, although it may continue to be referred to as a myth. There is the possibility that what functions as a myth for one audience operates as a profane story for another. Going back to the earlier example of the Roman Catholic mass, simply because it is intended to evoke a hierophany does not insure that each of the celebrants will experience one. Although Faulkner relates a particular storytelling event that functions as a myth, subsequent retellings of the same story in different settings to different audiences might not evoke hierophanies.

The possibility of story a functioning as a myth in one instance and a profane story in another is alluded to in *Flags in the Dust*. Aunt Jenny's telling of Carolina Bayard's ride for the anchovies functions as a myth for the Sartoris clan "at Christmas time" as they sit "before a
hickory fire in the rebuilt library" (Faulkner, Flags 15). The time in which the story is told fits the criteria of an essential time. It is Christmas, a sacred time. Moreover, John Sartoris is in the process of building his railroad, an archetypal act of creation that repeats the actions of the ancestral heroes of Aunt Jenny's myth. The physical setting—the house which was destroyed during the war—and the butt of the Yankee rifle (15-16) are reminders of the acts of the ancestral heroes associated with the Civil War.

As Aunt Jenny tells the story, the profane time of the telling is superseded by the sacred time of the events. Carolina Bayard's adventure—not the retelling of the event, but the event itself—is contemporaneous with Aunt Jenny's telling of the tale and old Bayard's memory of Aunt Jenny's storytelling. Aunt Jenny's voice is replaced by the voice of the novel's narrator; Jeb Staurt is not referred to as the "Mister Stuart," which, according to the narrator, Aunt Jenny always used, but as Stuart and General. It is not until the end of the narrative that the hierophanic moment ends and Aunt Jenny's voice reemerges: "'And so,' Aunt Jenny finished" (22). For the first time since the beginning of the storytelling event, a passage has been attributed to Aunt Jenny. Initially, Aunt Jenny's statement appears to occur in the same time period as the cries of General
Stuart's aide that immediately precede it: "'Think of Lee, for God's sake, General!' the aide implored. 'Forward!' he shouted to the troop" (22). There is no shift in tense or other indication of a shift in time or setting between the two attributions. Aunt Jenny's story, time, and place were subsumed by the sacred event the myth evoked.

Although the myth of Carolina Bayard's daring escapade functions as a hierophany for the Sartoris clan on this particular occasion, it would seem that the story does not evoke a hierophany every time she tells it: "She had told the story many times since (at eighty she still told it, on occasions usually inopportune)" (13-14). Indeed, the fact that the telling of the story is considered "inopportune" on certain occasions seems to imply that some audiences are offended by the myth because they do not consider it sacred.

IV. Conclusion

There is no reason to expect sacred stories to be different from the profane stories in structure, form, or content since all events are capable of acting as hierophanies and subsequently being sacralized into myths (Eliade, Sacred and Profane 12); stories are not considered profane because they relate events that are incapable of being sacralized.\(^8\) The association of a hierophany with a
certain story, the choice of a certain set of events, to convey the sacred over other stories, reflects some form of social criteria that is used to distinguish sacred stories from the multitude of profane stories contained in the history of Yoknapatawpha:

We find everywhere, even apart from these traces of higher religious forms, a system into which the elementary hierophanies fit. The "system" is always greater than they are: it is made up of all the religious experiences of the tribe (mana, kratophanies of the unusual, etc., totemism, ancestor worship, and much more), but also contains a corpus of traditional theories which cannot be reduced to elementary hierophanies.

(Patterns 30)

Myths must be shared by a community because hierophanies never occur in a social vacuum: "modern man's 'private mythologies' . . . never rise to the ontological status of myths" (Sacred and Profane 211).

The narratives, the storytellers, and the audiences of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction are a part of a community with a common history from which the stories are drawn: a history which all of the storytellers presumably have access to. The sacralization and use of particular stories to
explain certain events reflects the faith life of the community as a whole, as well as that of the individual participating in the ritual. By analyzing some of the sacred stories and the hierophanies they evoke, I will be able to explicate the profane experience the myth and its attendant ritual are meant to sanctify in the life of an individual believer.

This exegesis will reveal that the myths no longer sanctify profane experiences for what Cleanth Brooks terms "the younger aristocratic generation, male and female" (Yoknapatawpha Country 110); the disillusionment and alienation of Quentin Compson, Bayard Sartoris III, and Isaac McCaslin are the result of a breakdown of their civil religion. Although this mythic system was able to shape the world of their ancestors, it is no longer viable for the emerging generation. And, without the sacraments to evoke the sacred that would shape and order their world, they find themselves surrounded by chaos and meaninglessness.
In what amounts to an introductory chapter of Religious Perspectives in Faulkner's Fiction, J. Robert Barth, the book's editor, states that literary criticism "joins theology only at that point--wherever it is--at which the study of theology becomes the study of religion" (2). According to Barth, the authors of the essays are "concerned with the religious values as they are found incarnated in Faulkner's fiction, and as they are operative in determining the inner structure of his art" (7). The majority of these essays--despite Barth's assertion that they are "not special pleading for any theological tradition" (7)--place the analysis of the "religious values" in the context of some belief system outside of Faulkner's fiction: Christianity, specifically Protestantism, Roman-Greek mythologies, Romanticism, or Stoicism.

There have been numerous articles and books written on the various religious elements in Faulkner's works. The number of published works concerning the various religious aspects of his fiction makes an exhaustive list impractical for this study; consequently, I have included only a partial list of such articles and dissertation abstracts: Richard P.

A recent collection of essays concerning the religious aspects of Faulkner's works is Faulkner and Religion: Faulkner and Yoknapatwpha, 1989. Again, the essays in this collection focus on the relationship of various aspects of Faulkner's works to theological systems that his characters may or may not believe in.

A different approach to the study of religion in Faulkner's texts is Jeremy Smith's "Religious Experience and Literary Form: The Interrelationship of Perception, Commitment, and Interpretation." In his essay, Smith differentiates between the expression of various religious events through literary forms.
"From Purveyor of Perversion to Defender of the Faithful: A Summary of Critical Studies on Faulkner's Theological Vision," by Alma Ilacqua, provides a concise, but useful, overview of the critical works that have sought, in Ilacqua's words, "a possible key to [Faulkner's] religious center" (37). Ilacqua's notes serve as an extensive, albeit not comprehensive, bibliography.

In his article, "Profane Time, Sacred Time, and Confederate Time in The Sound and the Fury," Arthur Geffen adopts Mircea Eliade's theory of sacred and profane time to explicate Jason and Quentin Compson's perception of Southern history. Geffen argues that the Compsons look to a Southern civil religion for the sacred and that this religion fails to provide them with the access to the sacred necessary for a religious life. Although Geffen adopts Eliade's definitions of sacred and profane time, he does not, in this article, employ Eliade's model of the hierophany to distinguish between the two; he does not explicate Quentin's religious experiences based on Eliade's definition and descriptions of the hierophanic moment. Subsequently, Geffen assumes that Quentin's failure to participate in the sacred of the South is the result of an inadequate, "unrewarding" belief system, which "promises but never delivers fulfillment" (246); according to Geffen
"Confederate . . . time is actually failed sacred time" (232). Instead of analyzing a failed sacrament, Geffen analyzes the belief system, comparing it to the civil religion of the North, and suggests that Quentin's failure to experience the sacred failure is rooted in its incompatibility with Christian myths and images, the defeat that forms its basis, and Eliade's axiom that modern civil religions cannot compete with what Geffen terms "older supernatural systems of belief" (245). According to Eliade, though, "the dialectic of the sacred belongs to all religions, not only to the supposedly 'primitive' forms" (Patterns 30). In each instance, Geffen overlooks the basis of Eliade's approach: the attempt to understand the intentionality of the believer. By suggesting that the religion, rather than Quentin, fails in the attempt to evoke the sacred, Geffen switches from a phenomenological to a structural approach, undermining his attempt to explicate that which Quentin perceives as sacred.

Susan Donaldson uses Eliade's model in her article "Isaac McCaslin and the Possibilities of Vision." Donaldson does not concentrate on the role of myth within the belief system; instead, she focuses on the bear Old Ben in Go Down, Moses as a hierophany that Isaac comes to associate with his initiation into Sam Fathers's religion: "For in Ike's nearly
hallucinatory glimpse, Old Ben is not just a bear but transcendence suddenly intruding itself upon human experience" (39). She is in agreement with a host of other critics as to the cause of the repudiation's failure: "Ike has, in short, assigned himself the impossible task of maintaining purity in an impure world" (42). He cannot remain in the past, or the sacred. However, by adopting Eliade's model, she is able to understand Isaac's renunciation within the context of Isaac's belief system, rather than her own, and in so doing, she is able to judge Isaac's subsequent actions within the context of his own belief system. Although Donaldson's essay remains fairly true to Eliade's theories, she insists on distinguishing between what she terms Isaac's "vision" and "reality." Her use of "reality" as a contrast to Ike's experience is questionable. In Eliade's view, the vision experienced by the believer during the hierophany is of an "absolute reality" (Sacred and Profane 21).

Patricia Tobin, in "The Time of Myth and History in Absalom, Absalom!," also employs Eliade's theories in her analysis of Faulkner's fiction. Tobin focuses on "Sutpen's massive authority over his narrators' imaginations" (259). She attributes this authority to the story's role as a myth recalling the time of origins. Although Tobin does touch
upon Shreve and Quentin's hierophanic experiences--their immersion in the sacred past of the Sutpen myth--she concerns herself with distinguishing between myth and history and the effect of the Sutpen myth on Quentin. She concludes that Quentin is defeated "because the myth of Sutpen confronted and destroyed his own previously constructed myth of the South" (269). In later chapters, I will argue that Quentin is defeated because he cannot break free from the myth of Sutpen, which is representative of the Southern mythology.

2There are two basic approaches to the study of religions: the anthropological and the phenomenological. Robert Luyster, in his article "The Study of Myth: Two Approaches," compares the anthropological approach to the study of religions with the phenomenological approach, using Eliade's views as "typical of the [phenomenological] school as a whole" (235).

3Through a series of questions and answers, David Rasmussen's article, "Structural Hermeneutics and Philosophy," analyzes the essential principles of what he terms Mircea Eliade's structural hermeneutics, including Eliade's use of the notion of the irreducibility of the sacred.
On the ambiguity surrounding the term "epiphany" see Robert Scholes's and Florence Walzl's article "The Epiphanies of James Joyce."

Throughout this study, I will adopt the terminology employed in the studies of comparative religions, including such terms as *homo religiousus* and *numinous*. Some of these terms, such as "sacrament" and "myth," may have broader connotations outside this discipline; however, I will be using them according to their technical denotations. "Myth" will be used as a term to refer specifically to those stories that are associated with the sacred by the characters who tell and listen to the stories. And, "sacrament" will refer to those rituals used to evoke hierophanies.

Once again, it is necessary to understand the phenomena within the plane of reference of the believer. To label the myth as an alternative history or inaccurate history presupposes an alternative to the truth embodied by the sacred story.

Only certain individuals in society are allowed to or are able to recite myths: "he who recites the myths has had to prove his vocation and receive instruction from the old masters. He is always someone notable for his mnemonic capacity or for his imagination or literary talent." (Eliade,
Myth and Reality 145). Each of the storytelling events discussed is told by advanced, highly skilled storytellers.

In each case, the narrator's abilities have earned him a position of some prestige in the community. Quentin Compson and Bayard Sartoris represent some of the oldest families in the community, whereas the social status of the storytellers ranges from the lowest point of the social spectrum, a poor Indian-Negro guide, to the Southern aristocracy as represented by Rosa Coldfield.

8Beja's Criterion of Insignificance and the variety of forms a religious phenomena may assume both support the theory that any story is potentially a religious phenomenon.

9According to Malcolm Cowley in The Portable Faulkner, "All his books in the Yoknapatawpha saga are part of the same living pattern. It is this pattern, and not the printed volumes in which part of it is recorded, that is Faulkner's real achievement" (8). By analyzing religious phenomena in Faulkner's fiction, I am attempting to study an aspect of the pattern Cowley refers to. Because characters and events tend to reappear throughout Faulkner's fiction, it is not uncommon among critics to assume that the Quentin Compson who appears in The Sound and the Fury is the same Quentin who appears in Absalom, Absalom! or that the Yoknapatawpha County of The Town is the Yonocoa County of Flags in the
Dust. Near the end of his career, Faulkner himself attempted to account for the discrepancies between the various stories and novels in a prefatory note to The Mansion. In doing so, he suggests his own perception of The Mansion as a part of the larger story of Yoknapatawpha County:

the purpose of this note is simply to notify the reader that the author has already found more discrepancies and contradictions than he hopes the reader will—contradictions and discrepancies due to the fact that the author has learned, he believes, more about the human heart and its dilemma than he knew thirty-four years ago; and is sure that, having lived with them that long time, he knows the characters in this chronicle better than he did then.
CHAPTER TWO

TRICKSTERS AND KRATOPHANIES IN FLAGS IN THE DUST

According to Philip Cohen, in "The Composition of Flags in the Dust and Faulkner's Narrative Technique of Juxtaposition," the typescript beginning of Flags in the Dust represents a rejection of a traditional novel beginning for a more dramatic immersion into an event that occurred fifty-six years before the action of most of the novel takes place. (33-4)

The effect of this "dramatic immersion," Cohen continues, is "to send the readers scrambling for bearings" as well as presenting "one of the novel's concerns, the disastrous influence of the past on the present" (34). In "Learning as He Wrote: Re-Used Materials in The Sound and the Fury," Martin Kreiswirth contends that "the establishment of the 'groundwork' of a story by immediately assaulting the reader with a formally exaggerated overture to the fictional world he is about to enter" was first developed in Soldiers' Pay and Flags in the Dust (288). In Kreiswirth's words, Flags in the Dust begins with a "headlong rush into the heart of the Sartoris myth" (Making of a Novelist 124).
Faulkner accomplishes this headlong rush by immersing the reader in the sacred of old man Falls and old Bayard; *Flags in the Dust* begins with a hierophany that is experienced by old man Falls, old Bayard, and the reader. Faulkner enables the audience to share Falls's and Bayard's experience of the sacred by beginning the novel *in medias res*. By opening *Flags in the Dust* with a hierophany evoked by a telling of a story about John Sartoris, Faulkner thrusts the reader not only into the world of Yoconoa (later to become Yoknapatawpha) County, he immerses them in storytelling--the telling of myths--that evoke the sacred for the denizens of the county. The hierophany distinguishes the opening story as a myth and points to a belief system that encompasses both the hierophany and the myth that evoked it. Moreover, the structure of the novel enables the reader to participate in the storytelling's evocation of the hierophany and, subsequently, experience the story as a myth, rather than a mere story perceived as a myth by two old men.

The relationship between the myth and the ritual act that attends the myth, though, is never explicitly stated by Falls, Bayard, or the narrator. If, as Douglas Allen states, the intentionality of the *homo religiosus* establishes the tie between the myth, the hierophany, and
the act (170-71), then the connection between the sacred and the act that evokes it can be ascertained by analyzing the thoughts, statements, and motives of the believer. The same structure of *Flags in the Dust*, however, that enables the reader to share in the experience of the sacred precludes any information preceding the storytelling that might provide a clue to Falls's intentions, and during the storytelling, the narrator does not provide an insight into Will Falls's thoughts (to do so would disrupt the reader's direct experience of the hierophany).

Although the information surrounding Falls's hierophany is limited, the hierophany can be analyzed within the context of other related hierophanies that occur in the novel, specifically the hierophany Bayard experiences as he puts the pipe away with the other family heirlooms. Because all hierophanies form a part of a successive revelation of the sacred (Eliade, *Patterns* 392), the intentionality of Falls's hierophany may be understood in the context of related hierophanies.

I. Falls's Hierophany, Myth, and Sacrament

The retelling of myths, repeating accounts of the events that evoked the sacred, may come to function as the sacraments that provide access to the sacred at important
moments. In Carlos Martos's words, sacraments "allow a person to enter into a religious dimension of human existence" (16). Although hierophanies may occur at random, sacraments are an intentional attempt by the homo religiosus to evoke a hierophany. Such an evocation returns the believer to the sacred that initially provided a sense of place in the world. Mircea Eliade explains that the discovery of the sacred provides a believer with the orientation necessary to live in the world (Sacred and Profane 22). He equates "the discovery or projection" of this orientation with "the creation of a world" (22); sacraments, what Eliade terms "the projection of a fixed point," are creative acts supplanting chaos with order. For this reason, sacraments are an important part in the life of a believer; they offer homo religiosus the opportunity to return to the foundation of creation in times of crisis or transition. In other words, sacraments are attempts by homo religiosus to infuse life literally with order and meaning, in spite of, or perhaps in response to, whatever personal or social turmoil might exist at that time. Perhaps because of the effectiveness of sacraments in preventing meaninglessness and ordering the world of the believer in times of crisis, Eliade claims that sacraments
"do not occur, of course, except at essential periods"
(Cosmos and History 35).

The hierophany and myth at the opening of Flags in the
Dust are a part of a sacrament that occurs at an essential
time in the life of Will Falls. This particular sacrament
is made up of three events: the telling of the myth, the
hierophany, and the repetition of an archetypal act. As a
sacrament, the three events reflect the conscious attempt of
a believer—Will Falls—to evoke the sacred and, thereby,
save himself from the threat of meaninglessness.

Initially, the point of Falls's story is unclear. By
suspending the setting of the framed narrative, Faulkner has
also deleted the entrance talk, "the talk that serves as a
transition between the story proper and the embedded
conversation" (Polanyi 187). Storytellers, Falls included,
use entrance talk as an opportunity to make the relevance of
their story clear (188); it provides an opportunity to
establish the tellability of the story. Polanyi points out
that a successful storyteller "must make clear whether he
considers the story to be topically coherent with the talk
immediately preceding it" (188). Although the entrance talk
and abstract of Falls's story are not available, the
conversation following the story provides an insight into
the preceding discussion, making it possible to extrapolate the purpose of the story:

"What're you giving it to me for, after all this time?" he said.

"Well, I reckon I've kep' it long as Cunnel aimed fer me to," old man Falls answered. "A po' house aint no place fer anything of his'n, Bayard," he added. (Faulkner, Flags 5-6)

Before telling the story, Falls has apparently handed Bayard Colonel Sartoris's pipe, an act the story seems intended to explain. It may be assumed that Bayard's question refers to a conversation about the pipe: a conversation, not included in the novel, that Falls's story is intended to clarify.

Because Falls associates the act of giving Bayard his father's pipe with a myth--because it is a part of the sacrament--he intends it to be a participation in the archetypal act recounted in the myth. This imitation of a creative act of an ancestral protects homo religiosus from meaninglessness; the believer shares in the creative acts of an ancestral hero and, subsequently, experiences the sacred evoked by those acts (Eliade, Patterns 31-2). Homo religiosus, thus, regenerates his life and world by infusing it, once again, with meaning, order (Myth and Reality 18). Although the act of giving Bayard the pipe is not
necessarily a ritual, Falls sacramentalizes the event by coupling it with a myth; the handing down of this heirloom and this particular profane moment are sacralized because they imitate an archetypal act of creation. He uses the act as an opportunity to evoke the sacred by associating it with John Sartoris's escape. By sharing in Colonel Sartoris's archetypal act, Falls regenerates his life and his world.

The hierophany of Will Falls's storytelling sacralizes the act by abolishing profane time and replacing it with the sacred time of origins (*Cosmos and History* 35 and *Myth and Reality* 140):

As usual old man Falls had brought John Sartoris into the room with him. Freed as he was of time, he was a far more definite presence in the room than the two of them cemented by deafness to a dead time and drawn thin by the slow attenuation of days. He seemed to stand above them, all around them, with his breaded hawklike face and the bold glamor of his dream. (Faulkner, *Flags* 5)

The use of "as usual" implies that this evocation of John Sartoris is not an isolated event. Apparently, Will Falls repeatedly evokes John Sartoris's presence. Only certain individuals in society are allowed to or able to recite
myths effectively. Indeed, Eliade attributes a special status to persons capable of evoking the sacred through the recitation of myths (Myth and Reality 145). Falls is such an individual. Falls does not only talk of the past (Corrington 175); he makes it present. But the past Falls makes present is not the historical past of the Civil War; it is the time of origins, in which the power of the sacred was revealed in the form of a kratophany, John Sartoris.

Falls's retelling of the story makes the Colonel present; as a result of Falls's sacrament, the ancestral hero is contemporaneous with the two men (Eliade, Patterns 459 and Myth and Reality 10). John Sartoris's presence fills the room, encompassing them. Colonel Sartoris is a genius loci—not simply a familial myth (Corrington 172); he is a kratophany for the community. As a manifestation of the sacred, which ontologically founds Falls's and Bayard's world, John Sartoris embodies the absolute (Eliade, Sacred and Profane 21); he is "more definite" than either Bayard or Falls. By bringing John Sartoris into the room, Falls has called forth the sacred. The sacred, in turn, provides the two men with a "fixed point" from which the world may be approached, protecting them from meaninglessness. There is no danger of Falls and old Bayard confusing what Olga Vickery, in The Novels of William Faulkner, terms "legend"
with history (223). They are unconcerned with history. History does not, indeed it cannot, provide Falls and Bayard with the ontological foundation conveyed by the myth of John Sartoris, an ontological foundation, I am arguing, that Falls desperately needs at this point in his life.

Faulkner's use of *in medias res* enables the reader also to experience John Sartoris as a kratophany, one who makes present a "fixed point" in the fictional world of the novel. In *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse*, Mary Pratt explains that by opening a novel *in medi res* the author disorients the reader by leaving off a portion of the novel's narrative (56). Faulkner capitalizes on this disorientation by launching the reader into the world of the Sartoris myth, the time of origins and ancestral heroes, while providing little information about the people who tell and listen to the stories and cherish them as sacred.

Pratt's use of a derivative of orientation is particularly appropriate in a discussion of the sacred. Eliade contends that the existential value of the sacred is the orientation it provides the believer (*Sacred and Profane* 22). The sacred orients believers in a world by providing them with a foundation from which to approach the world. And, the only orientation available to the reader at the beginning of
Flags in the Dust is that provided by the Sartoris myth itself:

Old man Falls roared: "Cunnel was settin' thar in a cheer, his sock feet propped on the po'ch railin', smokin' this hyer very pipe. Old Louvinia was settin' on the steps, shellin' a bowl of peas fer supper. And a feller was glad to git even peas sometimes, in them days. And you was settin' back again' the post. They wa'nt nobody else thar 'cep' yo' aunt." (Faulkner, Flags 3)

Lacking a description of the novel's setting, the reader must rely on Falls's storyworld as the point of access to the fictional world of the novel: the setting of the novel is replaced by the setting of the myth. It is not until the end of Falls's narrative that a fuller description of the setting of the novel is given.

Sartoris, the title under which a heavily edited version of Flags in the Dust appeared in 1929, opens with the sentence that marks the close of Falls's story in Flags: "As usual, old man Falls had brought John Sartoris into the room with him" (Faulkner, Sartoris 19 and Flags 5). The story of John Sartoris's escape is included later in Sartoris, after old Bayard has returned home and the fictional world of the novel has clearly been established.
Consequently, in *Sartoris*, the story is recounted as a memory, albeit a vivid one: "Through the cloth of his pocket his hand had touched the pipe there, and he took it out and looked at it again, and it seemed to him that he could hear old man Fall's [sic] voice in roaring recapitulation" (*Sartoris* 33). Although the pipe may evoke a hierophany for Bayard, the story no longer acts as a myth for the reader that would enable the reader to share in Bayard's hierophany. John Sartoris's escape occurs within the already established world of the novel. It does not form the basis of the reader's perception of the novel; instead, the reader encounters it as only a part of the world of old Bayard, old man Falls, Simon, and Aunt Jenny. Because the setting of *Flags in the Dust* is withheld until after the framed story has been completed, the fictional world of the novel is founded, for the readers, on old man Falls's story; readers have no other way of approaching the novel. Consequently, the reader must experience the story as a myth, a hierophany, and the telling of the story as a sacrament.6

The relationship between the myth and the hierophany is clear. The myth manifests a kratophany, John Sartoris, for Bayard, Falls, and the reader. But, Falls's sacrament lacks a clear link between his ritualized act and the archetypal
act of the myth: the relationship between John Sartoris's escape from the Yankees and Will Falls giving Bayard the pipe is vague, at best. Although the pipe belonged to John Sartoris and may in fact be considered a sacred object, as Bayard's later handling of it implies, John Sartoris's pipe does not manifest "the Cunnel" nor does it play a significant role in the version of this myth Falls has chosen for this occasion. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the story and the passing of the pipe may have been clarified in the conversation that preceded the storytelling, but even Bayard, who must have been present at that time, fails to recognize the connection and must ask Falls, "What're you giving it to me for, after all this time?" (Flags 5).

In answer to Bayard's question, Falls says that "A po' house aint no place fer anything of his'n [John Sartoris's]" (6). Whether Falls has just come to this conclusion or is in the process of moving into the poor house at the time of the novel's opening is irrelevant. In either case, Falls's rationalization in giving Bayard the pipe reflects his perception of the poor house as a place of degradation and defeat. Indeed, his reference to his age, although stoic, reflects a sense of hopelessness:
"Not fer a pipe of his'n," he said. "Hit'ud be different ef 'twas him [John Sartoris], hisself now. Wouldn't no place be a po' house whar he was at. But that 'ere thing that belonged to him, hit'ud be takin' a advantage of him atter he's gone." Old man Falls chewed his tobacco for a while. "I'm going on ninety-fo' year old, Bayard," he said. (6)

Falls does not associate hopelessness with John Sartoris. In fact, John Sartoris, as a kratophany, would transform the nature of the poor house. His presence would change it from a place of defeat and despair. By retelling the myth as he gives Bayard the pipe, not only does Falls evoke the sacred that orders his life, but he also seeks to participate in the creative force of the sacred recollected by the myth. The connection Falls perceives between the act and the myth is the vision John Sartoris engendered by facing hopeless situations. John Sartoris's response to overwhelming odds has become an archetypal act Falls shares in when confronting the degradation of the poor house. Falls, through the sacrament, revels in Sartoris's power and strength, his ability to survive within and manipulate the chaos of the world around him. In turn, Falls manipulates his world by giving Bayard the pipe and evoking the sacred
because it enables him as a believer to reassert his place in a world that is founded on an absolute.

II. Bayard's Sacrament

The connection Falls perceives between giving Bayard the pipe and telling the story of John Sartoris becomes clearer through the course of yet another hierophany. This hierophany is experienced later only by Bayard Sartoris while in the attic of his house, putting away the pipe Falls had given him four weeks earlier. In the course of opening the trunk containing the family heirlooms and writing his grandson's name in the family bible, Bayard gradually immerses himself in the sacred. This hierophany is not evoked by a storytelling; instead, it is evoked by the artifacts of the ancestors of Bayard Sartoris and his reflection on the blurring of their names in the bible. Although the reader does not share in the experience of this hierophany, it clarifies the significance of Falls's sacrament. Bayard shares Falls's motivation in entering into the sacred. More importantly, the gradual process by which Bayard is immersed into the sacred—including the narrative digressions describing Bayard's thoughts—reveals the nature of John Sartoris and the other Sartorises that
the two old men have come to equate with their roles as kratophanies.

The pipe sits on Bayard's dresser for four weeks before he decides to put it in the attic with the other family heirlooms:

In his room, as he removed his collar and tie before the chest of drawers, his eye fell upon the pipe which he had laid there four weeks ago, and he put the collar and tie down and picked up the pipe and held it in his hand, rubbing the charred bowl slowly with his thumb.

Then with sudden decision he quitted the room and tramped down the hall. (93)

Bayard's sudden decision to take the pipe upstairs is reminiscent of Falls's justification for giving Bayard the pipe after all of these years. Both men have been confronted by their own mortality. Falls is having to move into the poor house, and Aunt Jenny is forcing Bayard to see a doctor about the tumor on his forehead. Before she tells him that she is taking him to the doctor, Jenny also points to what she believes to be his self-destructive nature: "You don't waste your afternoons riding in that car because you think it'll keep him from turning it over: you go because when it does happen you want to be in it, too" (93). Jenny
may be right about Bayard; however, Bayard's response to her comments reflects a concern with death and continuity that cannot be labelled simply as self-destructive. As if recognizing the validity of her comment or the inevitability of the outcome of his daily rides with his grandson, Bayard heads to the attic to store the pipe and record the information about his dead grandson, Johnny Sartoris, who was shot down over France. Like old man Falls, Bayard is attempting to insure the continuity of a mythology while evoking the sacred of the mythology that orders and makes sense of his world.

The attic is the room in which the Sartoris heirlooms are stored and the point in space where Bayard periodically comes into contact with the sacred. John Bassett characterizes "the chest [as] a static world, never entered or altered. Unopened since 1901, when young Bayard's father dies, it houses the relics of an ambiguous Sartoris history" (40). The room serves as a sort of reliquary or sacred space:

The room was cluttered with indiscriminate furniture--chairs and sofas like patient ghosts holding lightly in dry and rigid embrace yet other ghosts--a fitting place for dead Sartorises to
gather and speak among themselves of glamorous and old disastrous days. (Faulkner, Flags 93)

Eliade characterizes sacred space as a place that "implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it quantitatively different" (Sacred and Profane 26).

The notion that the room is a "fitting place for dead Sartorises" sets the room aside, apart from, the other rooms of the house. The ghosts are an irruption of the sacred, which distinguishes the room from all other rooms in the house. They are the type of sign Eliade says distinguishes sacred space and introduces an absolute element (27). The absolute, in this case, is related to the "Something" that Bayard pictures sitting on an invisible dias watching the arrival of the latest of them (Faulkner, Flags 94):

he pictured a double line of them with their arrogant identical faces waiting just beyond a portal and stretching toward the invisible dias where Something sat waiting the latest arrival among them; thought of them chafing a little and a little bewildered, thought and desire being denied them, in a place where, immortal, there were no opportunities for vainglorious swashbuckling.

(Faulkner, Flags 94)
The capitalization of "Something" indicates that this unseen presence is somehow unique. This "Something" old Bayard refers to is the power that the Sartorises have made manifest in their brief, often violent careers, and that has continued to be manifested through old man Falls's storytellings. Although the "Something" sits in a place beyond the "opportunities for vainglorious swashbuckling," it is somehow closely related to the violence that characterizes the Sartorises' careers, the violence which Aunt Jenny condemns.

This section, though, does not mark the beginning of the hierophany. The fact that Bayard pictures the ghosts and the "Something" rather than sees them indicates that he is reflecting on the significance of the place rather than experiencing the irruption of the sacred. Even though the hierophany is not fully realized until Bayard writes John's name in the bible and begins to think of "the dark dissolving apotheosis of his name," the passage provides an important insight into Bayard's perception of both the sacredness of the spot and the character of his ancestors that marked them as kratophanies. When Bayard lifts the lid to the chest, these ghosts fall way, as if they are making room for the presence of whatever is contained (or evoked by that contained) in the chest. By opening the chest to
place John's--the cunnel's--pipe in the chest and writing
John's name--the grandson of old Bayard--in the Bible, old
Bayard is performing a ritual that will make the sacred
present: a ceremony "commemorating the violent finis to some
phase of his family's history" that will result in a
hierophany (94). The opening of the chest marks the end of
a period; in effect, it serves as a sacrament marking an
essential time. Two of the objects in the chest receive
Bayard's closest attention and, hence, possess particular
significance in his ritual: a Toledo blade and the family
bible.

This sacrament surrounds John Sartoris's pipe, which
in turn represents Colonel Sartoris and his career for old
man Falls and Bayard. Bayard (Falls's thoughts are
unavailable) associates this career, and those other
Sartoris careers that ended with deaths of "needless and
magnificent violence" (93), with the Toledo blade. Bayard's
characterization of his ancestors' deaths initially seems to
confirm the opinions of Aunt Jenny and the vast majority of
scholars who view the Sartorises as pawns in an outmoded
game (432). But Bayard's reflection on the tarnished sword
in the trunk reveals a different perception of the
Sartorises. For Bayard, it is a symbol of the Sartorises
and their ability to survive in and to make meaning out of the chaos of the world around them:

Old Bayard held the rapier upon his hands for a while, feeling the balance of it. 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 fought his sleathy and simple neighbors. And old Bayard held it upon his two hands, seeing in its stained fine blade and shabby elegant sheath the symbol of his race; that too in the tradition: the thing itself fine and clear enough, only the instrument had become a little tarnished in its very aptitude for shaping circumstance to its arrogant end. (95)

Bayard once again notes the vainglory of his race when he imagines his ancestors wearing European finery in the Southern wilderness. Even then, they were anachronisms, who retained their ideals and code of honor in a time and place ill suited to--what the Yankee major terms when describing Carolina Bayard--"a paladin out of romances" (22). Their lives have been tarnished by their insistence on a way of life that appears ill-suited to the world around them; indeed, in light of what seems to be their outmoded views,
their deaths may seem needless and disastrous. But the tarnish also reflects their ability to shape fate, hence the magnificence of their deaths. Although oftentimes violent, needless, and romanticized, the deaths and defeats of the Sartorises are not meaningless.

The other object that receives Bayard's closest attention is the bible. As time erases the names from the cover of the Sartoris bible, it somehow transforms the individuals and the names themselves. Seemingly, time overrides and conquers the Sartorises—if "override" and "conquering" are the correct words for the process by which it appears to transform them and their names. The names on the page, though, have not been completely erased. They are no longer legible, but their presence, and the transformation they are undergoing, is revealed by the "soft mottlings of time" covering the upper half of the page. In the same way, the identities of old Bayard's ancestors are still present even if they may no longer be known by Bayard. Their identities like their names have been erased by time and have, in some sense, ceased to exist, but their ghosts still fill the room as reminders of the power of the sacred they embodied. Bayard's ancestors, like their names, have undergone an apotheosis that has altered their identities to such an extent that they are no longer recognizable.
Falls's mythologization of John Sartoris's escape is an example of such a transformation. Another version of the same story is told by Bayard in The Unvanquished. In both stories, John Sartoris is barefoot, except for his socks, Louvinia drops a bowl of peas, Sartoris mounts the horse, just ahead of the Yankee scout, and, probably most importantly, Sartoris faces the Yankee patrol, calm and collected, alone on his porch (Unvanquished 80-83). Despite these similarities between the two stories, Bayard's narrative conflicts with Falls's story in Flags. According to Bayard, Ringo is also on the porch, Louvinia is shelling peas in the kitchen, Bayard's maternal grandmother, not his aunt, lives with them at the time of the events, the Yankee soldier comes around the house after John Sartoris is on the horse, and no shots are fired until after John Sartoris has escaped. Unlike Falls's, Bayard's narrative does not focus on the initial exchange between his father and the Yankee patrol. Bayard spends the bulk of his story describing the chaos which the unexpected arrival of the Yankees precipitated. Presumably, though not necessarily, Bayard's rendition is the more historically accurate of the two; he is recalling events he witnessed, whereas Falls has received the story second-hand. Indeed, Falls recognizes Bayard's authority when he asks "How old was you then, Bayard?"
(Flags 3). The question authenticates Falls's version because it recognizes Bayard as a witness and, subsequently, an authority capable of correcting inaccuracies that might occur in the course of his, Falls's, storytelling. However, once Bayard has reminded Falls of his age at the time of the events, he does not speak again until the story is completed. Rather than providing proof of two separate events and two separate John Sartorises or of Falls's distortion of historical truths, the discrepancies between the two versions of the story reflect the different purposes of the two narrators.

Although Bayard is telling this story and it concerns the same events that Falls mythologizes, Bayard's narrative does not appear to be intended to evoke a hierophany, to function as a myth. Instead, he includes it as a brief anecdote, framed by the larger narrative of his grandmother's exploits during the war. Nevertheless, his participation in the hierophany at the beginning of Flags in the Dust would suggest that he perceives Falls's story as sacred. Old man Falls's tale is not intended to be an accurate retelling of John Sartoris's escape nor does Bayard seem to expect it to be; Falls has adapted the story to focus on that element in Sartoris's character which made him a kratophany. In effect, the historical John Sartoris has
disappeared because of the apotheosis his character has undergone. Like the names in the bible, Sartoris's identity has been erased by time and divinization. Although the names no longer appear on the page and the true characters of the individuals are not contained in the stories told about them, both continue to exist in the memories and stories of the living. Moreover, these memories, stories, and even some objects have been sacralized over the course of the intervening years and now have the ability to make present the Sartorises who were manifestations of the power of the sacred. In this way, the Sartorises deride time; as kratophanies, they are not confined by the boundaries of profane time and space.

The degree to which the presence of these figures is still felt is reflected in Bayard's thoughts as he puts his father's pipe away. Bayard surprises himself by using the past tense to refer to his father and sits and contemplates "the tense he had unwittingly used." While he is reflecting on time and his father, he undergoes a hierophany:

Bayard sat and mused quietly on the tense he had unwittingly used. Was. Fatality again: the augury of a man's destiny peeping out at him from the roadside hedge, if he but recognise it; and as he sat and gazed with blind eyes at the page, Time
rolled back again and again he ran panting through undergrowth while a Yankee calvary patrol crashed behind him, crashed fainter and fainter until he crouched with spent, laboring lungs in a bramble thicket and heard their fading thunder along a dim wagon road. Then he crawled forth again and went to a spring he knew that flowed from the roots of a beech tree; and as he leaned his mouth to it the final light of day was reflected onto his face, bringing into sharp relief forehead and nose above the cavernous sockets of his eyes and the panting snarl of his teeth, and from the still water there stared back at him for a sudden moment, a skull.

(97)

In realizing that he has spoken of John Sartoris in the past tense, in recognizing his father's fatality, old Bayard finds himself thrust into the past. Bayard returns to a past time. No shift in tense marks this passage as a memory; further, the use of the word "again" implies that the actions are actually occurring. Chronological time has fallen away, and Bayard has returned to the time he first confronted his own mortality. This shift in time marks the beginning of the hierophany evoked by the opening of the
chest, the ceremony marking the end of a phase of a period of his family's history.

The hierophany is related to Bayard's memory of his father, the bible which lies open on the chest, the momentoes of his forefathers, and his use of the past tense in referring to his father. All of these combine to release Bayard from the immediate surroundings of the present and return him to the moment when he first saw his own mortality. The hierophany evoked by the ceremony forces him to confront his own mortality. For Bayard, the sacred made present by his hierophany is his mortality, a sacred he associates with the careers of his forefathers as kratophanies; perhaps Bayard considers an appropriate heaven for the Sartorises an eternity of "dying deaths of needless and magnificent violence" (94), because he associates the sacred with death. Like his ancestors who inhabit the room and whose names once filled the page, Bayard enters sacred time when he acquiesces to his own mortality and the loss of his identity. The apotheosis that the names have undergone has also detached old Bayard from profane, chronological time. Ironically, in returning to the moment when he saw the skull in the spring, Bayard escapes profane time and his own mortality.
The opening of the chest commemorates "the violent finis to some phase of his family's history" (94). In this instance, the phase which is ending is old Bayard's. Aunt Jenny's comment about his rides with young Bayard—"you go because when it does happen [when young Bayard finally turns over the car], you want to be in it, too" (93)—motivates Bayard to settle his affairs: he takes the pipe and places it in the chest and writes Johnny's name in the bible. Like Falls, he acts to insure the continuity of the mythology. Seemingly, both Jenny's comment and, more immediately, the hierophany underscore the danger and the end result of old Bayard's rides with Bayard III. But, Bayard is not, as Jenny suggests, riding with his grandson because he hopes to die in a wreck. Like his father and uncle, Bayard does not seek death, but neither does he avoid it. Instead, he confronts it, recognizing it as an inevitable, inexorable part of his life. Just as his father knew, the night before he died, that Redlaw would kill him (7), Bayard knows that his rides with Bayard III will kill him. Neither, though, allows this knowledge to prevent him from following a course of action previously decided upon. Although this response may be construed as a romantic and, hence, archaic code of behavior (Scholes 201), it actually reflects an acceptance
of their frailness as humans and the threat posed by the chaos surrounding them.

III. The Sartorises as Kratophanies

Unprejudiced by the exploits of John Sartoris during Reconstruction or young Bayard Sartoris after returning home from the First World War, the reader first encounters a Sartoris as a resourceful trickster, an underdog who uses cunning to outmaneuver superior forces: the embodiment of a lost cause (Cantwell 150). Falls does not glorify that which Aunt Jenny, young Bayard, and even some critics have come to associate with the Sartorises and their role in the Civil War: violence, death, and foolhardiness. In Robert Cantwell's words, "Colonel Sartoris's violent actions are recollected with connotations of peace" (159), but in the stories of Will Falls, John Sartoris does not employ violence nor does he court death.

According to Falls's version of the Sartoris myth, John Sartoris is doomed when he stops relying on his cunning and poise and resorts to violence: "That 'us when hit changed. When he had to start killin' folks. . . . When a feller has to start killin' folks, he 'most always has to keep on killin' 'em. And when he does, he's already dead hisself" (Faulkner, Flags 6). Sartoris changes from a genuine heroic
soldier into an intolerant man (Corrington 184). This intolerance is his refusal to adapt to the changes in the world around him. Because of his intolerance, Sartoris, in Falls's words, "had" to start killing people (Faulkner, Flags 6). Ironically, Colonel Sartoris does not have to kill anyone in Falls's stories about the Civil War. The transformation occurs when John Sartoris believes he must use violence to overcome or control the chaos he once reveled in. When Sartoris recognizes this transformation, he declines self illusion and does something about it by refusing to defend himself (Pikoulis 220). He faces Redlaw, once again establishing an archetypal response to the chaos of his world, an act that can be meaningfully repeated by his son.

John Sartoris does not attempt to force order on the world around him; he struggles only to survive by whatever means he has at his disposal. Longley, in The Tragic Mask, characterizes Sartoris's "acts of audacity, daring, and violence" as lacking any direction or objective (186). In the novel, Sartoris is perceived as a kratophany because of his ability to participate in and survive the chaos of the world. As a result of his sangfroid, John Sartoris's acts are meaningful and purposeful; they are the creative acts of an ancestral hero, providing those who follow with the
models necessary to interact with the chaos of their own worlds. The violence that surrounds Sartoris is not, as Longley suggests, a symbol of John Sartoris’s corruption (187); it is emblematic of the world in which he lives. John Sartoris’s response to chaos becomes the archetypal act Falls seeks to emulate. His sacrament is an attempt to share in the sangfroid that enabled John Sartoris to survive and maintain his community during the turmoil of the Civil War. In Flags in the Dust, Faulkner is studying how ghosts of the past influence the present (Vickery 27), but the influence of the past is not always destructive. If the Sartoris myth does contain a demanding pattern for conduct (Corrington 175), it is a pattern of conduct that provides those who understand the significance of the myth—those who do not mistake the violence of the myth as its focus—with a means of surviving in a chaotic, oftentimes hostile world.

The Civil War for Bayard, Falls, and their community is the time of origins during which the world they live in was being formed. The Yankees are one of the forces against which the ancestral heroes struggled to create their world. In most of these struggles, the Yankees are an unseen force, acting as impersonal catalysts that compel the Sartorises to evoke the power of the sacred. John Sartoris is surprised and chased by a Yankee patrol; Carolina Bayard is pursued by
Yankee forces throughout his raid for anchovies; and old Bayard runs through the underbrush from an invisible Yankee detachment. The various details surrounding the pursuit are irrelevant. Only the pursuit itself is important. The Sartorises transform it into an archetypal act. By confronting and reveling in their own mortality through the course of the chase, they are able to participate in the chaos of the world around them.

The hierophany in the attic concludes as Bayard thinks to himself, "The unturned corners of man's destiny. Well, heaven, that crowded place, lay just beyond one of them, they claimed" (Faulkner, *Flags* 97). Bayard's flight from the Yankees and the hierophany he has come to associate with it are both tied to his recognition of his own transient nature. Although Bayard refers to heaven, nothing in the hierophany suggests a Judeo-Christian afterlife; indeed, he describes heaven as a series of illusions (97). Instead of any sense of immortality, the vision Bayard encounters is his own skull, reflected in the water, a poignant symbol of his own temporality. The hierophany reminds Bayard of the inexorable force of fate; it is only a matter of time before the mortality that is pursuing him overtakes him.

Paradoxically, once Bayard accepts death as his destiny, he has escaped it.
This perception of fate is not the outmoded code Scholes suggests (197), and the disruption that Scholes condemns the Sartorises for causing is not necessarily destructive or meaningless (197). The disruption the adherents to this code cause is the result of their recognition that society is bounded by the chaos that surrounds it. According to Karl Kerény, "nothing demonstrates the meaning of the all-controlling social order more than the religious recognition of that which evades this order" (185). This awareness of the limitations of social convention is perfectly illustrated in Colonel Sartoris's reaction to the Yankee patrol (a reaction that Falls dwells on in his narrative): "The Yankees they set thar on the hosses, talkin' 'mongst theyselves if this was the right house or not, and Cunnel settin' thar with his sock feet on the railin', gawkin' at 'em like a hillbilly" (Faulkner, Flags 4). John Sartoris realizes that if he remains bound by social convention he will be defeated or destroyed. By responding to them in an unconventional manner, by remaining on the front porch in his stocking feet and acting like a hillbilly, Sartoris confounds the Yankees and escapes imprisonment and possibly death. The chaos that shaped the lives of the Sartorises during the war, a chaos which their code enabled them to survive, has not
diminished; it remains in the form of carpetbaggers, the Snopeses, and the First World War. And, the social conventions are just as limiting and debilitating as they were when Sartoris stood up and walked away from an enemy captain.

Lauren Stevens argues that Sartoris symbolizes disorder and sees in Faulkner's work a movement from chaos to order (83 and 87). If there is such a thematic movement, then the Sartoris tradition represents the chaos that underlies society and threatens to overwhelm it. They are, in a fashion, the tricksters of the Yoknapatawpha myths. The trickster's role in mythologies is "to add disorder to order and so make a whole, to render possible within the fixed bounds of what is permitted, an experience of what is not permitted" (Kerény 185). Because the Sartorises neither attempt to avoid nor control the fatality of their acts, they become associated with the chaos of the wilderness, of the Civil War, of the South during Reconstruction. They survive by doing that which is unexpected and unaccepted. As tricksters, they are "the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries" (185). They recognize the limitations of the social order and, consequently, are not inhibited by society. On the other hand, the Sartorises do not seek to control or avoid the forces that shape their lives; they
recognize the forces of destiny, of fate, as evinced in Bayard’s response to his hierophany. The Sartorises act meaningfully within the boundaries set by chaos and fate. Like the Toledo blade, they shape circumstances to their own ends, and this shaping of circumstance is the archetypal, creative act of the Sartorises, the act old man Falls attempts to emulate.

IV. Conclusion

According to Cleanth Brooks in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, "if the younger aristocratic generation, male and female . . . are shaken and baffled, divided and alienated, the folk society remains sane and strong" (110). I would suggest that Falls and Bayard are both a part of the folk society and that their sanity is due in part to continued presence of the mythologies that order and shape the world for them. The myths provide both of the old men with the models—in the forms of ancestral heroes—for survival in a chaotic, hostile world. When the myths are discarded—when they are seen as outmoded, when the stories are viewed as profane tales, or when the violence of the narratives is perceived as their focus—the young aristocrats of Yoknapatawpha lose their ability to confront the alienation of the world.
An element of intentionality is necessary on the part of the believer for a story to function as a myth, and both Bayard and Falls have held onto the paradigmatic function of these stories by continuing to perceive and approach them as sacred tales. Indeed, nothing in the stories themselves differentiates them from the other, profane stories of other characters, just as no physical characteristic differentiates a sacred object from a profane object: young Bayard does not reflect on the ghosts of the attic when he goes to burn his brother's things, because he apparently does not recognize or accept the attic as a sacred space. For whatever reason--because he is not a shaman, because it is not an essential time, or because it is simply intended as a profane history--old Bayard's retelling of John Sartoris's escape is not intended as a sacred tale, even though it is based on the same events as Falls's myth. By continuing to accept these narratives as myths, both men have retained the ability to make sense of the world; the myths provide both men with the opportunity to shape circumstance, however frightening, to their own ends.

In his introduction to yet another story, Falls summarizes the archetypal act of the Sartorises: "Ef a feller'll show his face to destruction ever' now and then, destruction'll leave 'im be 'twell his time comes.
Deestraction likes to take a feller in the back" (Faulkner, *Flags* 263). The hierophanies of Falls and Bayard are both associated with confronting death, destruction, and despair. The lives of Falls and Bayard are not free from the division and alienation Brooks attributes to the young aristocrats; Falls and Bayard perform their rituals in response to the threat of hopelessness. However, the intentionality of the two old men that sacralizes certain tales, objects, or places enables them to found their world and escape being overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of their world. The degree to which Falls is able to interact meaningfully and effectively with the world is reflected in his ability to heal Bayard's wen--a feat both Doctor Peabody and Doctor Alford, a young scientist free of any constricting mythologies, are unable to accomplish.

Falls's voice is not that of a pathetic old man, as John Bassett suggests (42). He is a foil for the decadence and hopelessness that characterize the young aristocrats of the novel. In Brooks's words, he is part of a "folk society that lies around them and goes on in its immemorial ways. It is neither sick nor tired. It has all the vitality of an old and very tough tree" (*Yoknapatawpha Country* 115).
Controversy surrounds the 1973 Random House edition of *Flags in the Dust*. To begin with, no one is certain who reworked the original typescript to produce the 1929 version of *Sartoris*. François Pitavy, in "'Anything But Earth': The Disastrous and Necessary Sartoris Game," holds that Faulkner helped Wasson edit the text "(as a comparison of texts demonstrates beyond a doubt)" (268). And Max Putzel believes that Faulkner "must have had a say" (114). Day, on the other hand, writes that "Faulkner found himself unable to participate" in the editing and instead worked on *The Sound and the Fury* while Wasson made the changes (vii-ix). According to Blotner, "Wasson later recalled that Faulkner never questioned him about what he was deleting" (x). Faulkner himself claims to have refused to have anything to do with the editing of *Flags in the Dust* in an essay on the composition of *Sartoris* (*On the Composition* 119).

The uncertainty of the issue is compounded by the fact that the typescript used by Wasson is not the typescript now held in the University of Virginia Library. That typescript "apparently no longer exists in its entirety or original sequence" (Blotner viii), and "there is no way
to tell how many versions, whole or part, were created by Faulkner's revisions before the typescript was produced that Wasson prepared to serve as setting copy for the novel, retitled *Sartoris* (x).

In his introduction to the 1973 edition of *Flags*, Douglas Day contends that "if there were to be any publication of *Flags in the Dust* at all, then, it had to be what we have here provided" (x). Richard Adams believes that the edition is a mixed blessing: it provides access to "an important increment," yet is not the scholarly edition sorely needed in Faulkner criticism (*At Long Last* 880 and 879). Thomas McHaney characterizes the novel as "a badly edited and unreliable text" (7).

Recognizing the difficulties posed by the questions surrounding the novel's textual integrity, I intend to use the Random House edition of *Flags*. Most of the discrepancies that Hayhoe, Millgate, and other critics are concerned with occur in the handling of Byron Snopes and Horace Benbow, whereas my concern with the novel is Faulkner's development of the Sartoris myth. The use of the Random House edition of *Flags* for a critical study is not unprecedented nor unusual; indeed, George Hayhoe has published a chronology of the events of the novel (*A Chronology of Events in Faulkner's Flags in the Dust*).
George Hayhoe's article "William Faulkner's Flags in the Dust" provides a useful description of the discrepancies between Day's edition and the existing typescript. Merle Keiser's article "Flags in the Dust and Sartoris" in Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 1979 details the history of the genesis of and the textual criticism surrounding Flags in the Dust. Keiser also includes an interesting comparison of the treatment of Byron Snopes in the two novels as an "example to illustrate the kinds of changes cutting hands and minds made to form Sartoris from the typescript" (54).

2Thomas Zaniello, in "The Epiphany and the Object-Image Distinction," distinguishes between an epiphany and an epiphanic moment.

3Eliade uses the term archetype to refer to the divine model that is a part of every ritual (Cosmos and History 21).

4John Bassett describes Falls's voice as that "of a pathetic old man as Will Falls tells his two stories" (42). William Miller, in "Hardy, Falls, Faulkner," suggests a link between old man Falls and Mr. Falls in Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge: "Hardy's Mr. Fall, 'the weather prophet' whose predictions about the harvest-time rain Henchard ignores, is almost certainly the original of Faulkner's Will
Miller describes both as shaman figures, an appropriate title for Falls, who has the ability to evoke the sacred.

The origins Falls's myth deals with are not the creation of the cosmos, but the creation of world, the South, in which Falls and Bayard live: "the primordial stories that have constituted [them] existentially" (Eliade, Myth and Reality 12).

George Hayhoe's article, "The Rejected Manuscript Opening of Flags in the Dust," contains the original manuscript opening of the novel.

Various critics equate all of the male Sartorises with the self-destruction evinced by young Bayard. Hans Beatrice argues that Aunt Jenny's and Falls's stories characterize the Sartorises as violent, arrogant, and rash, simply stating "self-destruction is what sartorisism really aims at" (503). François Pitavy contends that they are compelled by a dream to "crash upward" ("'Anything But Earth'" 271). And Andrea Dimino believes that "to be a Sartoris means to live arrogantly, both with respect to time and with respect to other people" (335). Robert Scholes attributes the decline of the Sartorises to their inability to reconcile their code of behavior to the "sordid present" (201). John S. Williams, in "Ambivalence, Rivalry, and Loss: Bayard
Sartoris and the Ghosts of the Past," and Dexter Westrum, in "Faulkner's Sense of Twins and the Code: Why Young Bayard Died," attribute young Bayard's suicidal nature to the legends he has heard growing up.

Others see a change in John Sartoris's character following the war, based on Bayard's description of his father in The Unvanquished and argue that self destruction is not the core element in the Sartoris code of behavior. See John Corrington's article "Escape into Myth: The Long Dying of Bayard Sartoris" and John Pikoulis's "The Sartoris War." Corrington argues that young Bayard is the victim of his own inability to "hold in balance the tensions of [the family myth] and his pragmatic reality" (182). Old Bayard, on the other hand, in facing down Redlaw, "perfectly" integrates the myth and his personal integrity (178).

Some critics attribute young Bayard's self destruction to his own failings. William Cosgrove, in "The 'Soundless Moiling' of Bayard Sartoris," associates young Bayard's inability to reconcile the Sartoris legend to the modern world with his inarticulateness, his inability to define and give meaning to his world with words (169 and 166). Arthur Blair, in "Bayard Sartoris: Suicidal or Foolhardy," argues that Bayard III is far more foolhardy than suicidal (59).
Judith Byrant Wittenberg, in her article "Vision and Re-Vision: Bayard Sartoris," uses the word "sangfroid" to describe John Sartoris's closing line before riding away from the Yankee patrol (328): "And then he tole you to tell yo' aunt he wouldn't be home fer supper" (Faulkner, Flags 5). Although Wittenberg applies the word only to this particular line, sangfroid accurately and concisely conveys the self-assurance and poise of John Sartoris as he outwits his enemies.
CHAPTER THREE

THE SUSPENSION OF TWILIGHT: QUENTIN'S IMPENDING CONVERSION IN "A JUSTICE"

When Quentin Compson first listens to Sam Fathers's tale explaining the origin of the name "Had-Two-Fathers," he does "not quite understand" the significance of the story (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 360). He listens to the story to learn the significance of Sam Fathers's name, but for the twelve-year-old Quentin "the story did not seem to have got anywhere" (359). Although Sam Fathers appears to perceive the story as sacred, Quentin when he first hears it does not recognize its mythic features; the narrative is not sacred to the young Quentin nor does it evoke a hierophany for him. It is only in retrospect, after having undergone some sort of conversion, *metanoia,* that Quentin understands the significance of the story and perceives it as a myth capable of conveying the sacred. In the course of retelling the story of the first time he heard the tale, Quentin makes it clear that he has come to equate the storytelling with a turning point, an awakening, in his childhood, something similar to the existential crisis that characterizes a hierophany.
The significance of this particular short story to the study of hierophanies in Faulkner's fiction is that it records the shift in a character's perception of a story. According to James Fowler in *Stages of Faith*, a conversion is

*a significant recentering of one's previous conscious or unconscious images of value and power, and the conscious adoption of a new set of master stories in the commitment to reshape one's life in a community of interpretation and action* [author's italics]. (281-82)

Fowler's term "master stories," in this instance, is roughly synonymous with "myths." The shift in attitude that transforms the narrative from a profane tale to a myth is the product of a conversion that Quentin undergoes sometime between his first encounter with the story and his later retelling of this first encounter. "A Justice" does not include an explanation or description of the *metanoia* itself that transformed a profane story into a myth; nevertheless, the existence of such a conversion is evinced by Quentin's altered perception of the story.²

Faulkner's structure of "A Justice" reflects Quentin's perception of the story as a myth and Quentin's experience of a hierophany in his own retelling of the story. Quentin,
as narrator, never explicitly states that he has come to experience the story as a myth. Instead, he ends the narrative by emphasizing his failure to understand the story the first time he heard it, thus indirectly underscoring the importance the story has come to hold for him. He tells the story with the expectation that the audience will see the point in his narrative and, subsequently, accept the story as tellable. Quentin never states whether or not he intends for his audience to participate in the hierophany the structure of the story alludes to and emulates. But the fact that he expects his audience to recognize the story's point, the point he has come to associate with the story, would indicate that he plans for his audience to recognize—if not participate in—the sacred element that has come to make the story meaningful for him; likewise, because he relates the events surrounding the storytelling, Quentin obviously expects his audience to understand the significance the storytelling has come to hold for him. Initially, it is unclear whether Quentin associates the memory of the storytelling event or the story itself with his religious experience; Quentin himself may be unsure which it is that evokes the hierophany.

I. Quentin's Initial Response to Sam Fathers's Story
In the opening of the story Quentin describes his visits to his grandfather's farm with his grandfather, brother, and sister. Although Jason and Caddy would go down to the creek to fish, Quentin would remain behind to talk with Sam Fathers:

When we got there, Mr. Stokes, the manager, would send a Negro boy with Caddy and Jason to the creek to fish, because Caddy was a girl and Jason was too little, but I wouldn't go with them. I would go to Sam Fathers' shop, where he would be making breast-yokes or wagon wheels, and I would always bring him some tobacco. Then he would stop working and he would fill his pipe—he made them himself, out of creek clay with a reed stem—and he would tell me about the old days. (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 343-44)

Quentin's use of "but" implies that his not accompanying his brother and sister to the creek is contrary to someone's expectations; Quentin does not go with his brother and sister even though Caddy was a girl and Jason presumably too little to go alone. Indeed, Spokes must send a Negro boy in Quentin's place. It is unclear who expects Quentin to watch over his siblings (General Compson, Quentin himself, his parents); who places this expectation on Quentin is not as
important as the fact that Quentin recognizes the obligation and refuses to accept it. By choosing to go to Sam Fathers's shop instead to listen to stories of the old days, Quentin rebels against the expectations—real or perceived—he believes his community has placed upon him. At the age of twelve, Quentin's preoccupation with storytelling has set him apart from the other Compson children. His interest in Sam's stories, both literally and figuratively, isolates him from the other Compsons and inadvertently establishes the foundations for his role in the community.

A ritual attends Quentin's visits to his grandfather's farm and, more precisely, Sam Fathers's shop. Quentin always takes Sam Fathers some pipe tobacco. Once he had given Fathers the offering, Fathers would stop working, fill his pipe, and then begin a story. Apparently, Quentin equates the tobacco and Sam's quitting work and filling his pipe with the opening of a storytelling. Although he does not comment on the ritual's importance, Quentin later repeats this description as he recounts Fathers's introduction to the story. The ritual serves two functions. It further distinguishes Quentin from the rest of his family, and it sets Sam Fathers's storytellings apart from other stories. Whether or not Quentin recognizes the significance of the ritual, he remembers it years later and
makes sure to include it in his story; seemingly, for
Quentin, this ritual is an essential part of the
storytelling.

The ritual emphasizes Quentin's isolation from his
family. He always brings pipe tobacco because he
anticipates his visits with Sam Fathers, not the outdoor
pursuits his brother and sister seem to enjoy. It is Caddy,
wet to the waist with "one fish, about the size of a chip"
(360), who appears to revel in the outdoor pursuits, the
freedom and adventure, of the farm. Quentin, on the other
hand, listens quietly to Sam Fathers tell a story for the
greater part of an afternoon. Whereas Caddy is dynamic and
outgoing, interacting with the physical world around her,
Quentin is quiet and reflective; his only actions are tied
to the storytelling and voices. Indeed, Quentin reacts
physically as well as emotionally to the story he has heard:

Yet I obeyed Grandfather's voice, not that I
was tired of Sam Fathers' talking, but with that
immediacy of children with which they flee
temporarily something which they do not quite
understand; that, and the instinctive promptness
with which we all obeyed Grandfather, not from a
concern of impatience or reprimand, but because we
all believed that he did fine things, that his
Quentin, the narrator, recognizes the cause of his younger self's flight; moreover, he states that he only temporarily retreats from Sam and his storyworld. His use of "temporarily" alludes to a shift in his perception of the story; sometime after that evening, Quentin has returned to the story and that which he did not quite understand.

Quentin, as the narrator, points out that the twelve-year-old boy does not leave the story because he is "tired of Sam Fathers's talking" nor is his flight simply the result of an initiation into the violence of the adult world, as Putzel suggests (Genius of Place 229). He "flees" because he does "not quite understand it [the story]."

Even though as a child he has not understood the narrative, Quentin has been physically moved by it. Apparently, Quentin's actions are provoked by narratives. His initial reaction indicates the degree to which his reflective nature enables him to participate in the telling of the myth; this contemplative, creative nature is the basis of Quentin's skill as a storyteller. According to Susan Swartzlander, Quentin, in Absalom, Absalom!, is the only narrator in the novel capable of finding meaning in the various threads of the Sutpen legend. Quentin's nature,
Swartzlander contends, enables him to piece together the stories to form as a unified whole:

He is an emotional, sensitive individual, and because he is associated with warmth and the heart throughout the text, there is little doubt that he would be able to confront the issues of the heart. He is also able to achieve a complete transfer through imagination. (119)

Glenn Meeter, in "Quentin as Redactor: Biblical Analogy in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!," characterizes Quentin's role in Absalom, Absalom! as that of a redactor (105), similar to the Biblical redactors who remembered the oral traditions and joined together the various stories to meet the needs of succeeding generations (106). "A Justice" records a stage in the formation of Quentin as the repository for the oral history of Yoknapatawpha County, a role later exploited by Rosa Coldfield and Quentin's father.

In The Tragic Mask, Longley describes Ike McCaslin as Father's apprentice, who learns stewardship of the land from the Indian guide (85). In explaining Isaac's role as an apprentice, Longley quotes a passage from Go Down, Moses describing the effect of Sam's stories on Isaac:

And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either
that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become a part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening. . . . (Faulkner, *Go Down, Moses* 171)

This shift in time is reminiscent of *homo religiousus'* experience of a hierophany; it also resembles the reader's experience of Quentin's narrative. In the story "A Justice," the reader does not listen to Quentin narrate Sam Fathers's storytelling; the reader returns to the time of the storytelling itself. I would suggest that Quentin is also participating in an apprenticeship, albeit one of a different nature; instead of being trained to be a hunter, Quentin is being trained to be a storyteller, a teller of myths. Rather than indoctrinating Quentin in the obligations owed the land, Sam is training, immersing, Quentin in the history of the land and its peoples.

As a twelve-year-old boy, Quentin may not be aware of this role or its implications; indeed, when his grandfather asks what Quentin and Sam Fathers were talking about, Quentin simply responds "Nothing, sir," . . . "We were just talking" (*Collected Stories* 360). Quentin's answer reflects his own failure as a child to understand the significance of the story. Because he does not yet understand its point, he
is not ready to retell Sam's narrative when he first hears it. The statement also emphasizes that the story he once categorized as nothing but talk has undergone a transformation prior to Quentin's retelling, which indicates both a shift in his perception of the story and his ability as a storyteller. At the time of the storytelling, he is not yet the narrator of the short story capable of recalling, adapting, and retelling Sam Fathers's tale.

The ritual also differentiates Fathers's stories from other stories. Quentin's use of the phrase "old days" to describe the setting of Fathers's stories alludes to a time which predates Quentin and the world he knows. During the entrance talk of the story, Sam Fathers clearly distinguishes between the milieu of the storytelling and the time of the story: "Not in the old days. I remember. I remember how I never saw but one white man until I was a boy big as you are; a whisky trader that came every summer to the Plantation. It was the Man himself that named me" (344). Fathers defines the old days as the time before the arrival of the whites. The story, then, is set when the Indians still owned the land, before 1821 when Jason Lycurgus Compson traded Ikkemotubbe--Doom in Fathers's story--a racing pony for a square mile of forested land later known as Compson Domain (Portable Faulkner 707).
Likewise, the story is set before Sutpen arrives and purchases Sutpen's Hundred from the Chocktaw in 1833 (Absalom, Absalom! 34 and 38). The characters of Sam Fathers's stories are the predecessors of the ancestral heroes of Quentin's myths, although in some cases, such as Ikkemotubbe, they play a part in the cosmology of Yoknapatawpha County.¹

Although Quentin may not recognize Doom as an ancestral hero, he would presumably recognize the "old days" and characters of Fathers's family history; the story would be authenticated, an important part of any mythology (Eliade, Patterns 431), by the stories he has heard elsewhere. This familiarity with the setting and characters of Fathers's story may account, in part, for Quentin's reaction to the story. Fathers's story recounts a time of origins, an illud temps, which predates that of the myths of Quentin's society: the illud temps of Fathers's myth--although it may not be perceived as such by Quentin at the time of the telling--predates the illud temps of the Yoknapatawpha myths. As a result, Quentin, possibly for the first time, is forced to attempt to qualify the mythologies of Yoknapatawpha County that have shaped his world view.

By participating as an audience in the ritualized telling of Fathers's myth, he is forced to confront the
possibility of an alternative and a potentially contradictory mythic system. Fathers's story challenges the mythologies Quentin is familiar with because it implies that the world Quentin knows was not shaped by the ancestral heroes, by the time of origins, of those myths. So long as Quentin listens to and responds to the story as a profane tale about a long gone Indian chief, the story poses no threat to the mythic system that has shaped his world view; however, his reaction to the story indicates that he feels it to be something more. Once he opens himself to the possibility that the story is not simply a story, but a myth, Quentin is confronted by the possibility that his mythology--the myths of the Compsons, Sartorises, and Sutpens--is preceded and founded on some other mythology. Later, as he tells the story, Quentin adopts Sam Fathers's term "old days" to describe the setting of the story: "he would tell me about the old days" (Faulkner, Collected Stories 344). His use of this phrase would not necessarily be an indication that he has accepted the story as a cosmogenic myth. In this instance, though, Quentin is describing a story that evokes a hierophany for him, a story he has come to perceive as a myth. Consequently, by using this phrase to describe the setting of Fathers's stories, he inadvertently acknowledges the illud temps of Fathers's
myth. He accords the story a preeminence over the other myths of his childhood.

II. The Sound of Voices

It is ironic, and probably more than coincidental, that his grandfather's voice, along with his disquiet prompts him to flee Sam Fathers and his story. If Sam's story does threaten the mythologies of Yoknapatawpha on some level, then it is only appropriate that the voice of General Compson, the authority on which much of Quentin's telling of the Sutpen legend is based, calls him away from the myth. Quentin obeyed his grandfather's voice, rather than his grandfather (359-60). Quentin's statement implies a distinction between what his grandfather has said and the sound of his grandfather's voice. And, it is the voice, the sound, that claims a certain authority and exerts some control over Quentin. Because Quentin responds to the sound of voices, he recognizes the threat posed by the story without understanding the point of the story or the nature of the threat.

For Quentin, the sound of language conveys meaning, possibly more so than the words, and force. In Absalom, Absalom!, Quentin distinguishes between listening and hearing:
Yes. I didn't need to ask who invented that, put that one up, thinking, Yes, to too much, too long.
I didn't need to listen then but I had to hear it and now I am having to hear it all over again because he sounds just like Father. . . .

(Absalom, Absalom! 264)

Quentin listens to and accepts Shreve's narrative not because it is consistent with the stories his father told about the Sutpens; he listens, he has to listen, because the two men sound the same. Quentin responds to the sound of the words rather than their meaning, and the meaning Quentin responds to in some voices is the sound of authority:

    But you were not listening, because you knew it all already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it, with it, as children will and do: so that what your father was saying did not tell you anything so much as it struck, word by word, the resonant strings of remembering. . . . (266)

What his father has said does not effect Quentin; he knows the story his father is telling and does not listen. Instead, the sound of his father's talk awakens Quentin's
memory of stories he has already heard. Quentin's use of imagery to describe the effect of his father's voice is physical; the voices strike the strings of his memory. For Quentin, the sound of the spoken word is evocative, powerful, and laden with meaning; it is also physical.

Although Quentin insists that he did not see the point of Sam Fathers's story at the time of the storytelling, his response to the story suggests something other than a simple failure to understand. The mythology he had already heard as a child clashes with the mythology of Sam Fathers. According to Longley, Faulkner's characters absorb mythologies as if by osmosis (66); such an absorption would account, in part, for Quentin's ability to discern, on some level, that the story is a myth. Even though, Quentin the twelve-year-old boy does not recognize or understand the significance of the conflict between the two mythologies, he has absorbed the stories he has heard. Moved by the sound of voices, whether his father's, his grandfather's, or Sam's, Quentin responds, without understanding, to the conflict he hears and feels in the telling of the two myths: he flees Sam Fathers and his story.

III. The Way Fathers Says His Words
Quentin's recognition of the conflict between the two mythic systems is based, in part, on his recognition of Sam's unique position in the community. Only certain members of a community have the power, the ability, to recount myths (Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 145). Those who recount myths enjoy a special status in the community of believers; they share in and are, thus, associated with the sacred their stories evoke (18). Although Sam Fathers is an able storyteller, this ability in and of itself is not sufficient to set him apart as a conveyor of myths. His skill with narratives does awaken Quentin's curiosity and interest, but Quentin responds to the sound of Fathers's voice. And, the voices Quentin most often refers to and reacts to are those of authority figures: his father's and grandfather's. When Quentin listens to Fathers, he listens because Fathers is an engaging storyteller, but he also listens because Fathers enjoys a special status in the community, a position his racial heritage would seemingly preclude. As a Negro farm hand on General Compson's farm, Sam Fathers would presumably lack the authority to narrate myths to Quentin Compson, the grandson of General Compson.

Quentin himself is aware of the paradox posed by Sam Fathers and his authoritative voice. Often at the beginning of the story, Quentin attempts to describe Fathers based on
the classifications available to a twelve-year-old boy
growing up in the South; he is confused by the authority
Fathers commands. Quentin's concern, as a boy and possibly
the narrator of the story, with Sam's position in the
community is reflected in the methodical list of
distinguishing characteristics. In this passage, he is
attempting to explain the source of his uncertainty about
Fathers and his place in Yoknapatawpha's community:

He talked like a nigger--that is, he said his
words like niggers do, but he didn't say the same
words--and his hair was nigger hair. But his skin
wasn't quite the color of a light nigger and his
nose and mouth and chin were not nigger nose and
mouth and chin. And his shape was not like the
shape of a nigger when he gets old. He was
straight in the back, not tall, a little broad,
and his face was still all the time, like he might
be somewhere else all the while he was working or
when people, even white people, talked to him or
while he talked to me. . . . Sometimes he would
quit work with something half-finished on the
bench, and sit down and smoke. And he wouldn't
jump up and go back to work when Mr. Stokes or even
Grandfather came along. (Faulkner, Collected Stories 344)

Quentin's concern with race when he narrates the story is reflected in his use of "Negro" and "nigger." In his introduction, when the voice is clearly that of the older Quentin, he uses the term "Negro"; however, as he describes his childhood perception of Fathers, he uses "nigger."

Quentin, as a twelve-year-old boy, recognizes that Sam Fathers is an exception. He catalogues the characteristics that distinguish Sam from the other Negroes on General Compson's farm. If, as Marie Baird in "Self Transcendence and Narrative Practice" states, "any movement of transition be it a crisis or a less dramatic shift, presupposes a position out of which discomfort is first experienced" (334), then Quentin's uncertainty, his confusion, is the catalyst of the conversion he will later undergo.

Neither Fathers's facial features nor complexion matches what Quentin associates with the other negroes. Quentin, by eliminating the possibilities of age and light complexion as the basis of Fathers's atypical appearance, emphasizes the enigma Fathers poses for a young, Southern boy. In describing Fathers's posture, Quentin implicitly contrasts it with that of the Negro workers on the farm. He notes that Fathers was not tall, that his carriage just
made him seem so: "He was straight in the back, not tall."
By mentioning that Sam Fathers stands erect, Quentin implies that this is another characteristic which distinguishes him from the Negroes, inadvertently alluding to Fathers's self possession and pride (a self possession and pride, in Quentin's eyes, the Negroes do not share with Fathers). Quentin also notices that Fathers's behavior is not affected by the presence of General Compson or Mr. Stokes; Fathers makes no pretense of working when they are around, and he quits working whether or not he has completed a task. Quentin's use of comparators to describe Fathers's behavior implies a degree of independence and integrity that Quentin apparently feels sets Fathers apart from the other African Americans.

Fathers is an imposing figure—at a hundred years old (Faulkner, Collected Stories 343)—who forces the twelve-year-old boy to begin questioning the social system that would label and categorize the old man as inferior. But neither his stature nor his behavior is sufficient to establish him as an authority figure capable of relating myths that undermine the authority of Quentin's grandfather's myths. They both merely serve to emphasize that he does not fit any of the types of the Southern caste system. Somehow, Fathers lives within the communities of
Quentin overlooks the fact that Fathers's comment sets him outside of both social groups; instead, he responds to the question of Fathers's name. But, when an older Quentin introduces the story, he uses an abstract reminiscent of Fathers's: "He lived with the Negroes and they--the white people; the Negroes called him a blue-gum--called him a Negro. But he wasn't a Negro. That's what I'm going to tell about" (343). In both abstracts, the emphasis is on the failure of either group to correctly label Fathers, yet for Sam Fathers and Quentin as the narrator of the short story, the explanation of the name's origin is secondary. Quentin clearly states the story's point: although Fathers appeared to be a Negro, he was not. The story, both in Fathers's and Quentin's retellings, reveals that Fathers is from a time which predates the arrival of the whites and blacks, the illud temps; consequently, his identity does not
fit within the mythologies of Quentin's grandfather or community. The myth is meant to clarify Fathers's appearance, behavior, and, probably most importantly for Quentin, voice.

For Quentin, who reverberates with the stories he has been told, Fathers's voice establishes the authority, the status, necessary to retell myths. Quentin uses Fathers's language--"he didn't say the same words"--to distinguish him from the others at the farm. But, words are not as important as the sound of the words to the Quentin who is moved by the sound of voices. When Fathers stops the narrative to get up and light his pipe with a piece of coal from his forge, Quentin looks at his grandfather and Mr. Stokes: "I could see Grandfather and Mr. Stokes talking beside the carriage, and at that moment, as though he had felt my gaze, Grandfather turned and called my name" (358). Quentin is not simply looking at his grandfather; he is scrutinizing him. In fact, Quentin's "gaze" is so intense that he believes his grandfather may have even felt it. Although Quentin still does not comment on his thoughts at this moment and it initially appears that he is simply looking in his grandfather's direction, it seems that he is troubled by the story he has heard and somehow relates it with his grandfather; this troubled gaze is an indication
that the boy realizes that the story is something more than a simple explanation of an uncommon name. This gaze foreshadows his realization at the end of Absalom, Absalom! that "he has been lied to" by his culture, which has created a false mythology to support itself (Swartzlander 119). As a child, he has responded to something other than the meaning of Sam's words; he responds to the sound of Fathers's voice.

Even though Fathers uses words that the Negroes do not—even though he tells of things that the Negroes do not--his voice is the same as the Negroes, and the source of meaning for Quentin is Fathers's voice. Quentin, as he listens to Sam Fathers, hears the same sound as he hears when they are speaking. Ironically, of all the characteristics Quentin uses to distinguish Fathers from the other farmhands, the sound of the voice is the one thing that is the same: "He talked like a nigger--that is, he said his words like niggers do, but he didn't say the same words" (Faulkner, Collected Stories 344). That which provides him with the authority to undermine the myths of the South does not distinguish him from the African Americans on the farm. In fact, the sound of Fathers's voice establishes a bond with the Negroes, a bond that his story authenticates. Quentin, who reverberates with the sound of voices, recognizes the
significance of this bond not because he understands the point of the story; Quentin acknowledges this bond and its significance because of the sound of Fathers's voice.

The myth Fathers is relating to the twelve-year-old Quentin is tied to the African American experience in the South. Indeed, the story itself tells of the fusing of the two peoples in the person of Had Two Fathers:

Being part black and part Indian, Sam Fathers embodies not only both bloodlines but, more important, the two stubbornly persisting yet separate cultures that sustain them. Both races have adapted themselves to white bondage and survived. It is equally significant that Sam is coupled in both the opening and close of a remarkable framing device with Quentin's grandfather. Both are monumental, yet mutually respectful of each other's dignity. (Putzel 233)

Quentin does perceive both men as monumental and somehow similar, but, as the narrator of the story, he also recognizes the threat that Fathers and his mythology pose to General Compson and all that he has established. Sam Fathers's story functions as a myth recalling ancestral heroes who came before and defied the Sartorises, Compsons, and Sutpens and a time of origins which predates the whites,
a time before "Issetibbeha and General Jackson met and burned sticks" (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 361): it is a story of the archetypes who established two cultures capable of sustaining two races. For Sam Fathers, the myth provides an ontological foundation for his existence in the segregated South. For Quentin as the narrator of the story, the myth and Sam Fathers's telling of it have come to exemplify the limitations and injustices of the Southern social system: "it becomes a profound statement on how meaningless it is to judge people by the color of their skin" (Gage 33). The story of Two Fathers's name evokes such a realization in Quentin, and it is this knowledge that Quentin flees.

Fathers says that he was told the story about his name when he "was big enough to hear talk" (Faulkner, *Collected Stories* 345). He implies that he was told the story only when he had reached a certain age or, more likely, a certain level of maturity. Quentin, when Fathers first tells him the story, is on the verge of the twilight of his childhood (360). Fathers maneuvers Quentin into asking him to tell the story by using an abstract that evokes an expected response from Quentin: "Isn't that your name?" (344). Perhaps, Fathers has decided to tell Quentin the story because he feels that Quentin is also big enough to hear
about the time of origins. Sam recognizes Quentin's emerging awareness of the Southern caste system (an awareness that is reflected in the boy's concern with Sam's place in the community), and he, consequently, believes that Quentin is now old enough to hear Herman Basket's story. Perhaps, Fathers decides to tell Quentin the story because Quentin is as old as Sam was when he first saw a white man (344). Or perhaps it is a combination of the two; when Fathers first saw a white man, he was "big enough to hear talk," so Herman Basket told him the story. And now that Quentin has begun to see, to understand the significance of, the racial divisions of the South, Fathers has decided to tell him the story.

The conclusion of the story, the day, and Quentin's childhood are all linked together in Quentin's mind. Whereas the story itself has quite possibly brought about the approaching end of Quentin's childhood, which is foreshadowed by his realization that Sam Fathers "wasn't a Negro" (343), the conclusion of the narrative is brought about by the impending close of the day and General Compson's voice (359-60). Although it initially seems that the story ends during the twilight of the day, it becomes clear that Fathers stops the story in the moment of the day preceding twilight. Indeed, the sun does not set until
Quentin has rejoined his family in the surrey and they have begun their trip home: "When we turned on the road home it was almost sundown" (360). As Quentin rides off, he looks back at Sam Fathers:

We went on, in that strange, faintly sinister suspension of twilight in which I believed that I could still see Sam Fathers back there, sitting on his wooden block, definite, immobile, and complete, like something looked upon after a long time in a preservative bath in a museum. That was it. I was just twelve then, and I would have to wait until I had passed on and through and beyond the suspension of twilight. (360)

Quentin recalls that "the sun was already down beyond the peach orchard" as he gets up to leave Sam Fathers (359); the twilight of the day has momentarily halted as the Compsons ride away. Although Quentin associates this "suspension of twilight" of that day with the nearing end of his childhood, neither the day nor his childhood had ended when Quentin first heard the narrative.

Quentin's account of his original response to the story is filtered through his present perception of it as a myth. Consequently, the existential crisis that was averted and the religious moment that was missed at the time of the
telling because of his own youth and naivete, as well as the transformation that followed, have become the focus of the narrative: "I would have to wait until I had passed on and through and beyond the suspension of twilight. Then I knew that I would know. But then Sam Fathers would be dead" (360). Quentin missed the opportunity to participate in a sacrament, which would have made sense of the transformation that was to follow. The tone of finality in his closing remarks as he rides way with his grandfather and siblings results from his dawning awareness of Southern evils and his recognition of a missed opportunity of sharing in the story's significance with Sam Fathers, who dies before Quentin recognizes and accepts the story as a myth.

John T. Matthews, in "Faulkner's Narrative Frames," argues that while retelling Fathers's story, Quentin seeks to simultaneously understand the experience, while denying its significance:

the frame promises to be the site of fuller comprehension and the point of contact between the plights of the individual characters and the historical realities that condition the narrative. But the frame also becomes a site of stress at which the narrator works to cover over the very insight the story has put him in a position to
grasp. The frame labors to re-organize and to resist comprehension at the same time, in the same gesture. In Faulkner's texts, the frame often forecloses precisely what it promises to open.

The framing device does reflect Quentin's desire to understand the story; more importantly, it reflects his desire to understand his response to the narrative. Throughout the frame narrative, he focuses on those things that puzzled him about Sam Fathers and his storytelling. Quentin is attempting to go back to the moment and identify why this story became sacred. But, Quentin does not flee the insight a second time, as Matthews suggests. In the process of narrating the story, Quentin reveals his own acceptance of the insight, the realization that the story is a myth, that frightened him so badly as a child. His acceptance of this realization, and subsequent sacralization of the story, enables Quentin to retell the story as a myth capable of evoking a hierophany for his audience.

IV. A Transformation, An Epiphany, and The Hierophany

Once Fathers's story is underway, Quentin's narrative voice disappears. No quotation marks indicate that the story is being told by Fathers. Instead, in the short
story, a section divides the shift from Quentin’s narrative voice to Fathers’s. The opening of the second section of the short story begins a narrative with Sam Fathers as the first person narrator: “This is how Herman Basket told it when I was big enough to hear talk. He said that when Doom came back from New Orleans, he brought this woman with him” (Faulkner, Collected Stories 345). It is clear that the “I” here is Sam Fathers, and the authority on whom he bases his story is Herman Basket (Quentin, on the other hand, refers to General Compson and Jason Compson to establish the authority of his tale in Absalom, Absalom!). Quentin’s narrative does not intrude. The setting in which the story is being told—the setting of Quentin’s narrative—is replaced with the setting of Fathers’s narrative, and the narrator of this section does not include Quentin’s responses to the story or even refer to Quentin. The narrative is self-contained and independent of the short story that frames it.

This shift in narrative voices may simply be a technique used by Faulkner to avoid cumbersome attributions and quotation marks throughout Fathers’s lengthy narrative. Or, it may be an indication that Quentin has adopted the persona of Fathers, dropping the attributions he used while narrating the entrance talk: a technique employed by
However, based on Quentin's response to the story and his later preoccupation with the narrative, it is possible that the shift in narrative voice may be the result of a hierophany.

The myth that evokes the hierophany for Quentin is not Sam Fathers's story, but Fathers's telling of the story. The sacred time Quentin returns to is not the old days of Sam Fathers, but the time Fathers told him the story. On some level, Quentin recognizes the story as a myth and responds to it as such; he adopts Sam Fathers's use of the term the "old days" to describe the story's setting. Yet, in the short story "A Justice," the hierophany is evoked by the time of the storytelling; the story itself has been sacralized by the storytelling, which would indicate that Quentin has come to perceive the storytelling as a sacrament.

Throughout Fathers's story, there is the clear presence of a first person narrator who constantly ascribes his knowledge of events to an eye witness and refers to one of the main characters, Craw-ford, as "my pappy." If the hierophany had returned the reader--and Quentin--to the time of origins of Fathers's myth, then there would be no evidence of such a narrator; instead, the events would
unfold as if they were occurring at the time of the telling. Aunt Jenny's retelling of Carolina Bayard's death in *Flags in the Dust* is structured in this way. An omniscient, third person narrator—not the voice of her brother or Jeb Stuart—replaces Aunt Jenny's narrative voice. Although it is clear that the reader has returned to the time and place of Fathers's telling, it is impossible to determine what Quentin experiences as the story is retold; however, because of the structure of the story, the switch to another first person narrator rather than an omniscient narrator, it seems likely that Quentin shares the reader's experience of Sam's retelling of the story. If he does share the reader's experience, then Quentin perceives Sam's storytelling as a sacred time, a time sacralized by Fathers's myth, because that is the time he is returned to.

Beja, in *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, refers to the retrospective epiphany: an epiphany evoked by a memory of a past event (15). Although Quentin did not experience a hierophany when he heard Sam's tale and subsequently did not respond to the storytelling as a sacred event, it is possible that he has experienced an epiphany that, in turn, has resulted in a retrospective hierophany. In looking back at his childhood, Quentin remembers the unique position Sam Fathers held in the community and the confusion this caused
in his own mind. When combined with the story explaining the name Had Two Fathers, the memory produces an epiphany; Sam Fathers "wasn't a Negro," which is the point of Quentin's story.

At some point in his life, Quentin has come to understand the significance, the meaning, of the story. Although Matthews insists that Quentin's storytelling is an excercise in "self-protective incomprehension" (84), Quentin believes he has come to understand the point of the story, hence the phrase "Then I knew what I would know." This understanding is reflected in his introduction to his and Father's stories: "But he wasn't a Negro. That's what I'm going to tell about" (Faulkner, Collected Stories 343). More importantly, though, looking back on his experience with a knowledge of the South's corruption, Quentin recognizes the significance of Father's story and why he fled as a child; he understands the threat it poses to the mythic system of his forefathers. He believes that he has undergone some sort of transformation that has helped him to understand, and he uses the suspension of twilight as a metaphor for the transformation: the moment when he was neither a child nor an adult. Quentin divides the transformation into three stages: on, through, and beyond. These three stages are, respectively, the epiphany (the
realization that Sam was not a Negro), the resulting conversion, and finally his sacralization of Fathers's story as a myth.

Once Quentin has undergone this transformation, he will no longer be able to believe that his grandfather's life "passed from one (if faintly grandiose) picture to another" (360). He will be forced to confront the injustices of the South, and he will recognize that his family has profited from those injustices. The conversion is the shift in world views that follows the epiphany. Matthews believes that Quentin seeks to avoid recognizing the racial inequity of the South (84); however troubling, this insight into the injustices of the Southern social system is not as significant as the realization that his mythology is inadequate. Once he has the epiphany--once he realizes that Sam Fathers was not a Negro and understands all that the realization entails--Quentin undergoes a conversion that alters the foundation on which he bases his understanding of the world. He can no longer hold onto the values of his ancestors; consequently, he is forced to reevaluate the myths, what Fowler terms "the master stories," that founded those values while at the same time recognizing that Sam Fathers's story is a myth. At this point, Quentin confronts the reality that the mythic system of his ancestors is
incomplete, because it is incapable of incorporating Sam Fathers and the time of origins of his myth, and as a result, adopts a new set of master stories. When Quentin accepts Fathers's story as a myth, he sacralizes the story and sacramentalizes the storytelling, evoking a retrospective hierophany.

According to Baird, a person may develop an autobiographical narrative in order to successfully "traverse" a crisis of transcendence, a conversion experience (333). Quentin's storytelling may, on one level, serve this purpose; on another, it provides the opportunity to participate in the sacred he has come to associate with that moment. Quentin's narrative takes the reader and Quentin back to the time of Fathers's storytelling rather than the time of origins because the storytelling sacralized this particular moment in Quentin's life. Because sacraments occur at essential times (Eliade, Cosmos and History 35), they structure the word and fend off meaninglessness for homo religiousus by manifesting an absolute (15). Sam's storytelling provided Quentin with the archetype, in the person of Sam Fathers, necessary to cope with the upheaval caused by his loss of childhood innocence. Quentin's childhood attempt to place Sam Fathers, his preoccupation with Fathers's differences from the other
Negro farmhands, reflects some awareness that Fathers lives in a world in which he is alone. As the narrator of the story, Quentin understands the source of this isolation and knows that Fathers's myths have provided Fathers with the meaning necessary to survive without a community. By going back to the storytelling, Quentin goes back to Fathers's archetypal act of creation--Fathers's creation of meaning in an alien world through the retelling of stories--and imitates it. He tells a story that acts as a sacrament and evokes the sacred.

V. Repudiation of Land and Community

Both Quentin Compson and Isaac McCaslin are influenced by Sam Fathers and his stories. They both recognize Fathers as an authority and, more importantly, accept his stories as mythic. The acceptance of the mythic function of these stories has the same result on both young men: the repudiation of their own ancestral myths that convey the belief system of the South. The myths of their ancestors have provided the justification necessary to claim ownership of the land and the African Americans, a justification based on the supremacy of the whites. Once they no longer accept the authenticity of these stories, Quentin and Isaac are unable to accept their places in Yoknapatawpha County. In
Go Down, Moses, the narrator details the effect of this shift in master stories on Isaac McCaslin’s perception of the world and his subsequent belief system. Because Isaac and Quentin come to share sacred stories, the descriptions of Isaac’s belief system provide an insight into the belief system of Quentin Compson and the result of his *metanoia*.

"Was," the first story in Go Down, Moses, opens with a description of Isaac McCaslin that seems unrelated to the rest of the story. This introduction concerns events before Ike was born. This lengthy and somewhat verbose introduction does place the rest of the story within the context of Ike’s character and his repudiation of the land. Brooks sees the introduction as a foreshadowing of the works to follow in the novel (Yoknapatawpha Country 245). I would suggest that the introduction does not so much foreshadow as qualify this particular story and the following stories, as well as a clarification of Ike’s perception of the various narratives in the novel:

this was not something participated in or even seen by himself [Isaac McCaslin], but by his elder cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, grandson of Isaac’s father’s sister and so descended by the distaff, yet notwithstanding the inheritor, and in his time the bequestor, of that which some had
thought then and some still thought should have been Isaac's, since his was the name in which the title to the land had first been granted from the Indian patent and which some of the descendants of his father's slaves still bore in the land. But Isaac was not one of these.

not something he had participated in or even remembered except from hearing, the listening, come to him through and from his own cousin.

(Faulkner, Go Down, Moses 3-4)

Like Quentin, Isaac has absorbed the stories of his ancestors. In fact the narrator feels it necessary to clarify that Isaac's memories of the events are based on listening to the stories. Seemingly, Isaac has incorporated these stories into his memory to such an extent that the events in the narratives are somehow comparable to the events in his own life. No evidence—descriptions, expositions, or explanations—exist in the novel clarifying how these stories of Isaac's forefathers affected him or how he perceived them, so it is impossible to determine if he ever perceived them as myths. Yet, I would argue that the stories are not simply "a profane inheritance of rape and incest" as Susan Donaldson suggests (41). The presence of this seemingly irrelevant introduction at the beginning of
"Was" and the opening of the novel reminds the reader that all of these narratives are familiar to Isaac and somehow related to his refusal to accept his inheritance.

"Was" details a part of the McCaslin history that supports their possession of the land and slaves. By explaining that Isaac has given up his claim to the land immediately preceding a story that justifies his possession of the land and its workers, the introduction establishes a contrast between what Isaac has been told and how he has acted. It emphasizes that his behavior is not in accord with the stories told to him by his father figure, McCaslin Edmonds. Throughout the introductory description, the narrator catalogues the various claims to property Isaac has renounced. By refusing to claim ownership of the property that belongs to him, Isaac has ignored his legal rights. More importantly, in order to refuse his inheritance, he must disregard the significance of those narratives that justify his ownership of the land. The description of Isaac at the beginning of "Was" emphasizes the result of his failure, refusal, or inability to mythologize the stories of his forefathers, juxtaposing this story with the later stories Isaac has adopted as sacred.

As a young man, he is trained in the skills of woodcraft by Sam Fathers, and during this time, Fathers
tells him stories about the old times. "The Bear" opens with a description of the effect of these stories on Isaac:

For six years now he had been a man's hunter. For six years now he had heard the best of all talking. It was of the wilderness, the big woods, bigger and older than any recorded document:—of white man fatuous enough to believe he had bought any part 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. It was of the men, not white nor black nor red but men, hunters, with the will and hardihood to endure and the humility and skill to survive. . . . (Faulkner, Go, Down Moses 191)

These narratives are the "best of all talking," because they function as the myths that evoke the sacred for Isaac and found his world. As Ike listened to the stories, the old times "would become a part of the boy's present" (171); the time of origins would become contemporaneous with Isaac.
The narratives that have become myths for Isaac are about those able to survive in the wilderness, and the archetypal act, the creative act, of these myths is hunting, an act Sam Fathers has trained him to repeat. "In passing on his heritage to the boy, Sam initiates Ike McCaslin into his tribe as a shaman in his turn" (Hoffman 59). Having accepted the myths of Sam Fathers—and renouncing the white myths, such as the Sutpen, Compson, and McCaslin stories, that justify ownership of and dominion over the land—Isaac must give up his birthright and any claims he might have had to the land deeded his grandfather by a Chickasaw chief. By giving up his inheritance, he attempts to base his life on the stories told to him by Sam Fathers rather than those of McCaslin Edmonds. Isaac’s response to the two sets of stories, a response explained in the introduction to "Was," underscores his acceptance of Fathers’s stories as mythic; in other words, Isaac, like Quentin, accepts the mythology that requires him to repudiate his place in society.

Later in "Delta Autumn," when Isaac is close to eighty years old, he dreams about the land and his refusal to claim any portion of it, even to save it from the destruction threatened by progress:

It belonged to all; they only had 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 its ultimate fate. It was because there was just exactly enough of it. He seemed to see the two of them--himself and the wilderness--as coevals. . . . (Faulkner, Go Down, Moses 354)

This passage reiterates what, in "Was," the narrator had said was Isaac's reason for rejecting any claims to ownership of the land: he "owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man's but all men's" (3). Unlike his father who presumed to own the land and those who worked it--who was able to gamble for and hunt other men because of his birthright--Isaac rejects private property. He perceives the wilderness as an entity that can be destroyed but not owned. For Isaac, it is a kratophany, capable of evoking the sacred in much the same way Colonel Sartoris's presence manifests the sacred for Falls and Bayard.

Isaac at some point in his life has given up or refused to accept the myths of his forefathers; he does not accept their cosmogenic function, justifying his ownership of the world around him. When Sam swabs him with the blood of a buck in "The Old People," he initiates Isaac into manhood;
however, this baptism is not the point at which Isaac undergoes his *metanoia.* Isaac had participated in Sam's myths and experienced the hierophanies before he was ten years old and allowed to accompany the other men to the wilderness; he has been converted by Sam prior to his first hunting trip in the wilderness, hence his acceptance and anticipation of that particular trip as an initiation. Like Quentin, the point of Isaac's conversion is unclear, but the effect of that conversion is a world view inconsistent with the society in which he lives.

VI. Conclusion

Both Quentin's and Isaac's perceptions of the South and their heritage are tied to Sam Fathers and the stories he tells them during their childhoods. Both are inexorably altered by the religious experiences they share with the Indian guide. Once the men have abandoned the myths of their forefathers, the stories that justified their positions in the South, they must reevaluate their places in the world: Isaac rejects ownership of the land and Quentin disowns the Southern social system. Isaac's conversion leads him to the life of an ascetic; he owns only what he can carry. He is able to continue to live in the midst of a social system he has rejected, because of the model and
archetypal act Sam Fathers has provided him. By continuing to hunt and relying on the knowledge and expertise passed on to him by Sam Fathers, Isaac participates in a ritual that, for him, evokes the sacred; through the archetypal act of the hunt, Isaac is able to return to the sacred that founds his life. Like Sam and Quentin, he is alone, surrounded by a community whose values he does not share, but he survives and achieves a place for himself by retaining his contact with the sacred. Donaldson argues that he is unable to "unite vision with history," "but because he moves in sacred time in this last section [the fourth section of 'The Bear'], the act of repetition is not tinged with the despair that eventually destroys Quentin" (49).

Having adopted the mythologies of Sam Fathers, both men are alienated from their communities, but only Quentin is isolated from the world around him. The archetypal act Quentin has inherited from Fathers is telling stories. Rosa identifies him as a storyteller, and he accepts this role at the opening of Absalom, Absalom!; he thinks to himself that the reason she is telling him the story of Thomas Sutpen is "because she wants it told" (8). When he reevaluates the sacred stories of his forefathers, he forsakes the mythology that has an audience of believers, adopting in its place a mythology without a community of believers. Consequently,
he must look both outside of his culture and his belief system for an audience; his use of "they," at the beginning of "A Justice," to describe the whites of Yoknapatawpha indicates that his audience, and perhaps even Quentin himself, is outside that community (Collected Stories 343). Ironically, his rejection of his heritage deprives him of a community and the possibility of imitating Fathers's archetypal act. Perhaps this absence of a community of believers explains the difference in Quentin's voice in "A Justice" from other stories, such as Absalom, Absalom!; the tone in "A Justice" may be the result of Quentin's recognition of an opportunity to tell his myth to an audience capable of sharing in the hierophany the story is intended to evoke.

The young men accept and respect Isaac's hunting skills and allow him to accompany them even though they realize that he is nearing eighty years old. Even if they do not share his perception of the wilderness as sacred, they share his affinity for the hunt and his love of the outdoors. Likewise, Quentin, as a young boy, did not share Fathers's perception of the stories as sacred, but he shared Fathers's interest in the stories of "the old times." But, it appears that Quentin has no such community readily available. He does not have the opportunity to periodically regenerate his
world by an evocation of the sacred, because he lacks a congregation with which to share his archetypal act. His access to sacred time is sporadic, and he cannot evoke it through rituals at essential times in his life. To all intents and purposes, Quentin is cut off from the sacred that founds his life. As a result, Quentin, who was raised interacting with the sacred and underwent a shift in world views because of an encounter with the sacred, has been forced either to accept a profane existence or return to a belief system he finds repugnant.
ENDNOTES

1 *Metanoia* is a term used by theologians to refer to conversions. Strictly speaking, *metanoia*, ΜΕΤΑΝΟΙΑ, is Biblical Greek for "a change of heart" (Michel 629); however, *metanoia* connotes a change of heart that is "a divine operation in spite of and precisely in suffering" (629). For this reason, the term seems particularly well suited to Quentin Compson, whose conversion is precipitated by and a part of the loss of his childhood innocence. Quentin's suffering, though, is exacerbated rather than soothed by his conversion, because it does not end in acceptance or recognition of a benevolent divine presence.

2 There is a discrepancy in the age of Quentin and the death of his grandfather. According to Quentin, he was twelve years old when the story occurred, and Cleanth Brooks calculates Quentin's birthdate as 1890 based on the dates given in *Absalom, Absalom!* (Yoknapatwpha Country 447). Consequently, the story occurs sometime in 1902, two years after the death of Quentin's Grandfather in 1900, the date given by Faulkner in *The Portable Faulkner's appendix* (741).

Although he does not refer to this particular discrepancy in the date of General Compson's death, Max
Putzel does point out that the trips to General Compson's farm are not mentioned in *The Sound and the Fury* and that Benjy is not mentioned in "A Justice" in arguing that the Quentins of the two stories are not the same person (231). Max Putzel assumes that Quentin narrates the story sometime during middle age, hence eliminating the possibility that it is the same Quentin who appears in either *Absalom, Absalom!* or *The Sound and the Fury* (232). Although Quentin's age, as the narrator, is never referred to or mentioned in the story, Putzel bases this belief on the experiences alluded to by the narrator that have altered his world view (232): none of which is conclusive evidence that the Quentins in each story are different people. I would contend that a conversion would achieve a similar perspective with or without the experiences Putzel believes the narrative voice of the story implies. Indeed, John Matthews labels "counterintuitive" any attempt to deny that the Quentin Compson of *The Sound and The Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* is the same person as the Quentin Compson in "A Justice" (72). Matthews goes on to write that such a denial "perversely disregards Faulkner's own remarks about the essential identities of the characters who appear in more than one of his works" (72).
I will discuss one important similarity between the Quentin of "A Justice" and the Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!* (and, therefore, of *The Sound and the Fury*) at length later in this chapter.

Redaction criticism, in Biblical studies, focuses on the way in which an author records a group of interrelated narratives to form a single, unified text:

Redaction criticism (*Redaktionsgeschichte*, "the history of redaction") attempts to establish the theology of the New Testament writers by analyzing the way they accepted or rejected, modified or expanded, or otherwise reformulated traditions, as well as how they reordered and regrouped materials to make a certain point, composed new materials, and structured their accounts--all primarily intentional interpretative devices--in order to set forth their points of view. (Perrin and Duling 70)

Although Perrin and Dulling are concerned here with the New Testament writers, the same methods are used to analyze the writings of the Hebrew Testament. Although I agree with Meeter that Quentin is functioning on some level as a Biblical redactor, there is a significant difference between Quentin's storytelling and the post-Exile authors Meeter
compares him with. They were transcribing the stories, writing down orally transmitted narratives; Quentin, on the other hand, tells his stories.

A useful tool for the analysis of Quentin's role as redactor is a section entitled "What We Know About Thomas Sutpen and His Children" in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country. In this section, Cleanth Brooks details the sources of the various threads of Quentin's narrative in Absalom, Absalom!.

"The term "old days" is used again in the short story "The Courtship" to describe the time of Doom and his contemporaries:

This is how it was in the old days, when old Issetibbeha was still the Man, and Ikkemotubbe, Issetibbeha's nephew, and David Hogganbeck, the white man who told the steamboat where to walk, courted Herman Basket's sister. (Faulkner, Collected Stories 361)

Like Sam Fathers's story in "A Justice," "A Courtship" tells about the illud temps. The final sentence of the story, "That's how it was in the old days" (380), alludes to both a first person narrator and the narrative's purpose or point. Although it is unclear if Sam Fathers is the narrator of this story, the narrator is a member of Doom's tribe: "But
merely by occurring on the other side of that line which you couldn't even see, it became what the white man called a crime punishable by death if they could just have found who did it. Which seemed foolish to us" (361). The story itself and the first person narrator intimate the possibility of a group of stories, myths, told by the Choctaw about a time of origins in which the whites played a secondary role. David Hogganbeck is a main character in "The Courtship," but he serves as a foil for the cunning and guile of Doom. In this story, as in "A Justice," the narrative focuses on Doom as an ancestral hero, whose heroic traits are cunning, strength, insight, and quick thinking.

This phrase is also used in the Appendix of The Portable Faulkner to describe what appears to be the same time period: "these were the old days before 1833 when the stars fell and Jefferson, Mississippi, was one long rambling one-storey mudchinked log building housing the Chickasaw agent and his trading-post store" (704). The narrative voice here appears to be third person; consequently, it is difficult to determine whether the narrator perceives "the old days" as simply a period of time before Jefferson or if the narrator intends the phrase to serve as a distinction between the profane present and a sacred past.
Quentin assumes that the meaning he has ascribed to the story makes it tellable. The use of "they" in the abstract to refer to "the white people" indicates that the implied audience is not the white people who had originally labelled Sam Fathers a negro: the story, like Absalom, Absalom!, is told to explain the social system of the South to an outsider.

I intend to deal at length with the oral characteristics of Quentin's storytelling and thought patterns in the following chapter.

A host of authors have written on the basis and consequence of Isaac's repudiation of the land. In The Tragic Mask, John Longley argues that the repudiation reflects "that most Christian of all paradoxes: he who loses his life shall gain it" (98). The result of such a sacrifice, Longley reasons, is an inability to help others (98); indeed, according to Herbert Perluck, in "'The Bear': An Unromantic Reading," Issac's renounciation proves that there is no freedom or sanctity in such a repudiation and that it fails "as they all must" (174-5). Arthur F. Kinney in "Faulkner and the Possibilities of Heroism" contends that Isaac betrays the South and loses the ability to "serve or influence humanity" (112), and Alma Ilacqua, in "The Place of the Elect in Three Faulkner Narratives," characterizes
Isaac's repudiation as a betrayal of "the splendid potential [Isaac] demonstrated as a youth" (135). John Pilkington in *The Heart of Yoknapatawpha* sees the bear hunt as symbolic of the struggle between the wilderness and ownership of property and suggests that Isaac's repudiation of the land is his attempt to live in accord with Fathers's teachings (264, 267). Eric Sundquist, in *Faulkner: the House Divided*, holds that neither Isaac's repudiation nor the purity of the wilderness is sufficient to overcome the consequences of racial prejudice (139).

Issac's rejection of his inheritance may be ineffective, but it is not necessarily meaningless. Having undergone a conversion, Isaac is struggling to rectify the sins of his father. In "The Parabologic in Faulkner, O'Connor, and Percy," McFague concludes that "Ike is no Dilsey--he is not a saint--but an ordinary though reasonably decent human being, one who stands outside his own culture and its expectations" (54).

As I mentioned earlier, Susan Donaldson, in "Isaac McCaslin and the Possibilities of Vision," analyzes Isaac's denial within the context of the belief system he has inherited from Sam Fathers. Donaldson focuses only on the role of the vision produced by his encounter with Ben in
Isaac's conversion. She overlooks the myths and subsequent hierophanies that precede his encounter with the bear.


According to Cleanth Brooks in William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Isaac "is initiated into the life of the hunter by having his forehead marked with the blood of the first buck" (257). Sheila Donnelly views the act as an initiation into 'the mystical Wilderness' (66). Daniel Hoffman in "The Last of the Chickasaws," terms the act a "rite de passage" composed of two distinct acts: the killing of the buck and the anointing of the blood (54). The first marks Ike's passage from boyhood, and the second establishes "a sacred tie" between Ike and Sam Fathers (54-5). Once again, I would suggest that this ritual is less of an initiation into a belief system than an initiation into a new role within a belief system. Pilkington characterizes
it as the end of Ike's novitiate and the beginning of his priesthood (268).
CHAPTER FOUR

QUENTIN'S REDACTION AND DEFINITIVE HIEROPHANIES

IN ABSALOM, ABSALOM!

Absalom, Absalom! initially appears to be a novel about Thomas Sutpen's attempt to realize his dream of becoming a Southern Planter. This narrative, though, is framed by the people who retell Sutpen's story and react personally to his dream. Critics, in general, have come to accept that the focus of the novel is the construction of narratives and the protagonist is Quentin.¹ Throughout the novel, Quentin participates in the telling of the Sutpen story as an audience, narrator, and redactor. Initially, he quietly listens to Rosa Coldfield's version of Sutpen's life, but by the time his father tells him the story, Quentin has begun redacting the story in his mind. Each time the story is told, Quentin experiences a hierophany, signifying that he recognizes, on some level, the story as a myth and the telling of the story functions as a sacrament. Quentin's painful ability to continue to participate in the mythology of his Southern, white fathers, indicates that he has yet not completed the conversion prefigured in "A Justice." Quentin continues to enter into the sacred of the Southern
white myth, but he has not reconciled himself to the truths it offers.

His response to the hierophanies reveals that the archetypal acts he associates with them are not the events of Sutpen's life but the redaction of Sutpen's story; the storytellingss are repetitions of an archetypal act, one which orders and explains the origins of the world and defines his place in the world. The profane time of the storytellingss in *Absalom, Absalom!* is framed by the sacred time of the hierophanies evoked by those storytellingss. The novel is limited to three settings (excluding the settings contained in the framed narratives), and all are related to retellings of the Sutpen myth: Rosa Coldfield's "office," the Compson porch, and the Harvard dorm room. In each instance, Quentin participates in the telling of Sutpen's story, and in each instance, he experiences a hierophany. Quentin's movement from one setting to another—a change in the setting of the storytelling— is obscured by the events of the myth. Without explanation or clarification, chapter two begins on the Compson front porch, even though chapter one began in the "office" of Rosa Coldfield and ended in the Sutpen barn of the myth. Likewise, the transition from the Compson front porch to the Harvard dorm occurs without comment or explanation. The setting and events of the
novel, or the profane events of Quentin's storytelling, are framed by the narratives contained within the novel. The narrative thread of the novel is formed by the sacraments Quentin participates in and his redaction of the myth based on these storytellings; the story of Thomas Sutpen bonds the various storytellings together, forming a unified whole.

According to John Irwin, the voices of the various narrators are filtered through the consciousness of Quentin Compson (26). Pierre Michel contends that the entire novel "emanates from Quentin's consciousness and it is written, or told, from his vantage point at Cambridge" ("Quentin Compson" 195). If the entire novel is being told by Quentin, the eclipsing of profane time by sacred time reflects Quentin's perception of sacred time and profane time; the reader, like Quentin, experiences profane time as disconnected and sacred time as a unified whole that orders and founds profane time. The entire novel functions as a hierophany evoked by Quentin's storytelling; the novel itself is Quentin's recreation of the ritual marking his acquiescence to the role assigned him by Southern society.

The series of hierophanies, and Quentin's memories of those hierophanies, form a sacrament that enables Quentin to relive his immersion into the sacred during a crucial time
in his life. Mircea Eliade makes the point that the sacred evoked by hierophanies forms a "succession" (*Patterns* 392):

> The heterogeneousness of time, its division into "sacred" and "profane," does not merely mean periodic "incisions" made in the profane duration to allow of the insertion of sacred time; it implies, further, that these insertions of sacred time are linked together so that one might almost see them constituting another duration with its own continuity. (391)

Quentin's experiences while listening to Rosa Coldfield in her father's office, his father on the front porch of their home, and Shreve in the cold dorm room at Harvard are all a part of a single experience: "a ritual does not simply repeat a ritual that has gone before it (itself a repetition of an archetype), but is linked to it and continues it, whether at fixed periods or otherwise" (391). The retelling of the Sutpen myth continues the story Thomas Sutpen first told General Compson. Quentin's redaction of the myth--his fusion of the various narrative threads to form a unified whole--is a repetition of the archetypal act initiated by Thomas Sutpen when he first told General Compson; more importantly, though, Quentin's storytelling is a continuation of Sutpen's archetypal act.
By telling Shreve the story Sutpen told his grandfather, Quentin resumes and assumes Sutpen's cosmogenic act of storytelling. The continuity of sacred time unifies and frames the profane world of the novel for the reader and defines the world for Quentin. Both must sift through the various threads and narratives in order to arrive at some meaningful structure. Without the sacred and the redaction of the stories associated with the evocation of the sacred, the profane events would make sense to neither the reader nor Quentin. In short, the sacred shapes the profane.

The novel begins with Quentin's initiation into the myth, as he sits listening to Miss Coldfield's version of the Sutpen legend. It continues with his father's version of the same narrative and ends with the joint telling by Shreve and Quentin. The novel culminates in Quentin's redaction of the myth to answer Shreve's questions and the hierophany evoked by Quentin's redaction. When he tells Shreve the story in a manner that evokes a hierophany, Quentin acquiesces to the role of a teller of myths, possibly for the first time. The retelling of the Sutpen legend--the narration of the story rather than the story itself--defines Quentin's place in the south. It provides him with a paradigm that structures the world. And, the Sutpen story in particular, a story that he has pieced
together from several sources in order to form a unified whole, evinces the cosmogenic function of his role as a shaman. Although Quentin tells the story ostensibly to answer Shreve's questions—"Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 218)—he ultimately transforms it to answer the question why he lives in the South. The story does answer Shreve's questions, showing him how Southerners have been able to gather various narrative threads in order to mythologize their history to evoke the sacred. Listening to Quentin's telling of the story, Shreve witnesses and participates in the cosmogenic act of ordering the world, but he fails to recognize the degree to which that archetypal act binds Quentin to a world he can no longer accept.

Absalom, Absalom! traces Quentin's gradual and partially successful progress through the twilight of his conversion. He is unable to act on his conversion because he cannot discard the identity created for him by Thomas Sutpen's archetypal act. Quentin is retelling the story that he identifies with his initiation into his role as a storyteller. While redacting the Sutpen myth, Quentin returns to those rituals, those moments, in which he was formed into the role of a teller of myths. I have suggested
in the previous chapter that Sam Fathers's mythologies have initiated a conversion that will eventually put him at odds with the mythologies associated with this role, and I would argue that Quentin's response to the memories of hierophanies he associates with Sutpen's myth is indicative of this tension. Throughout the novel and the various storytellings, Quentin reveals a reluctance to participate in the hierophanies and an alienation from the myths that evoke them. Quentin's ability to participate in the telling of the myth in such a way that his redaction evokes the sacred evinces his maturation into the role as a teller of myths; at the same time though, the role he has assumed contradicts the belief system he has been introduced to by Sam Fathers. While retelling the Sutpen myth, Quentin acquiesces to the role and world established by that mythology rather than the mythologies of Sam Fathers. By the end of the novel, Quentin has denied the metanoia that has alienated him from the belief system of his forefathers.

I. Listening Reneges and a Vanishing Voice

Rosa Coldfield's storytelling is qualitatively different from others in the novel. In all the other storytellings, Quentin retains some degree of self-possession, but during Rosa's, Quentin lacks any control
over the effect the story has on him. At the beginning of
the novel, Quentin listens to Miss Coldfield's voice as she
tells him the story of Thomas Sutpen, but it is not her
voice or the story that moves him. Instead, Quentin is
engulfed by the telling of the story and the effect the
story had on him—the evocation of a hierophany:

and talking in that grim haggard amazed voice
until at last listening would renege and hearing-
sense self-confound and the long-dead object of
her impotent yet indomitable frustration would
appear, as though by outraged recapitulation
evoked, quite inattentive and harmless, out of the
biding and dreamy and victorious dust.

Her voice would not cease, it would just
vanish. . . . and the ghost mused with shadowy
docility as if it were the voice which he haunted
where a more fortunate one would have had a house.
Out of quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-
horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as
a schoolprize water color, faint sulphur-reek
still in hair clothes and beard. . . . (4)

Miss Coldfield's storytelling disrupts profane time. In
Patrick O'Donnell's words, "she is an intimate part of the
process that converts Sutpen into the 'demon' and herself
into the would-be ravished bride; indeed, she generates the language that recollects this transformation from history to myth" (33). Rosa is able to transform a profane tale into a myth that evokes a hierophany. The smell of the wistaria plant, the coffin smells of Quentin's surroundings, Rosa's "office" are all replaced by the sacred time of Sutpen's arrival at what was to become Sutpen's Hundred.³

In this passage, Quentin, as the narrative voice of the novel, describes the process by which he was distanced from the profane and is immersed in the sacred.⁴ Quentin's description of the shift suggests that he does not make a conscious choice to enter the sacred; instead, he appears to be acted upon by the sound of Rosa's voice. It is not Quentin's choice to participate in the hierophany; listening reneges and hearing-sense self-confounds. Listening implies a conscious effort to understand what is being said, whereas hearing consists only of an awareness of sound. Quentin, as the novel's central consciousness, emphasizes this distinction by including "sense" as a qualifier of hearing, indicating that it is a sense rather than a cognitive process. As Miss Rosa's story progresses and Quentin begins to experience the hierophany, Quentin is no longer using his reason or senses. During all other storytelling, Quentin continues to hear without listening.
The breakdown of both his cognitive and sensual processes reflects and occurs in conjunction with his movement from the profane time to sacred time: "as though in inverse ratio to the vanishing voice, the invoked ghost of the man whom she could neither forgive nor revenge herself upon began to assume a quality of solidity, permanence" (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* 11). Quentin experiences a hierophany. The careful and detailed description of the shift reflects Quentin's meditation, as the consciousness of the novel, on the affect these myths have had on him. Although the description of Quentin's experience of the shift is lengthy, the shift itself is sudden and startling, like a "quiet thunderclap." Instead of being heard or recognized, it is sensed. Abruptly, Quentin is a contemporary of Thomas Sutpen and all of the ghosts which inhabit Miss Coldfield's stories, as well as the stories told to him by his father and Sam Fathers.

Quentin's movement into the sacred of the hierophany requires only his recognition of the authority of the story and the storyteller, the ability of the story to recall some aspect of the basis of his life. But, Quentin does not perceive this acquiescence as a free choice as he hears Rosa's story:
It was a part of his twenty years' heritage of breathing the same air and hearing his father talk about the man. . . . Quentin had grown up with that; the mere names were interchangeable and almost myriad. His childhood was full of them; his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth. (9)

Apparently, Quentin is acted upon by the sound of the voices telling the story. Indeed, later in profane time, the sound of Shreve's voice, which recalls the voice of his father, evokes a hierophany for Quentin: "thinking Yes. I have heard too much, I have been told too much; I have had to listen to too much, too long thinking, Yes, almost exactly like father: that letter" (259-60). This section contains two different thoughts from two different times. Quentin thinks he has heard too much when his father first tells him of the letter Mrs. Coldfield gave his grandmother, and the realization that Shreve sounds almost exactly like father evokes his memory of this realization. He is transported back to the sacred time his father told him about Rosa Coldfield; Quentin can see Charles Bon's letter, "as plainly as he saw the one open upon the open text book on the table before him" (259). For Quentin, the story in and
of itself is not as significant as the storytelling event, the ritual.

The ritual transports him to the time of origins contained in the myth. Participating in Rosa's myth, Quentin becomes aware of the power and influence of these storytellings, but he is also aware that he has no rational control over his response to these rituals; his identity is determined by their effect on him. An ambivalence attends the experience of the sacred because of the threat of the loss of identity within the sacred (Eliade, Patterns 460-1). Quentin has lost his identity because of his participation in the myths; "he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 9). Quentin cannot break free from the patterns established in the archetype of the myth because he is unable to escape the hierophanies evoked by the storytellings. Ritual usurps his free will, as ritual must.

II. Mr. Compson's Profane History

The relationship of the next hierophany, or series of hierophanies, to the events surrounding it is confusing and difficult, perhaps impossible, to follow. Although the story told by Mr. Compson immediately precedes a hierophany; it is not necessarily his story that evokes the sacred for
Quentin. This hierophany, one in which Quentin returns to the moment the two Sutpen brothers faced one another outside the gate of the Sutpen mansion, is followed by the conclusion of his father's narrative. The next chapter begins with what appears to be a monologue in italics given by Rosa Coldfield. Although it is probable that the audience is Quentin, the setting, the time and place, of this commentary are never clearly explained. This monologue, or letter, ends with a hierophany that continues the hierophany Quentin experienced during his father's narrative. The ambiguity surrounding these passages, reflects the degree to which the profane time of the storytellings has been usurped by the sacred time of the myths.

The first of these hierophanies does not occur until near the end of Mr. Compson's story, after he has given Quentin the letter from Bon. In this instance, the hierophany may be discounted by some readers as nothing more than a description out of the vivid imagination of Quentin Compson as he listens to his father's stories and reads the old letter. When Mr. Compson begins his narrative, he and Quentin are sitting on the front porch waiting for the twilight to end and darkness to fall. This scene echoes the quotation that concludes "A Justice": "That was it. I was
just twelve then, and I would have to wait until I had passed on and through and beyond the suspension of twilight. Then I knew that I would know" (Collected Stories 360).

Quentin is waiting to pass on and through the twilight, this time in a much more literal sense, before he can continue on: Rosa will not head out to the Sutpen home until she deems it suitably dark (Absalom, Absalom! 108). Whereas twilight marked the end of Fathers's story and the beginning of the end of Quentin's childhood, Mr. Compson's story begins at twilight when Quentin is no longer a child and is ready to assume his role as an adult; Quentin is preparing to leave for college and walk out of his father's talking (218). His conversation with Miss Coldfield indicates that the collective myths of the community have long before assigned him his role and have been biding their time, waiting for Quentin's acquiescence to the inevitable.¹

At the beginning of the novel, Rosa reveals an awareness of Quentin's role in the community, even as she predicts that he will not return to Jefferson: "So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentleman and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it" (6). Quentin's reaction to Rosa's overtures confirms his capitulation to this role: "It's because she wants it told"
Quentin is a storyteller, and according to Walter Ong, one of the storyteller's functions in a predominately oral culture—or in this case a residually oral culture, one that retains the characteristics of an oral culture—is that of a repository of the community's important information; "[the bard] is at once a storyteller and tribal encyclopedist" (Havelock 83). Unlike Sam Fathers who tells Quentin the story to lead him into and beyond the twilight Quentin must pass through, Rosa tells Quentin the story that it may be recorded. Although this motive may initially appear to indicate that the story is simply a profane tale about a particular family history, Rosa, in the course of her narrative, transforms it into a myth; she is telling Quentin the story to explain her place in the world and why God allowed the Confederacy to lose the war. For her, the story functions as a myth explaining the fall of the South.

Mr. Compson, presumably, tells Quentin his version of the story to explain and complete Rosa's version. He approaches the tale as a profane story. Although the intentions or beliefs of the hierophant do not necessarily prevent the believer from experiencing the hierophany—Masses performed by skeptical or disillusioned priests may evoke the sacred for the laity, and Dilsey experiences the sacred in *The Sound and the Fury* despite Reverend Shegog's
intentions'—Mr. Compson's response may be the reason the hierophany is delayed.

Mr. Compson does not respond to the stories in the same way his son does. They do not transform his world or provide him with a basis for interacting with the world around him:

you bring them together again and again nothing happens: just the words, the symbols, the shapes themselves, shadowy inscrutable and serene, against that turgid background of a horrible and bloody mischancing of human affairs. (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 124-5)

Mr. Compson does recognize the potential of the stories. He is aware that for some persons these stories evoke the sacred, but he seems unable to participate in these hierophanies:

We have a few old mouth-to-mouth tales; we exhume from old trunks and boxes and drawers letters without salutation or signature, in which men and women who once lived and breathed are now merely initials or nicknames out of some now incomprehensible affection which sound to us like Sanskrit or Choctaw; we see dimly people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves
lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions, performing their acts of simple passion and simple violence, impervious to time and inexplicable—Yes, Judith, Bon, Henry, Sutpen: all of them. They are there, yet something is missing. (124)

Although he dismisses the stories as empty and inscrutable, he does recognize the force of the lives of those contained in the stories. He acknowledges that the actions of these people have become mythologized and, subsequently, transcend time. Although the characters of these stories are by Mr. Compson's lights dead, they somehow continue to live in the people around him and Quentin, but he is unable to share in their lives. For Mr. Compson, the stories "don't explain" (124).

Critics have commented at length on Mr. Compson's cynicism. Arthur Geffen, in "Profane Time, Sacred Time, and Confederate Time," identifies Mr. Compson's religious cynicism as prohibiting him from participating in a ritual in such a way that he would experience the sacred (233). Despite his nihilism or cynicism, or both, Mr. Compson does recognize the mythic function of the stories. Acknowledging the presence and the meaning of the symbols of a ritual,
though, is not sufficient to evoke the hierophany. Carlos Martos explains that faith and belief in the efficacy of the ritual are essential elements in a sacrament:

Of course, sacraments do not always have a profound experiential effect on those who see them. People must believe in the effectiveness of sacraments in order for them to be effective. They must look at them with the conviction that they can indeed have the kind of effect they are supposed to have. Without such a conviction the sacrament can be a sterile symbol which signifies something but which does not generate a living experience of meaning. Or the experience can be minimal, like an intellectual awareness of a sacred meaning which is not fully felt. (21)

"Mr. Compson has the data, the historical baggage, without the animation, without the imagination; the life of things is not available to him for connections" (Slattery 47). Just as he recognizes that the nicknames of long dead couples allude to an affection he does not, cannot, participate in, he concedes that the stories he has heard and retells intimate something he cannot experience. Although he comprehends the potential of the stories, Mr. Compson does not experience the power of the stories to
explain his place in the world. The something that he feels is missing from the stories is his ability to participate in the mythic function of the stories; it is not, as Geffen suggests, the inability of the Southern civil religion to evoke the sacred (247). Mr. Compson's telling of the story, then, may be intended as nothing more than an explanation of something he does not expect Quentin to understand.

Quentin does not need to understand or know the various details of the story. He does not need the entire historical background to enter into the story and participate in it because he does not perceive the story as a profane history. Because the story functions as a myth, enabling Quentin to enter into and experience the events, the narrative does not have to be complete or even necessarily rationally comprehensible. For Quentin as a homo religiosus, the only significant history is preserved by the myths (Eliade, Sacred and Profane 102). In "'The Firmament of Man's History': Faulkner's Treatment of the Past," Michael Millgate argues that Faulkner is concerned with precisely this perception of history in Absalom, Absalom!:

But if Faulkner is less interested in history as the reconstruction of what actually happened in the past, he is very interested in history as the
embodiment of what people believe happened; he remains profoundly concerned with what history means for his central characters, with their individual vision of the past, their unique sense of how the past impinges upon their present situation. (27-8)

Mr. Compson and Quentin model two ways of viewing history. Whereas his father focuses on the "inscrutable and serene" words and symbols of the stories, Quentin responds to and enters into the archetypal act contained in the storytelling experience. Mr. Compson's perception of the stories does not necessarily inhibit Quentin's experience of a hierophany, yet the absence of a hierophany throughout a large portion of Mr. Compson's tale may be the result of Quentin's reaction to the story in the manner in which his father appears to intend it; he too initially approaches the story as an explanation of background to Miss Coldfield's narrative. But Quentin is not cut off from the sacred because, as Geffen suggests, he has adopted his father's religious cynicism (233). When listening to Rosa's story, Quentin was acted upon by the storytelling itself; he entered into the sacred. Here, though, it seems that he has adopted his father's stance, at least until he begins reading the letter.
Once Quentin begins, in his mind, redacting the story, combining the contents of the letter with the events in his father's narrative, he experiences a hierophany. For Quentin, the redaction of narratives is a sacramental act, an act that repeats an archetype established by his father and Sam Fathers. Quentin, by redacting the story, is participating in a creative act; he is ordering the world. Although Mr. Compson provides Quentin with a model and the materials, initiating the archetypal act, he is unaware of or unable to recognize the way in which this act reveals the sacred on which they--the people of Yoknapatawpha--base their lives. Quentin, on the other hand, is acutely aware of and responsive to this revelation.

As he reads Charles Bon's letter, Quentin stops listening to what his father is saying although he continues to hear his voice (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* 159). Once again, the distinction between listening and hearing reflects Quentin's reaction to the story. Although he no longer listens to his father, Quentin still hears his voice--he has not entered into sacred time. His father's voice does not "vanish" during his storytelling as does Rosa's. The hierophany he experiences during Rosa's storytelling, though, occurs almost immediately, whereas Mr. Compson's narrative does not have an immediate effect on
Quentin. Quentin does not experience the hierophany until he has received and read Charles Bon's letter. He continues to hear his father's voice as he reads Bon's letter, because Quentin is combining the two narratives on some level. Once Quentin completes the letter and begins to experience the hierophany, his father's voice disappears:

"the one calm and undeviating, perhaps unresisting even, the fatalist to the last; the other remorseless with implacable and unalterable grief and despair--" (It seemed to Quentin that he could actually see them, facing one another at the gate. . . . the one with the tarnished braid of an officer, the other plain of cuff, the pistol lying across the saddle bow unaimed, the two faces calm, the voices not even raised: *Don't you pass the shadow of this post, this branch, Charles; and I am going to pass it, Henry*) "--and then Wash Jones sitting. . . . (164-65)

The parentheses that set off this section seem to suggest that this memory or experience is occurring simultaneously with Mr. Compson's narrative: Quentin sees Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon at the gatepost while his father is describing them. As I mentioned earlier, this section could be dismissed as a product of Quentin's vivid imagination, his
ability as an artist to visualize settings and events; the
details contained in Quentin's vision coincide with the
events in Mr. Compson's narrative. I am arguing, however,
that it is a hierophany because the images are associated
with the events of Miss Coldfield's myth at the beginning of
the narrative; in other words, it is a continuation of the
hierophany evoked by Miss Coldfield's narrative and is, in
turn, continued after her monologue that begins the next
chapter.

After the hierophany ends, Mr. Compson's voice
completes his portion of the tale. At this point, the
setting of the novel abruptly shifts. The chapter that
immediately follows Quentin's hierophany and the completion
of his father's narrative begins with a commentary by Rosa
Coldfield, explaining her relationship with Thomas Sutpen.
The nature and setting of this explanation are unclear.
Cleanth Brooks, in William Faulkner: First Encounters,
explains that this section constitutes a flashback to Miss
Coldfield's storytelling in chapter one (202). If it is
such a flashback, the italics seem to indicate that it is
occurring in Quentin's mind; he is remembering the
explanation. As he and Rosa ride out to Sutpen's place, she
is speaking to him, but he is hearing her voice in his mind
from a prior telling. The events occurring at the moment of
this flashback are not italicized because they have been superseded by the memory. The present, the moment at which Quentin is remembering this conversation, occurs only after the flashback is complete, and even then, the setting is unclear:

"I was told, informed of that too, though not by Jones this time but by someone else kind enough to turn aside and tell me he was dead. 'Dead?' I cried. 'Dead? You? You lie; you're not dead; heaven cannot, and hell dare not, have you!' But Quentin was not listening, because there was also something which he too could not pass—that door, the running feet on the stairs beyond it almost a continuation of the faint shot. (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 215)

Two, possibly three, events are occurring simultaneously here, but Quentin is attuned to only one. And, that is the only one available to the reader. Rosa is speaking while he is remembering this past monologue. Possibly for this reason, Rosa's conversation is not contained in the novel; Quentin, as the central consciousness of the novel, does not include this particular conversation because it was not relevant to his hierophanic experiences.
The flashback is italicized to distinguish it from the conversation that is occurring as Quentin remembers. Rosa's voice emerges when Quentin's memory ends. Once Quentin becomes aware of her voice, her comments are given in regular print, not italics:

He was not even listening to her; he said,

"Ma'am? What's that? What did you say?"

"There's something in that house." (216)¹₀

Instead of listening to Rosa, Quentin is remembering what she has told him about her relationship with Thomas Sutpen, and this memory joined with his father's narrative evokes yet another hierophany, which ultimately supplants the other two narratives. This hierophany, though, is not directly related to the explanation in italics that immediately precedes it. Although both are concerned with the Sutpen legend, the commentary ends with the death of Thomas Sutpen and the hierophany begins after the shooting of Charles Bon. Quentin is combining a variety of seemingly disparate narrative threads to create a myth capable of evoking the sacred. Even though Quentin does not, at the time of this memory, know what he will discover in the Sutpen mansion, his later knowledge that Henry is in the upstairs room, provides the necessary link between the disjointed narratives.
The hierophany that Quentin experiences at the end of this chapter provides the line of continuity with the previous chapter; it begins where the previous hierophany left off. The shooting is not included in either of the two hierophanies. Instead, Quentin returns to the moment after the shot: "--that door, the running feet on the stairs beyond it almost a continuation of the faint shot" (215). The dash preceding the shift in time seems to indicate that a portion of the narrative has been left off or that this section completes an earlier incident. The events in the hierophany, as well as this dash, provide the continuity in the narrative thread that the profane events, the events of the storytellings, lack. Although it is unclear where Quentin is, or even at the advent of this hierophany whom he is listening to, the happenings of the sacred story form a continuity that transcends the fragmentation of the events in Quentin's life.

In his mind, Quentin has begun redacting the stories of Thomas Sutpen and his minions in such a way that the subsequent narrative has assumed the function of a myth. The redaction is the ritual by which Quentin evokes the sacred, and the narratives form only a portion of this sacrament. Not only do the storytellings evoke hierophanies for Quentin; as a result of the hierophanies, Quentin has
begun to organize profane experience according to the sacred contained in this mythology. Moreover, the formation of the Sutpen story, the novel itself, is a ritual initiated and retold by Quentin that evokes the sacred for his audience.

III. Bound and Defined by the Stories

Chapter six begins in the Harvard dorm room Quentin shares with Shreve McCannon, "the Canadian, the child of blizzards and of cold" (432). Once again, the shift from one storytelling setting to another occurs without comment or explanation. This time Quentin is the storyteller, and his audience is from a different country, and world. The story is initiated by the arrival of his father's letter telling of Rosa's death:

Then on the table before Quentin, lying on the open text book beneath the lamp, the white oblong of envelope, the familiar blurred mechanical Jefferson Jan 10 1910 Miss and then, opened, the My dear son in his father's sloped fine hand out of that dead dusty summer . . . the wisteria, the cigar-smell, the fireflies--attenuated up from Mississippi and into this strange room, across this strange iron New England snow . . . bringing
with it that very September evening. . . . (217-18)

Apparently, Shreve has brought Quentin a letter from Mr. Compson, telling of Rosa Coldfield's death. Neither Shreve's placing the letter on the open book nor Quentin's opening of the letter is described; instead, Quentin as the novel's narrator focuses on the visual impact the letter has on him, the image of the envelope laid across the open book. The letter captures Quentin's complete attention and, subsequently, that of the reader; it is the focal point of this passage, because it is the catalyst that will initiate another hierophany, which will, in turn, lead to another storytelling. The letter returns Quentin to the evening he experienced a hierophany on his family's porch. Like the hierophany that occurred at the end of his father's narrative, a hierophany that seems to have been initiated by Charles Bon's letter, this hierophany is evoked by Mr. Compson's letter; both are evoked by the redaction of Thomas Sutpen's myth.

The hierophany that evokes the September evening begins before Quentin even starts reading the letter; just seeing the letter initiates the hierophany, evoking the smell of wistaria and his father's cigar. And, the structure of the novel suggests that it continues as he reads. The text of the letter interrupts, but does not end, the description of
September night. It continues after the text of the letter: "--bringing with it that very September evening itself."
The dash and incomplete phrase would suggest that some portion of the hierophany has been overshadowed by the text of the letter. Although this eclipsing of a sacred time by a profane is not in keeping with the previous hierophanies in the novel, it does suggest that both events are contemporaneous: Quentin's immersion into the sacred is not disrupted by his reading of the letter.

According to Carlos Martos, "the meaning [of a sacramental event] seems not to come from us but from or through the sacrament. It radiates out of the sacramental object or illuminates the sacramental ritual from within" (21). This section recreates a believer's experience of a sacrament evoked by a sacred object while remaining aware of the object that initiated the sacrament; as homo religiosus participates in the sacred, he remains conscious of what has evoked the sacred and aware of the fact that this object is the source of his experience. Indeed, this awareness results in the perception of certain objects as sacred. Mircea Eliade explains that a stone or tree is worshipped because it is associated with the manifestation of the sacred; the object, once it manifests the sacred, has become something else, "yet it continues to remain itself" (Sacred
and Profane 12). This paradox or duality is reflected in the shift from the sacred time of the September evening to the profane text of the letter back to the sacred time of the September evening. The two are intermingled, and Quentin is experiencing both at the same time. The structure of the text reflects this awareness.

The hierophany is disrupted when Quentin is required to answer a question that does not appear in the text: "(and he soon needing, required, to say 'No, neither aunt cousin nor uncle Rosa' . . ." (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 218). Shreve's question occurs sometime during the hierophany and, consequently, is superseded by the sacred. Once Quentin answers the question—the "soon needing" may imply that Shreve has repeated the question—the hierophany is momentarily interrupted. Shreve's question leads to another question Quentin has been asked all semester, but apparently not yet answered: "that not Shreve's first time, nobody's first time in Cambridge since September: Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all)" (218).

Shreve's question—"Why do people live in the South?"—supplies the abstract for Quentin's story and the novel: the purpose of the tale is to explain that which provides the South with meaning, the reason for which Southerners live.
Significantly, Quentin settles on a story to answer Shreve's question, instead of simply describing the mindset of the South or the effect of the Civil War on Southern culture. Quentin's answer is a device characteristic of Faulkner's storytellers. But, the question asked by Shreve is more complex than those concerning Ratliff's battered face or Caspey's war exploits. Shreve is asking Quentin to explain the meaning, the truth, on which Southerners base their lives. The question is existential, in as much as it presupposes a relativism in which various cultures can arrive at different answers as to the purpose of existence, but it is a metaphysical inquiry into the meaning of life arrived at by one particular culture, the defeated South. The question is about a religious perspective. Shreve is delving into a belief system on which a society bases its understanding of the world, a belief system that defines the South as a race and has enabled it to survive and make sense of a catastrophic defeat. To answer the question Quentin assumes the role of a shaman.

Instead of answering with an abstract, philosophical belief statement or a creed, Quentin answers with a story about Thomas Sutpen. Quentin's answer is a traditional device of oral cultures in dealing with complex, philosophical issues. Because the only record available to
preliterate societies, oral cultures, is the memory, all important information has to be structured in such a way that it can be easily memorized (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 35). The only complex, analytical thoughts available are those which can be fit into mnemonic patterns: "Oral cultures tend to use concepts in situational, operational frames of reference that are minimally abstract in the sense that they remain close to the living human lifeworld" (49). Because narratives can be adapted to provide the necessary mnemonic devices for memorization and recall, they serve as the repositories of a culture's accumulated knowledge or wisdom. Stories—not expository discourse—are used to record and explain such metaphysical issues as the meaning of life and the origins of evil and the world.

As he tells Shreve a story that explains the religion of the South, Quentin is surrounded by the tools and symbols of literacy: he is looking at a letter on an open book in his dormitory room at Harvard. Nevertheless, Quentin is the product of a predominately oral society. The literate images surrounding Quentin contrast with the oral tradition that surrounded him in his youth and, ironically, the stories he is reminded of by his father's letter:

The stories that come to him, word by word, to strike "the resonant strings of remembering,"
provide the only access he has to his cultural heritage; the stories he hears, tells, and seeks to finish, are the only means he has of absorbing, appropriating, assimilating his culture. (Minter 86)

The written texts that surround Quentin do not explain his world. By employing the story of Thomas Sutpen to answer Shreve's question, Quentin returns not only to the mythologies of a culture he is struggling against, but he returns also to the mindset and role that culture instilled in him. This series of questions leads Quentin to begin telling the Sutpen legend, assuming the role of storyteller and hierophant. As a result, he finds himself thrust into the paradigm provided him by his belief system.

Initially, because the events of the hierophany overshadow those in the Harvard dorm room, Quentin appears to disregard Shreve's question; his answer is not included in the text. However, Shreve responds to the events that Quentin is experiencing:

(then Shreve again, "Wait. Wait. You mean that this old gal, this Aunt Rosa--"

"Miss Rosa," Quentin said. (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 221).
The parentheses, here and earlier, are used to set off the dialogue that occurs during the hierophany. Quentin is narrating the story as he relives the night he went out to Sutpen's home with Miss Rosa. At the moment, the story for Shreve is nothing more than an interesting commentary about why this old lady, this Southern Guinevere (218), lives and dies. For Quentin, it is a story that explains his place in and relationship to the South; it functions as a myth that not only explains but defines his place in the world.

The hierophany evoked by his father's letter that Shreve's question disturbs is not yet complete, but at some point during this hierophany, Quentin begins telling Shreve the story as an explanation of why people live in the South. The story Quentin tells Shreve to explain the South and its subsequent hierophanies becomes enmeshed with the hierophany Quentin associates with his role as a storyteller. Quentin's place in the South is defined by this role. Ironically, he reaffirms the mythologies of the Southern white culture by telling the story of Thomas Sutpen in such a way that it evokes a myth, at precisely the same time he is returning to the night he began to undergo the transformation alluded to in "A Justice": a transformation that placed him at odds with the belief system espoused by this mythology.
IV. Quentin's Dilemma

In the process of redacting the myth, Quentin not only acquiesces to his role in Southern culture, he literally returns to that which he is "unable to pass":

--that very September evening when Mr Compson stopped talking at last, he (Quentin) walked out of his father's talking at last because it was now time to go, not because he had heard it all because he had not been listening since he had something which he still was unable to pass: that door. (218-19)

The original hierophany marked an essential time for Quentin. It precedes his passage through the twilight when he finally walks out of his father's talking. When he experiences this hierophany, he already knows that someone is living at the Sutpen mansion besides Clytie--Rosa has told him (216), but he does not yet know who it is. Despite the hierophanies Rosa's and Mr. Compson's storytellings have produced, neither the hierophanies nor the stories have been sufficient to prepare him for what was behind the door in the Sutpen mansion. When Quentin walks out of his father's talk, he is not only walking out of the range of his father's voice; he is attempting to move beyond the boundaries set by his father's stories. He must walk out of
his father's talk before he can identify that "something which he still was unable to pass."

The hierophany he experiences while looking at his father's letter takes him back to the moment when he moved beyond the limits of his father's storytelling and Rosa's. Although he ostensibly leaves his father's narrative because "it was now time to go" out to the Sutpen home, he ultimately walks out of both of Rosa's and Mr. Compson's talking because of the inadequacy of their narratives. At some point, Quentin has realized that their stories are no longer adequate, and consequently, he stops listening: "he had not been listening since he had something which he still was unable to pass: that door."

This recognition of the deficiency of Rosa's and his father's narratives suggests his coming of age; he can now redact the master stories of his culture. That Quentin is now able to tell the stories that will evoke the sacred, explaining the meaning of existence for the Southerner, is evinced by the degree to which Shreve is able to participate in the story. The sense of independence suggested by the phrase "walked out of his father's talking at last" is qualified by Quentin's participation in the role of teller of myths; while Quentin has achieved independence from his father, he has not broken free from the South.
His independence is qualified and limited by the role that has been assigned to him by the Southern culture and the myths that that culture has provided for that role:

He [the oral bard] profoundly accepts this society, not by personal choice but because of his functional role as its recorder and preserver. He is therefore dispassionate, he can have no personal axe to grind, no vision wholly private to himself. (Havelock 89)

Although Havelock is here discussing the obligations and role of the classical Greek poet, his point applies. Indeed, James Justus argues that Quentin's story is bound by his culture in the same way the bard or epic poet was: "Like the epic narrator, he [Quentin] expresses the feelings of the people of his region. Though his intellectualization goes beyond the bardic role, he yet reflects the group-consciousness of his own time and country" (47). As an oral repository (beyond his will) of Southern myths, Quentin is limited in his response to those myths. Because the oral storyteller must meet the demands of his audience (Ong, Orality and Literacy 67), he speaks for the society rather than himself: "the individual's reaction is not expressed as simply individual or 'subjective' but rather as encased in the communal reaction, the communal soul" (46).
The stories and role have been integrated into Quentin's life to such an extent that he cannot separate himself from them. He is defined by the effect the storytellings have on him: "his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names; he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 9). Because he associates the hierophanies with the telling of the stories rather than their meaning, the telling of these stories forms a continuity for Quentin. Regardless of the narrator, Quentin does not recognize a significant difference in the storytellings (and the reader has a difficult time distinguishing among them): "Yes, Shreve sounds almost exactly like father" (207). Once Quentin enters into the telling of the story, he faces the possibility of being returned to that role and belief system: "That Quentin is intended to be elevated from private status to Hierophant is not only revealed by the structure that scaffolds the story but also reinforced by the granduer of the style itself" (Justus 48). Quentin feels trapped by what he has heard and his role as a storyteller, and to a certain extent he is.

Although Quentin is bound by the society from which he comes, his redaction of the narratives offers him the opportunity to adapt the myth to a specific existential
situation. He can manipulate the stories and redact the stories to fit the needs of his audience; indeed, redaction criticism focuses on just this type of manipulation of narratives (Perrin and Duling, New Testament 70). The oral storyteller adapts his narrative to fit the needs and demands of the community: "[oral] narrator narrates what an audience will tolerate" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 67). Quentin is telling the story to a foreigner to explain why people live in the South; to answer Shreve's question, Quentin must tell a myth that reflects the beliefs of the South even as it reflects his own religious struggle. Consequently, the storytelling requires that Quentin must confront the conflict between what he has been taught and what he believes, what he must say and what he wants to say.

V. Too Much, Too Long

The hierophany evoked by the arrival of Jason Compson's letter appears to end as Shreve asks a series of questions, which Quentin answers brusquely. Shreve usurps the narrative at this point, summarizing what Quentin has been told by Jason and Rosa. As he listens to Shreve, Quentin becomes aware that Shreve's storytelling echoes his father's:
He sounds just like Father he thought, glancing . . . for a moment at Shreve leaning forward into the lamp . . . smelling (Quentin) the cigar and wistaria, seeing the fireflies blowing and winking in the September dusk. Just exactly like Father if Father had known as much about it the night before I went out there as he did the day after I came back. (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 227)

Quentin briefly returns to the twilight his father and he sat on the porch waiting for darkness. But, he does not continue to experience a hierophany; instead, he begins to think about the story: "thinking Mad impotent old man . . ." (227). Although it is impossible to tell if Quentin is intentionally disrupting the hierophany, he does repeatedly break away from it.

When Shreve's voice intrudes on his thoughts, Quentin experiences another hierophany, albeit one of a different time and place; the events of this hierophany take place sometime after his visit to the Sutpen mansion and occur on the Sutpen land.11 Yet, the hierophany revolves around another storytelling. The transition from Shreve's narrative, a story based on one which Quentin has told him, to the hierophany occurs in mid-sentence:
"You told me; how was it? you and your father shooting quail, the gray day after it had rained all night and the ditch the horses couldn't cross so you and your father got down and gave the reins to--what was his name? the nigger on the mule? Luster.--Luster to lead them around the ditch" and he and his father crossed just as the rain began to come down again. . . . (234-5)

The hierophany occurs as two narratives--Shreve's story and the information Quentin must have provided him with at an earlier time (Brooks, First Encounters 205)--are joined to form a single story. The shift from second to third person and the close of the quotation marks both indicate that the narrative beginning with "and" is no longer Shreve's; however, nothing implies that Shreve's narrative has ended. Instead, it has been subsumed by the hierophany that returns Quentin to the moment when he came across the Sutpen graveyard and his father told him the story about the grave markers. Again, the hierophany evokes the sacred time of the telling of a myth. Shreve's ability to tell the story in such a way that it evokes a hierophany may be due in part to the fact that he sounds like Quentin's father, but it also alludes to Quentin's skill as a storyteller and a shaman. Basing his narrative on what Quentin has told him,
Shreve is able to complete the narrative in such a way that Quentin not only accepts its viability, but shares in its construction.¹²

This particular hierophany is layered. It begins with Mr. Compson telling Quentin about the defeated Confederate troops. While his father tells the story, Quentin sees the troops: "It seemed to Quentin that he could actually see them: the ragged and starving troops without shoes" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 237). Initially, this image seems nothing more than the product of Quentin's imagination. "It seemed" implies that Quentin is not actually seeing the troops, but simply believed that he could. But, the image does not end with the description of the troops; it continues on with the arrival of the stones and Rosa Coldfield's preoccupation with them. At the end of the vision, Quentin has to tell himself that he was not there; "he could see it; he might even have been there. Then he thought No. If I had been there I could not have seen it this plain" (238). Quentin no longer seems to actually see; he does see. These events are not part of what David Ragan characterizes as an "imaginative reconstruction" (344). Throughout this chapter, Quentin's thoughts have been in italics. Presumably, because it is not italicized, the first part of this passage is not a
thought, but a response or a comment by Quentin as the third person narrator: "he could see it; he might have even been there." Quentin's response--"No" --suggests that he is in some way aware of this reaction; Quentin as the consciousness of the novel states what he could only sense at the time of the hierophany. Whether the thought is Quentin's while he is standing in the small graveyard with his father, in the dorm room with Shreve, or recasting the events of the novel in his mind is unclear. Quentin, at each of these stages in his life, is uncomfortable with the belief system the hierophany supports and, consequently, would be reluctant to participate. Regardless, the "No" reflects a willful attempt to end and perhaps even discredit the hierophany.

By thinking to himself that he was not there, Quentin breaks the hierophany, commenting on his perception of the significance of the experience. The phrase "seen it this plain" may imply that the events of the myth make more sense than the events of history; he can better understand the mythic events because they have meaning. Quentin recognizes a qualitative difference between this experience and his profane experience: the events are somehow clearer, more accessible, than profane historical facts. Despite, or perhaps because of, this awareness, Quentin has again
intentionally broken away, if only momentarily, from a hierophany (once again, it is unclear which Quentin breaks away from the hierophany). After this interruption, Quentin returns to the side of his father and the conversation about the headstones. As Quentin looks at the graves and his father tells his story, Quentin recalls part of his conversation with his father. The hierophany continues undisturbed until Quentin's thoughts again intrude into the sacred time, returning him to the profane time of his surroundings. When he moves back into profane time, he again makes note of the clarity and immediacy of the images conveyed by a hierophany:

(Because there was love Mr Compson said There was that letter she brought and gave to your grandmother to keep He (Quentin) could see it, as plainly as he saw the open text book on the table before him, white in his father's dark hand against his linen leg in the September twilight where the cigar-small, the wistaria-smell, the fire flies drifted, thinking Yes. I have heard too much, I have been told too much; I have had to listen to too much, too long thinking Yes, almost exactly like Father (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 259-60)
Quentin's memory, which is evoked by the events in his hierophany, breaks him away from the hierophany and returns him to the profane: his father's reference to Charles Bon's letter reminds him of the letter on his textbook, which Quentin acknowledges evoked the initial hierophany. The use of regular print to describe what Quentin is looking at as well as the attributive "thinking" would suggest that the passage is the product of a third person narrator, the narrative voice of Quentin as he relates the events of the novel. The first thought is his response to the story his father is telling in the hierophany, and the second thought is about the sound of Shreve's narrative. In the first, Quentin is still responding to the events of the hierophany, whereas in the second, he responds to the ritual evoking the hierophany, indicating Quentin's gradual emergence from a sacred time. Quentin's insistence on the similarity between his father and Shreve is further evidence that the hierophany has been interrupted yet again by Quentin. Once Quentin's thoughts end, he reenters the hierophany evoked by Shreve's narrative: a hierophany that has returned him to his father's storytelling at the Sutpen grave site.

Quentin finally breaks away from this hierophany when he remembers the inscriptions on the tombstones. At that moment, he recognizes the degree to which he has integrated
the stories into his life. He can fill in missing information without being told:

thinking (Quentin) Yes. I didn't need to ask who invented that, put that one up, thinking, Yes, to too much, too long. I didn't need to listen then but I had to hear it and now I am having to hear it all over again because he sounds just like Father. (264)

His initial thought leads to another about the influence the stories have on him; he has to listen to the stories. At this moment, the hierophany ends, and Quentin's thoughts disclose the significance of his refrain, "too much, too long."

Quentin is not responding to what his father is saying, but to the sound of the words. "Quentin feels that history acts on him without his volition. He is simply a medium" (Uroff 439). The sound of the voice telling this story acts upon him; he must respond to the story, which reflects the degree to which he has been influenced and shaped by the oral culture of his youth. Ong attributes the power of spoken words in oral cultures to the fact that without writing words are inextricably bound to sound: "Words in an oral-aural culture are inseparable from action for they are always sound" (Presence of the Word 112). For this reason,
Ong explains, in an oral culture "language is a mode of action not simply a countersign of thought" (*Orality and Literacy* 32). Quentin perceives the sound of the story as an action. He describes the strings of his remembering being struck and brought to life by the sound--not the meaning--of his father's narrative (*Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom!* 266). Quentin must break away from the hierophanies he associates with this myth in order to act upon the conversion Sam Fathers initiated years before, and his repeated interruptions of the hierophanies reflect his recognition of this necessity. But the sound incites Quentin, forcing him to participate in that which he can no longer accept. Quentin must participate in the hierophanies evoked by the storytelling, because the sound of the storytellings controls him; it "establishes the here and now personal presence" that, in the case of these stories, is associated with the hierophanies of belief system he is attempting to repudiate (Ong, *Presence of the Word* 113).

The complexity of this hierophany or series of hierophanies is the result of and underscores Quentin's reluctance to participate in the sacred evoked by the telling of the Sutpen story. He is vying with the power the storytellings have over him. Throughout the section, he breaks away from the hierophanies, reminding himself that he
was not there, that he has heard too much and listened too long, and that the images are clearer than those of the profane world. Whether they are hierophanies or the imaginative reconstructions David Ragan considers them to be, Quentin is not, as Ragan claims, more satisfied with the events in these sequences than "actual reality" (344). He is "too much involved . . . to enjoy the reconstruction," but "he feels a compulsion to do so" (Brooks, Yoknapatawpha Country 312). Quentin is struggling against something that he does not feel that he has control over, but that controls him. In Brooks's words, "Quentin . . . cannot disentangle himself" ("Narrative Structure of Absalom, Absalom!" 384). And in order to complete his conversion, he must first disentangle himself.

Quentin still returns to the myths of his forefathers and the role that has been assigned him by his society and these myths. Part of his reaction to these stories is based in his recognition that the events they portray are clearer and more immediate than those around him. They order and structure his world, but Quentin is no longer willing or able to accept the order and structure they provide.

VI. Redaction and Repetition
In an often quoted and interpreted passage, Quentin contemplates the formation of narratives, comparing it to two pools joined by "narrow umbilical water-cord" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 326). Perhaps the historical events are the pebble that disturbs the two pools, the narrative is the ripples, and the storytelling is the channel connecting the two. I would suggest that the symbol is ultimately indeterminate because Quentin himself is unsure of what he means; he is attempting to understand the relationship of the storyteller, the story, and the audience as he develops the metaphor. His comments framing the description provide an insight into his attempt to understand and his struggle to arrive at some clear theory of the nature of narratives and, consequently, may provide a clearer insight into the significance of the image than the image itself:

Maybe we [Shreve and Quentin] are both Father.
Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished.
Maybe happen is never once but like ripples on water after the pebble sinks . . . thinking, Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (326-27)
Without the image of the two pools, this section provides an interesting genealogy of the telling of the myth.

When Quentin first thinks that both he and Shreve are his father, he is reflecting on what Shreve has just said: "Don't say it's just me that sounds like your old man" (326). Throughout the novel, Quentin has been thinking, and apparently commenting, that Shreve sounds like Mr. Compson, but here Quentin is reminded that the story is his own; by telling the story, Quentin also assumes the role and authority of his father. When Shreve tells the story, he assumes Quentin's and Mr. Compson's roles; both Quentin's and Mr. Compson's narratives are the source of Shreve's. In retelling the story, Quentin and Shreve together adopt Mr. Compson's role. In each instance, the narrator by retelling the story is recreated by and assimilates the narrators who proceeded him. Paradoxically, each of the narrators is defined by the storytellers who came before him and those who follow; at the same time, they are defining the narrators both before and after them: "Most of the themes of Absalom, Absalom! are clustered here, in this expression of oneness. . . . Most important is that the characters have become united, the storytellers are one" (Matlack 352). Thomas Sutpen, in first telling the story to General Compson, is the origin of their narratives and identities as
storytellers: it took Thomas Sutpen to make them all narrators. His story is the archetypal act that initiated the storytelling Quentin finds himself repeating.

Thomas Sutpen's cosmogenic act, then, is the telling of his story to General Compson. By telling Quentin's grandfather the story of his origins and his purpose, Thomas Sutpen defines not only himself, but the way those who listen to Compson's narrative perceive him. Although the telling of the Sutpen story becomes the archetypal act that General Compson, Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin Compson, and Shreve repeat; it is not itself a hierophanic moment for Quentin. Retelling the story does not return either Shreve or Quentin to the time the story was first told. Although the first telling becomes the archetypal act others repeat, it is not the sacred event Quentin returns to; instead, he returns to Sutpen's arrival in Jefferson county, the duel between his sons, and the announcement of Charles Bon's death. The stories associated with redaction are generally those which evoke the sacred for Quentin.

For Quentin, two different sacraments occur in his reconstruction of the events of the novel. The first is associated with the life of Thomas Sutpen, and the second is associated with his, Quentin's, role as a storyteller. Although, as a teller of myths, Quentin recognizes the
archetypal act of Thomas Sutpen in telling his life's story, he is not imitating that act. Instead, he is emulating his father and perhaps even his grandfather by redacting the various narrative threads at his disposal to create his narrative. The combination and manipulation of narratives, according to Patrick O'Donnell, is the significance of the image of the two pools:

The story, then, depends less upon matters of authority, authenticity, and self-presentation than upon the ability of the speakers and hearers to transform a collection of remnants and fragments of story into the loomed cloth of the whole. (41)

As Quentin thinks about the interrelationships of the various narrators, only Thomas Sutpen stands alone. All of the other narrative voices are created by two other narrators: "maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve." Unlike his father, Quentin is reconstructing a mythology—not a profane story.

In redacting the myth, he is expressing his own theology. He is, as Suzanne Jones recognizes, shaping the Sutpen narrative "to satisfy private needs" (84), but like the South they [Quentin and the other narrators of the novel] become victims of the
reality of their own myths. The reality they create, while binding them to their community, separates them from the rest of the world. (84)

Cosmologies and deep-seated beliefs do change in oral cultures (Ong, Orality and Literacy 42), yet, once again, as an oral storyteller, as a teller of myths, Quentin must meet the demands of his audiences. In order to answer Shreve's question—"Why do people live in the South"—and because of his perception of his role within the community, he is bound by the creeds and beliefs of the community from which the mythology arose. In Faulkner The Major Years, Melvin Backman contends that this quest to discover "the truth about the rise and fall of the South" distinguishes the Quentin Compson of Absalom, Absalom! from the Quentin Compson of The Sound and the Fury: "his [Quentin's in Absalom, Absalom!] concern is social rather than personal" (88). He cannot completely individualize his myth. He must accept certain basic premises in order to remain within the bounds of the Southern culture and Shreve's question—namely that incest is more acceptable than miscegenation, that murder is a justifiable solution to Henry's dilemma, and that Thomas Sutpen, whether demon or foolhardy dreamer, is in someway a definitive Southerner.
When Shreve takes over the narrative, he begins flippantly, perhaps irreverently: "Let me play a while now" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 349). Quentin, the third person narrator, explains that this is not "flippancy," but "that protective coloring of levity behind which the youthful shame of being moved hid itself, out of which Quentin also spoke" (349). The emotion both men are attempting to hide is not related to events or characters in the myth; it is the result of evoking, returning to, Quentin's past storytellings:

the two of them back to back as though at the last ditch, saying No to Quentin's Mississippi shade who in life had acted and reacted to the minimum of logic and morality, who dying had escaped it completely, who dead remained not only indifferent but impervious to it, somehow a thousand times more potent and alive. (350)

The shade is not identified; it may be Sutpen, Rosa, Henry Sutpen or perhaps even Quentin's past identity as a part of the culture he has attempted to leave behind. All four have been evoked by the storytelling, and it is from this shade that Quentin and Shreve feel they must defend themselves. In saying "no" to the shade, Quentin is attempting to deny its place in his life. Nevertheless, the storytellings have
evoked it, giving it more life and potency than it ever had, and the "no" of Quentin and Shreve is insufficient to prevent it from entering the room.

The hierophany Quentin experiences at Harvard returns him to the tellings of the Sutpen legend. These storytellings, in turn, take him back to the events of the Civil War and Sutpen's life, but the clear focus of the hierophanies has been the sacraments that evoked the sacred for Quentin; Quentin's past self has been made present through the hierophanies. For this reason, I would argue that the shade Shreve and Quentin stand against is Quentin's own. Quentin attempted to escape his role as a cultural repository and the cultural boundaries that constrained him when he walked out of his father's talk, but in the process of answering Shreve's question by telling the Sutpen legend, Quentin realizes the futility of trying to escape his place in Southern culture; Quentin's and Shreve's stand against this shade is futile. It enters the room with the September evening, the letter from Mr. Compson, and Quentin and Shreve's redaction of the myth. Quentin is caught in the succession of sacraments first initiated by Thomas Sutpen's story, and his role in this continuum of narratives, in the ritual, defines him. He must protect the Southern myth from
dying, even though he is no longer able to accept the validity of that mythology.

VII. Conclusion

Isaac Sequeira, in "The Bear: An Initiation of Ike McCaslin," argues that "there are three types of initiation: decisive, uncompleted, and tentative. "The second category defines initiates who cross the threshold of initiation but are still confused as to the direction they should proceed" (3). Quentin is this type of initiate. He has gone through the pain and disillusionment of the initiation Sequeira associates with coming to some sort of threshold (4), but having crossed, Quentin is unsure of how to proceed. Sequeira equates this type of initiate with the ironic protagonist, the eiron (4).

What Quentin learns about himself, the South, and his relationship with the South at Sutpen's mansion is never stated and, consequently, a matter of debate. I am not concerned here with what specifically alienates Quentin from the South—racism, incest, miscegenation, murder, private property, or all somehow intertwined. Quentin himself is uncertain. He denies even being estranged from the South by quickly and immediately repeating that he does not hate it (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 227); he cannot even accept
that he is alienated much less recognize the source of that alienation. Whatever the reason for his estrangement, it is associated with the series of storytellings contained in *Absalom, Absalom!* and prefigured by his experience with Sam Fathers. Despite his disaffection, Quentin has been unable to break free from the influence of these stories.

The twilight Quentin returns to throughout the novel marks the moment of silence, a period of waiting, before he goes out to the Sutpen mansion and faces that which he cannot pass. I believe that this twilight, this suspension, is the one to which he refers at the end of "A Justice": "That was it. I was just twelve then, and I would have to wait until I had passed on and through and beyond the suspension of twilight. Then I knew that I would know" *(Collected Stories 360).* In "A Justice," the twilight is somewhat confused; when his grandfather calls, the sun is "already down beyond the peach orchard" (359), but later after they have turned onto the road home, "it was almost sundown" (360). The ambiguity of the sunset, and consequently the twilight, reflects Quentin's own youth and ignorance of that which he would know; "A Justice" ends while he is still a child, before his entrance into the twilight. The settings of the storytellings in *Absalom, Absalom!* accord with Quentin's description of his initiation
into adulthood as a passage through the twilight. The conversion and hope alluded to in "A Justice," however, are not realized in the initiation that he undergoes in Absalom, Absalom!.

Absalom, Absalom! contains all three stages; he passes on, through, and beyond. Rosa's story begins in the afternoon and lasts "until almost sundown of the long hot weary September afternoon" (Absalom, Absalom! 3). His father's story begins during a twilight filled with wistaria, while they wait for darkness to fall so that Quentin and Rosa can ride out to the Sutpen mansion (35). And, Quentin and Shreve's narrative begins in the evening and continues on throughout the night. When Quentin does go out to the Sutpen home with Miss Rosa, he crosses over the threshold, entering the Sutpen home and even Henry Sutpen's room, but to do so, he must first walk out of his father's talking. The two events combine to mark Quentin's passage into adulthood. Once he has crossed the threshold, he begins to tell stories and shape mythologies of his childhood. No longer does he simply listen and remember; he now tells and shapes the myths to fit his audience. For Quentin these storytellings are the rituals that mark his transition from childhood to adulthood. The storytellings
do not bring about the transformation, but they prepare
Quentin for it and mark its passage.

When Quentin describes his passage into adulthood in
"A Justice," he ends with a cryptic qualification: "Then I
knew what I would know. But then Sam Fathers would be dead"
(Collected Stories 360). Quentin, here, recognizes that
although he will have completed his transformation, the
insight that he will have gained is that one day he would
know. The initiation he undergoes does not necessitate the
conversion he realizes that he must eventually undergo to
free himself from the South. He will not have undergone the
conversion prefigured in "A Justice"; he simply will
recognize the necessity of the conversion. Quentin is at
this point; having moved beyond his father's boundaries and
completed the story on his own, Quentin has realized a new
degree of independence as an adult, but in Gary Stonum's
words, "Quentin's 'freedom' is that of impotence" (48).

Quentin notes that Sam Fathers's will be dead, because
Fathers, at the point of Quentin's transformation and
subsequent epiphany, will no longer be there to guide and
aid him. Without the guidance of Sam Fathers, Quentin will
flounder, assuming the identity established by his role as a
Southern storyteller. Once Quentin has assumed this role,
he has trapped himself in a belief system which he finds
repugnant. Throughout *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin evinces his reluctance to participate in this role and his distaste for the hierophanies it evokes. Yet having passed on, through, and beyond the twilight, he spends an entire night in his Harvard dorm room with Shreve telling, retelling, and shaping the stories he has heard too much and too long.

An eiron is a hypocrite who "pretends to ignorance to deceive others" (Holman and Harmon 161). Quentin deceives himself; he pretends not to know that he hates the South or why he hates the South. Susan Swartzlander explains that "Quentin's society has shaped a false cultural history for him. He realizes that the glory and grandeur that he was told were the South is an artificial perception" (119). Quentin's society has fashioned such a false cultural history, and in "A Justice" he glimpses the fallacies his culture perpetuates as its very basis. But, he is not, as Swartzlander suggests, attempting to reconcile himself to the fact that he has been lied to at the end of *Absalom, Absalom!*. The tragedy is not that Quentin has been lied to, but that, having recognized it, he is unable to admit to the lie and to move beyond it. Pierre Michel contends that "Quentin's tragedy is rooted not in the outside and immediate circumstances of Jefferson, the South and its past, but in his own mind" ("Quentin Compson" 202). By
denying his hatred, Quentin denies the need for the conversion that would free him from a role that binds him to a belief system he finds constrictive and destructive.

David Ragan, as do most critics, argues that Quentin associates himself with Henry, and his fascination with Henry "results from Henry's ability to act in a decisive manner, to sublimate his love both for his sister and for his friend to his abstract definition of honor" (345). Cleanth Brooks argues that "Quentin's suicide results from the fact that he can neither repudiate nor fulfill the claims of the code" (Yoknapatawpha Country 337). Brooks is referring to the Southern heroic code that requires Quentin to protect his sister's honor: a code exemplified by Henry Sutpen. According to Backman, though, Quentin's incestuous love of Caddy is prefigured by Charles Bon's relationship with Judith, and his suicide foreshadowed by Charles Bon's refusal to stop at the gate post (169-70). Whereas Henry, by shooting Charles Bon is attempting to defend and maintain the code of the South, Quentin, like Charles Bon, is struggling against it. And, the struggle of both is doomed to failure. Neither can escape the role he has been assigned, and the personal turmoil of each is subsumed by that role.
Kellner believes that a need for incestuous love is not the only trait Quentin shares with Charles. Both look to Thomas Sutpen as "the one man who can give [them] justification for living, who can resolve the individual-versus-society conflict that so plagues [them]" (42), and both men are disappointed. David Minter proposes that the stories of Quentin's childhood "are the only means he has of moving beyond both the dangerous desires and harsh judgements that memory and knowledge arouse within him" (86). Because the moral system Quentin has inherited, the moral system contained within the Sutpen myth, does not condemn the incestuous love that torments Quentin, it does not provide him with a useful model, at least one which he is able to recognize, that will enable him to make sense of his feelings for his sister. Sutpen's story does, as Minter suggests, enable him to explore the depths of his consciousness (86), but it does not enable Quentin to move beyond the "dangerous desires" that he fears; in other words, the story makes Quentin acutely aware of his own inner turmoil without supplying him with the means of fitting that turmoil into his life. Thomas Sutpen's cosmogenic acts do not provide Quentin with the model for ordering, and hence surviving, the chaos he encounters in his own world.
Quentin, at the end of Absalom, Absalom!, has resigned himself to the Southern belief system, without the ability to adapt the mythologies of that belief system to make sense of the world. He enters into the sacred of the Sutpen myth; he experiences the hierophanies by imitating the ritualistic storytellings of his youth to evoke the sacred. But, ultimately, he cannot find in the mythology the archetypal act that would order and make sense of his world. Ironically, Quentin tells the story to answer Shreve's question "Why do they live at all." According to John Hunt, "in some way, Sutpen's story holds for him the key to the whole southern experience" (106). The story is meant to explain how the Southerners are able to survive in the midst of the chaos of their defeat. Hunt contends that all of Absalom, Absalom! is Quentin's answer to Shreve's questions (134). Actually, Shreve only participates in the final reconstruction of the Sutpen story; only Quentin participates in all of the storytellings in the novel. The entire novel is Quentin's attempt to answer Shreve's questions for himself.

Quentin cannot use the story of Thomas Sutpen, and the redactions of that story, to make sense of his own personal chaos, his incestuous love. The myth does not provide him with the order he desperately seeks and, consequently, will
not prevent him from committing suicide. Quentin commits suicide not because he has adopted a belief system that he cannot reconcile himself to; Quentin kills himself because he is unable to interpret this belief system—a belief system he feels trapped by—in a way that would make sense of the chaos in which he finds himself, the chaos he struggles against.
Alexander Leupin characterizes Quentin as the protagonist of the novel (227). Michael Millgate states that "Absalom, Absalom! . . . is not so much about Thomas Sutpen as about what the narrators, and especially Quentin, make of the Sutpen legend--or even what the Sutpen legend makes of Quentin" (27). Pierre Michel characterizes the novel as one about fiction ("Quentin Compson" 194). O'Donnell believes that the novel "can be seen as a theatricalization of the body's alienation from voice" (29). Swartzlander describes the novel as "essentially a portrait of the artist as an unconventional historian" (112). Also see Oliver Billingslea's "The Monument and the Plain: The Art of Mythic Consciousness in William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!," Peter Brooks's "Incredible Narration: Absalom, Absalom!," Colleen Donnelly's "Compelled to Believe: Histiography and Truth in Absalom, Absalom!," Suzanne Jones's "Absalom, Absalom! and the Custom of Storytelling: A Reflection of Southern Social and Literary History," Paul Rosenzweig's "The Narrative Frames in Absalom, Absalom!: Faulkner's Involuted Commentary on Art," Carolyn Porter's "William
Much of the criticism concerning *Absalom, Absalom!* is a form of redaction criticism. According to Richard Soulen, redaction critics shifted the emphasis from viewing the synoptic authors as editors to theologians by analyzing the writers' "use, disuse, or alteration of the traditions known to him" (165). In a similar fashion, literary critics have analyzed the way in which the various narrators of *Absalom, Absalom!* manipulate the narrative traditions available to them to convey their point. Examples of these types of articles are James Snead's "Absalom, Absalom!" in *Figures of Division*, Pierre Michel's "Shreve McCannon: The Outside Voice in Absalom, Absalom!," Rosemary Coleman's "Family Ties: Generating Narratives in Absalom, Absalom!," and Bernhard Radloff's "Dialogue and Insight: The Priority of the Heritage in Absalom, Absalom!.")

In Quentin's mind, the smell of the wistaria plant seems related to the storytelling and his religious experiences. He identifies the plant with the events of the day he listened to Miss Coldfield's story and found Henry Sutpen in the upstairs room. As he sits listening to his father, he again notices the wistaria: "It was a summer of wistaria."
The twilight was full of it" (Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* 34). And later, the arrival of his father's letter, which evokes a series of hierophanies, brings the smell of wisteria and cigar smoke, "attenuated up from Mississippi" (217). Quentin associates the scent of wisteria with the evocation of hierophanies attending his transition from childhood to adulthood.

"Throughout the novel, a disembodied voice emerges to describe or explain aspects of the novel. The nature of this voice is a difficult problem. Although, as I stated earlier, John Irwin and Pierre Michel believe that the novel issues from Quentin's consciousness, certain critics argue that some passages in the novel point to some type of an omniscient narrator; others simply assume that it is the voice of an omniscient narrator. Lewis Simpson argues that Quentin Compson is "a central consciousness in the history of Yoknapatawpha" (261). Bernice Schrank, in "Patterns of Reversal in Absalom, Absalom!," sidesteps the issue of the exact nature of this narrator, referring to him as "a fifth narrator" (650). According to Schrank, this narrator is "more knowledgeable and detached," "whose mere presence reduces the reader's sense of dependence on the other narrators" (650). Colleen Donnelly characterizes this narrator as "potentially omniscient" "best perceived as a
historian, whom he [Faulkner] reveals as subject to biases and reliant on speculation like the rest of the narrators" (105). Richard Forrer, in his article "Absalom, Absalom!: Story-telling as a Mode of Transcendence," describes this narrative voice as that of a "diffused 'omniscient narrator'" (25). See also Susan Parr's "The Fourteenth Image of the Blackbird: Another Look at Truth in Absalom, Absalom!" and Arthur Scott's "The Myriad Perspectives of Absalom, Absalom!.

"Quentin is pictured as the seeker of truth, the sociologist and chronicler of history" (Kellner 40).

John Lamiman in "'Walking in Breath and Air': Orality and Presence of the Past in William Faulkner," has argued that the culture in which Faulkner was raised retained many of the characteristics of a residually oral culture:

he [Faulkner] grew up in what was largely an oral folk culture in which many people were illiterate and where the written word and print were, anthropologically speaking, a new or unknown experience to half the culture, the black half, one generation out of slavery. (107-8)

Like Quentin, Faulkner did not learn the history of the South from books; instead, it was passed from parents to children (108). Lamiman associates Sam Fathers with those
who gave Faulkner his oral mindset: "Faulkner not only creates a clear performance of a character experiencing time, as Faulkner has experienced it, but he gives us, in Sam Fathers, a model of his source for his temporal perception" (111). Although Lamiman goes on to discuss Fathers's influence on Quentin, he does not discuss Fathers's--or Dilsey's--influence on Quentin. In "On Absalom, Absalom!," Cleanth Brooks's explanation of the source of Faulkner's understanding of the South suggests the impact of the oral culture on Faulkner:

he had absorbed, from traditional sources, from what he saw in the world around about him, and from the conversations and stories told, all that he needed to know in order to arrive at a just conception of the "kind of world the slave-holders of the old South had made" and the relation of that world to those dominated by quite different values. (177)

Brooks uses "absorb" in the same sense--to describe the integration of Southern history--as Quentin uses it: "But you were not listening, because you knew it all already, had learned, absorbed it already without the medium of speech somehow from having been born and living beside it, with it, as children will and do" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 266).
Brooks's explanation of the various events that constituted this absorption might be applied to Quentin, even though he believes that he had absorbed it without the medium of speech. In both instances, their information and insights are the product of oral, rather than literate, sources. A productive study might focus on a more detailed and exhaustive comparison of Faulkner's and Quentin's residual orality.

James Matlack sees *Absalom, Absalom!* as a novel "devoted to the analysis of oral narration" (343). Several critics have seen similarities between Faulkner and Quentin, which may in turn suggest that Quentin like Faulkner was influenced by a residually oral community. For articles dealing with orality in Faulkner's works, see Helen McDuffe's "The Oral tradition in Yoknapatawpha County," Joycelyn Donlon's "Orality and the South: The Personal Narrative in Black and White Literature," James Justus's "The Epic Design of Absalom, Absalom!," and Helen Swink's "William Faulkner: The Novelist as an Oral Narrator."

Jackson Benson in "Quentin Compson: Self-Portrait of a Young Artist's Emotions" develops a detailed comparison of Faulkner and Quentin.

The issue of the hierophant's character was addressed early in Christian history during fourth and fifth centuries in
response to the Donatist heresy (Faul 1001). Donatists held that a sacrament is not valid if the minister is in a state of mortal sin, an apostate, or a heretic (McBrien 2:611 and Martos 57). In *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, Augustine argued that "it was not the minister but the rite that conferred the seal" (Martos 57). Regardless of the moral or religious standing of the minister, the sacrament is valid (Hannon). Once again, the believer's relationship with the rite determines whether or not the sacrament will evoke the sacred.

See Philip Castille's "Dilsey's Easter Conversion in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*" and Thomas Dukes's "Christianity and Curse in The Sound and the Fury."

8 Mr. Compson's use of the Choctaw language as an example of the unintelligibility of the stories is ironic because the myths of the Choctaws have supplanted, or are in the process of supplanting, the myths of the South for Quentin; the Choctaw stories found Quentin's world, giving it meaning.

9 Swartzlander says that Mr. Compson's biases "impede the artistic approach" (116), and Jones states that Compson uses the story to support a world view that "allows him to be passive and live with his own powerlessness" (94). Other articles referring to and detailing Mr. Compson's attitude toward the past include Stephen Ross's "The Loud World of
Jason Compson", David Ragan's "'That Tragedy is Second-Hand: Quentin, Henry, and the Ending of Absalom, Absalom!,'
Lynn Levins, however, sees Jason Compson's dispassionate narrative voice as a means of avoiding "that degree of distortion which results when the narrator is hopelessly involved with the figure he is trying to create" (16). As a result, Compson is able to humanize Sutpen (16).

According to Stephen Ross,

  Faulkner modulates Quentin's talking to reflect the boy's erratic emotional meanderings through time and event. He signals variations in Quentin's voice with changes in form—in style, punctuation, paragraphing, printed type, etc. Though Faulkner is deliberately inconsistent in using such variations, he is consistent in varying the degree of control Quentin has over any given statement or description. (248)

Although Ross is here describing The Sound and the Fury, Faulkner uses the same technique in Absalom, Absalom!.

Because Faulkner employs the same variation to convey different events, the context must be taken into consideration for determining the significance of a
particular dash or use of italics. James Matlack explains the shift in italics in Absalom, Absalom! reflects "a shift from indirect to direct quotation, or from external to internal narration, or both shifts occurring simultaneously" (339). For an examination of Faulkner's use of parentheses see Fred Randel's "Parenthesis in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!.

11Cleanth Brooks believes that Quentin's visit to the gravesite with his father could not have taken place after the encounter with Henry. "For if Quentin and his father had known a flesh-and-blood ghost was inside, it is unthinkable that they would have teased Luster about the house's being haunted" ("Narrative Structure of Absalom, Absalom!" 369).

12In "Dialogue and Insight: The Priority of the Heritage in Absalom, Absalom!," Bernhard Radloff examines the social boundaries that determine Shreve's and Quentin's storytelling. According to Radloff, "the narrators' speculations are grounded in and circumscribed by the rhetoric of tradition, and for this reason are neither arbitrary proposals nor the simple manifestations of Quentin's psyche" (261). Quentin must move within the boundaries of his heritage (268), but Shreve does not. The fact that Shreve is able to create a narrative that
functions within these boundaries reflects Quentin's skill—the basis of Shreve's narration—as a storyteller.

13 Theology is something of a misnomer in that it implies the study of a divinity or divinities. For lack of better word, I use it here to refer to a conscious awareness of the various characteristics of a belief system.

14 Quentin's telling of the Sutpen legend is, in Irwin's view, indicative of Quentin's struggle to overcome his father:

For Quentin, the act of narrating Sutpen's story, of bringing that story under authorial control becomes a struggle in which he tries to best his father, a struggle to seize 'authority' by achieving temporal priority to his father in the narrative act. (114)

Arnold Goldman, in "Faulkner's Images of the Past: from Sartoris to The Unvanquished," also holds that "Quentin's near-catatonic exhaustion and repetitive-compulsive vehemence is his recoil from the unacknowledged struggle with his father and his disobeying of unstated parental injunctions not to inquire further" (120).

15 Allan Chavkin, in "The Imagination as the Alternative to Sutpen's Design," contends that Quentin repudiates neither the South nor his life at the end of the novel: "the end of
the novel is affirmative, for in an irrational world of seemingly inexplicable evil and suffering, Quentin has gained much understanding" (125). And in "Shreve McCannon and the Confessions of Absalom, Absalom!," Terrence Doody argues that Quentin cannot "hate the South" because of the community he has shared with Shreve, providing Quentin with an identity his community did not offer him (467).
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: THE COMMUNITY AND ITS SACRAMENTS

Cleanth Brooks contends in his article "The Sense of Community in Yoknapatawpha Fiction" that understanding Yoknapatawpha as community is an essential element in understanding Faulkner's work. Brooks differentiates "community" from groups, crowds, and societies: a community is "a group of people united by common likes and dislikes, aversions and enthusiasms, tastes, lifestyle, and moral beliefs. The agreement, naturally, is never absolute, but when it is substantial, we have true community" (4). The sacraments I have discussed thus far are all based on a character's relationship with Yoknapatawpha. They are, for the most part, manifestations of the sacred that serves to help unite these characters into a community. Although Shreve McCannon physically is not a member of this community, he is able to participate in the communal experience because of his recognition of the authority of one of the community's shamen, Quentin Compson. Even though Bayard experiences a hierophany alone in an attic, his sacrament is associated with a myth that is a part of the collective unconscious of Yoknapatawpha. The sacraments
experienced by Quentin in "A Justice" and Ike in Go Down, Moses culminate in an alienation from their community, but the myths they eventually adopt are, as I argued earlier, a part of another, older community.

I. Gail Hightower the Outsider

Gail Hightower, in Light in August, provides a concrete example of the degree to which hierophanies and communities are inextricably bound. Throughout the novel, Hightower returns to his grandfather's raid on Jefferson during the Civil War. For Hightower, this anecdote defines him and shapes his destiny. But when he attempts to share this experience with others, he fails. Although Hightower returns to the time of his grandfather's harry, the event itself is robbed of its paradigmatic value and the hierophany is reduced to mere escapism by the community's refusal to sacralize the story and accept Hightower as a shaman of the civil religion.

Hightower experiences what appears to be a hierophany near the end of the novel as he sits in his office looking out the window: "Already he can feel the two instants about to touch: the one which is the sum of his life, which renews itself between each dark and dusk, and the suspended instant out of which the soon will presently begin" (Faulkner, Light
in August 536). Hightower's awareness of the distinction between the two moments identifies the past of his grandfather's raid as sacred; the raid encompasses his life. The convergence of the two moments, the sacred past and the profane present, is the hierophanic moment:

It is as though they had merely waited until he could find something to pant with, to be reaffirmed in triumph and desire with, with this last left of honor and pride and life. He hears above his heart the thunder increase, myriad and drumming. Like a long sighing of wind in trees it begins, then they sweep into sight, borne now upon a cloud of phantom dust. (543-4)

In this passage, Hightower is able to see and hear a cavalry raid that took place before he was born. He has returned to what he perceives as a sacred time. The raid, the instant that is renewed between dark and dusk, is a cosmogenic act. His grandfather's escapade created his world: "And I know that for fifty years I have not even been clay: I have been a single instant of darkness in which a horse galloped and a gun crashed" (542). But the crux of his failure as a minister and as a believer is that he alone perceives his grandfather's raid as a cosmogenic act. Although it is a part of the larger mythic time of the Civil War, his
grandfather's harry has not been mythologized by the community--perhaps in part because it was an attack on that community--and although Hightower is a Christian minister, he is not accepted, by the community, as a shaman of the civil religion they associate with the events of the Civil War. Even though this is the same community that I am arguing created the myths of Thomas Sutpen and John Sartoris, it has not mythologized Gail Hightower's raid.

Throughout the novel, a clear distinction between Hightower and the community is developed and maintained with such phrases as "the town believed" and "the town knew." The Reverend Hightower is an outsider, who, as a Presbyterian minister, has been accepted into the community to fulfill a specific function. Almost immediately, the elders of the church recognize that the role they have assigned to Hightower and the role he intends to assume are somehow at odds: "they listened to him with something cold and astonished and dubious, since he sounded like it was the town he desired to live in and not the church and the people who composed the church, that he wanted to serve" (65). Even though Jenny's story is told and responded to as a myth during Christmas time (Flags 15), her myth is not mixed or confused with the mythologies of Christianity. The stories of the Sartorises and Sutpen are not told during the sacred
times or in the sacred places associated with Christianity by Christian shamen; they are not told during church services by ministers. For the members of Yoknapatawpha, there are two separate belief systems: Christianity and the mythology of the South.

The degree to which the two are differentiated in the minds of the community is evinced by the town's response to Hightower. In preaching the myth of his grandfather from the pulpit, Hightower is recalling a myth that in many ways echoes Aunt Jenny's myth of Carolina Bayard. Both men are riding behind lines in raids of dubious merit, and both are shot by less than honorable adversaries. Hightower's descriptions of his grandfather's raid are even reminiscent of the descriptions of Carolina Bayard: "A handful of men . . . performing with the grim levity of schoolboys a prank so foolhardy that the troops who had opposed them for four years did not believe that even they would have attempted it" (*Light in August* 532-33); and later, "here is that fine shape of eternal youth and virginal desire which makes heroes" (533). But, whereas Jenny's story is sacralized by the hierophany that attends it--and continues to attend it even as old Bayard remembers the first time he heard the story--Hightower's story is perceived as sacrilegious: "it was natural that the old men and women
should believe that what he preached in God's own house on God's own day verged on the actual sacrilege" (67). They are offended that he preaches the myth of his grandfather associated with the Christian belief system, not the Southern.

The fact that the old men and women, presumably the people of Aunt Jenny and old Bayard's generation, people who still participate in the myths of the Sartorises, Compsons, and Sutpen, find Hightower's stories sacrilegious further emphasizes his alienation from the community; those who recognize the sacrality of stories associated with the Civil War fail to respond to Hightower's stories as myth. In Hightower's own mind, he sees himself reflected in their eyes as "a charlatan preaching worse than heresy, in utter disregard of that whose very stage he preempted, offering instead of the crucified shape of pity and love, a swaggering and unchastened bravo" (539).

The congregation's response to Hightower's story is just one indication of his inability to communicate his experience of the sacred because he cannot find or recognize an audience for his myths. When he first enters the seminary he thinks about going to the elders and explaining why he must be sent to Jefferson and the significance of his grandfather's story (527), but he never does. His fiancee
warns him not to (530), and he later thinks to himself that "he had at least one thing to not repent: that he had not made the mistake of telling the elders what he had planned to say" (528). On the train to Jefferson as he retells the story to his wife, he has to tell her that she can see and hear the events he is narrating: "You can see it, hear it; the shouts, the shots, the shouting of triumph and terror" (534). She does not see or hear, because she has not returned to the sacred time he associates with his tale, nor does she seem interested. Instead, she tries to quiet him, warning him that people are looking at them (535). Unlike Hightower's cynical wife, Byron Bunch appears to be a person in search of a mythology. He rides his mule thirty miles into the country every Saturday to lead a country church choir (52), and he attaches himself to the mythic figure of Lena Grove. ¹ Byron seeks out Hightower, visiting him in the office where Hightower experiences his nightly hierophanies. Perhaps, he has recognized in Hightower a purveyor of myths. Although Byron spends time with Hightower listening to his stories and ideas, there is no indication in the novel that he ever experiences a hierophany as a result of Hightower's narratives. Hightower seems to lack not only the communal recognition necessary to function as a shaman, he appears to
lack also the ability to tell the stories in such a way that they evoke the sacred.

Hightower himself does not participate in a hierophany during his storytellings. He associates the experience of the sacred less with the storytelling than with the place the narratives have sacralized: "I know the very street that they rode into town upon and then out again. I have never seen it, but I know exactly how it will look" (533). Eliade contends that sacred space is "detached" from its surroundings because of the irruption of the sacred. As a result of this detachment, sacred space is "qualitatively different" (Sacred and Profane 26). The riders galloping past Hightower's office window would seem to be such an irruption, and this irruption of the sacred has, for Hightower, sacralized Jefferson, especially this particular street and house. But, Hightower is unable to communicate this experience of the sacred to those around him. His sermons and stories are a confused jumble of the Presbyterian dogma he is expected to preach and his own sacralization of his grandfather's ride: "It was as if he couldn't get religion and that galloping cavalry and his dead grandfather shot from the galloping horse untangled from each other, even in the pulpit" (Faulkner, Light in August 66).
Although myths regenerate the world for homo religiosus (Eliade, *Myth and Reality* 35), Hightower's myths have no such effect on him: he believes that the world is "peopled principally by the dead" (Faulkner, *Light in August* 535). Hightower is associated and even associates himself with the dead. He thinks "I am not in life anymore" (330). Unlike old man Falls and Bayard Sartoris, who by returning to the past reclaim the present, Hightower simply returns to the past to escape what has become a dead present.

The present is dead for Hightower because he is unable to participate in the cosmogenic act of his grandfather. Once Hightower loses his congregation and, perhaps more importantly, his pulpit, he loses his ability to imitate his grandfather's act. He simply sits and waits for dusk and the hierophany to arrive. Unlike Falls and Quentin, who evoke the sacred through their storytellings, or Ike, who participates in it during the hunt, Hightower is passive; he is merely a spectator. Eliade states that

modern man's 'private mythologies'--his dreams, reveries, fantasies, and so on--never rise to the ontological status of myths, precisely because they are not experienced by the whole man and therefore do not transform a particular situation
into a paradigmatic gesture. (Sacred and Profane 211)

The part of Hightower that his apparent hierophany does not engage is his relationship to those around him. His hierophany is isolated and isolating; it insulates him from the rest of the world: "He sees himself a shadowy figure among shadows" (Faulkner, Light in August 537).

Labelling Hightower's experience a "hierophany" may, for this reason, be inaccurate. Hightower does not perform a cosmogenic act, a sacrament, to enter into the sacred time. He witnesses a reenactment of his grandfather's raid at dusk, but because he can do no more than participate in its evocation, it does not provide him with the means of infusing his life with meaning. Without an audience, Hightower does not have the opportunity to repeat the archetype established by his grandfather; he cannot use the events of the raid to make sense of the chaos that surrounds him. Because he cannot adapt the cosmogenic act of grandfather to infuse the world outside of his office with meaning, he is unable to interact with that world. Without a community, Hightower is bereft of his ability to act creatively and transform profane time into sacred time.

II. The Community, Sacred History, and Profane History
Sacraments, ultimately, are communal, not individual affairs. The repetition of the archetype does enable the individual to participate in the sacred, but the spirituality is not the individual's alone. It is the community's collectively. Avery Dulles has defined myth as "any symbolic story that underlies and shapes the collective life of a group" (137). The archetype has been, for lack of a better word, "canonized" by the community, not the individual. And, the myths that contain these archetypal acts are retained and passed on by the community through individuals who have been identified as capable of doing so. Although the individual's spirituality is shaped and defined by the community of believers, it also reflects the individual's interaction with the sacred.

Hightower's myth fails, in no small part, because his community does not accept him as a shaman and perceives his narrative as sacrilegious. Unlike Hightower, Falls, Quentin, and even Fathers are recognized as shamens; indeed, they themselves represent a cross section of the community, spanning generations and social classes. Also, unlike Hightower, the sacraments these characters experience are shared with other believers or potential believers; the hierophanies are not experienced in isolation. But whereas the community's perception of Hightower and his religious
experience is available, shedding light on the significance of his religious experience for the rest of the community, no indication is given of the community's perception of the myths and sacraments of Falls, Bayard, Fathers, and Quentin. However, just as Mircea Eliade approaches his analysis of the sacred by studying the dialectic of the sacred and the profane, it is also possible to understand the community's spirituality by looking at the dialectic of the sacrament and the profane history. The relationship between the profane history, from which the myth originated, and the myth suggests the character of the community's spirituality that sacralized a particular historical anecdote.

The narratives of Falls, Fathers, and Quentin are a part of Yoknapatawpha's history. All of the ancestral heroes associated with the myths are contained in the history of the conception of Jefferson that Faulkner scatters throughout Requiem for a Nun; they are all integral parts in the formation of Jefferson's identity, whereas Gail Hightower's part in a foolish sortie is, at best, an insignificant anecdote that plays no part in the creation of Jefferson. The first Jason Compson, who is "the gnat, the thorn, the catalyst" of the city's inception (Faulkner, Requiem 29), swapped Ikkemotubbe, who is also known as Doom, a race-horse for "a square mile of what was to be the most
valuable land in the future town of Jefferson" (12). The courthouse, the culmination and embodiment of the city's inception, is designed by Sutpen's French architect (35). And, John Sartoris appears in the first Confederate uniform the town would see (38).

Because sacraments by their very nature are communal, the two people when participating in the sacrament reflect the entire community's perception of an ancestral hero's archetypal act; their sacralization of profane history is an expression of the community's spirituality.

Each of the mythic characters is bound to the county's formation, reflecting some portion of that formation. In the mythology of the whites, not necessarily the mythology Quentin is drawn to, Doom, despite his cunning and ingenuity, personifies the deception the whites are able to perpetuate on the Indians in order to rob them of their land and the ultimate corruption of the Indians by the whites.² Sutpen, who is neither the first nor the largest of planters, represents the subjugation and ordering of the wilderness to establish a dominion. And, John Sartoris embodies the chivalric, but doomed, struggle of the South to retain its way of life. These are stories that shape and form the collective spirituality of Yoknapatawpha. The citizens of Yoknapatawpha recognize and accept these figures
as founders, even if they do not accept their roles as kratophanies.

III. The Sacraments and Existential Crises

Each of the sacraments marks a specific type of essential time in the lives of the characters. And, the essential time the characters associate with a particular myth and hierophany is indicative of the community's perception of both the nature of that particular archetypal act and the believer's place in the community. The sacraments old man Falls and Bayard Sartoris experience in *Flags in the Dust* are coupled with the recognition of their own frailty and mortality. The hierophany Quentin looks back to and reexperiences in "A Justice" marks a conversion experience in which he is initiated into a new belief system. And finally, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the multiple hierophanies Quentin undergoes throughout the novel form a single, continuous sacrament that signifies his reluctant reaffirmation of a belief system.

In each instance the sacraments are roughly comparable to the codified sacraments in the Roman Catholic tradition. The ritual shared by old man Falls and Bayard echoes the anointing of the sick; Sam Fathers's story is Quentin's baptism into a new religious community; and Quentin's
telling of the Sutpen legend functions as a confirmation, albeit a reluctant one.

Surprisingly, the most hopeful of the Yoknapatawpha sacraments is that shared by Bayard and Falls. In the Roman tradition, the sacrament of extreme unction came to be dreaded and feared, because of its association with death and illness. Actually, though, the sacrament itself is meant to be an embodiment of hope and promise. Carlos Martos explains that the anointing of the sick is intended to mark the transition from one life to another with hope (389); "it is a sacrament that calls for faith, which can find meaning and hope even in death" (393). Martos's wording here is important; death is only an extreme example. The sacrament is a reminder in a time of crisis, a serious, although not necessarily life threatening, illness, that the world is still founded by the meaning the Christian has accepted (McBrien 2:787). In much the same way, Bayard and Falls's sacrament functions as such a reminder of the belief system that has provided meaning and purpose through turmoil and chaos. For the community, Sartoris's death marks the end of an era. He was the first person any of them ever saw in a Confederate uniform, and his death marks the passing of the old frontier code as well as the antebellum South. His death becomes an archetypal act that provides a transition
for the community into the new era: tired of killing, he faces Redlaw unarmed. Although he is killed, his son is able to repeat the archetypal act: he faces Redlaw unarmed and cows him.

Baptism is the event whereby a person is accepted into a new community of believers. According to Hans Küng, baptism is not an individual decision:

entry into the community is not like joining a club, something a man can do on his own decision, on the basis of his own faith as it were. No one is born into the community... The believer does not make himself a member of the community, but he is made a member. (274)

Although Küng is discussing baptism in the Roman Church, the point adds an important insight into Quentin's relationship with Sam Fathers. By telling Quentin the story, Fathers is inviting him to enter into a community of believers. In proffering this opportunity, Fathers acts as a representative of his people: "A man does not baptize himself, he is baptized in the presence of the community and for the community" (273). It is a community that has been displaced by Quentin's own; indeed, Quentin's own ancestor, in the collective conscious of Jefferson, initiated the deceits upon the Indians in Yoknapatawpha county, and Doom
was first victimized and corrupted by the rapacity of the whites. The salvation this baptism offers Quentin is the escape from the destructive belief system he has inherited from his forefathers and the opportunity to begin rebuilding, recreating, the community his forefathers destroyed.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, confirmation is a troublesome sacrament. Theologically, it is difficult to distinguish from baptism. But, in the scramble to arrive at a distinctive purpose or effect, theologians have come to the consensus that it is a sign of the missionary role of the believer: "Confirmation makes explicit the fact that each of us is co-responsible for our neighbor, even our furtherest neighbor" by bearing witness to the faith (Rahner 52). In telling Shreve the story of Thomas Sutpen, Quentin is acquiescing to the role that has been assigned to him by his community. More importantly, he is fulfilling his obligation to his community to bear witness to the belief system that he has inherited and been indoctrinated into. The story of Sutpen is an appropriate confirmation narrative. Thomas Sutpen, though his dream failed and his plantation lies in ruins on the outskirts of town, shaped Jefferson. Just as the courthouse, which is Sutpen's architectural legacy to the town, is the product and symbol
of the town's inception, Sutpen's life is the embodiment of the failed design of the South: "the tragedy of Sutpen is the tragedy of the South" (Cleopatra 89).

The essential times marked by these rituals—initiation, affirmation, and transition—are each sacralized by the community that provides the mythologies which evoke the hierophanies. Because the sacraments are a reflection of the spiritual life of Yoknapatwpha, they are the expression of the people's spiritual needs as a community. The essential times are not individual crises. They are the crises faced by the community as a whole, and the rituals the community adopts to manage these crises are based in the recollection of and participation in ancestral myths:

For the Southern idea of itself is—or at least was yesterday—firmly anchored in history. It had grown out of experience endured by the region as a whole, and it reflects memories of guilt, loss, and defeat, and not merely bright promises for the future. (Brooks, "Faulkner's Criticism" 306)

They have mythologized their history in order to understand and survive with their sense of loss. The defeat, Reconstruction, and the disillusionment, although no more dangerous or chaotic than the frontier their ancestors faced, threaten to rob their world of the meaning it once
had. As effective as the myths have been for such figures as Aunt Jenny, old man Falls, old Bayard, and Rosa Coldfield—the generation Brooks labels "the older régime" (296)—in dealing with the upheaval of their lives, the sacraments associated with these myths of the Southern whites are in the process of being discarded by the younger generation; the stories are retained, but without the religious element.

Only Sam Fathers's myth serves as an initiation of a new member into a belief system, but the belief system Quentin is initiated into is not the dominant belief system of the South. Shreve participates in Quentin's narrative, and it is possible that he even experiences a hierophany during the course of the narrative, but he is not initiated into the Southern belief system. He does not adopt the paradigmatic function of Quentin's narrative and explicitly places himself outside the belief system that looks to Thomas Sutpen as a kratophany: "The South. Jesus. No wonder you folks all outlive yourselves by years and years and years" (Absalom, Absalom! 469). Quentin has been initiated into the belief system of the South long before he visits Miss Rosa and listens to her story. He has already absorbed the stories and, in the process, become a cultural repository. Because he has absorbed a mythology that is
unable to sustain him, Quentin will not outlive himself "by years and years": he will kill himself.

IV. Imitating the Past

Quentin is an anomaly. None of his contemporaries, Jason Compson, Caddy Compson, Bayard Sartoris, nor even the meticulous chronicler of the encroachment of the Snopeses, Gavin Stevens, enter into the religious dimension of the narratives. In some instances they imitate, consciously or unconsciously, their ancestors who have been mythologized, but their exploits lack the intentionality of Falls's or Bayard's rituals. They are not repeating the acts of their ancestors to order their world; they are simply mimicking what has gone before. Bayard and Johnny Sartoris appear to model their self-destructive recklessness on the patterns of their great-grandfather and uncle. And, Jason IV, who "competed and held his own with the Snopeses" (Faulkner, Faulkner Portable 750), appears to have inherited the cunning and shrewdness of the original Jason Compson.

They are able to imitate the actions of their ancestors, but they are unable or, in the case of Jason IV, unwilling, to imbue their acts with the same creative force or meaning of their ancestors. Johnny's dogfight resembles the time his great-grandfather John Sartoris stumbled into a
Union camp during a horse race. Bayard's reckless drives through the woods in his roadster parallel his great-uncle Carolina Bayard's fox hunts and raids with General Jeb Stuart. Jason IV's land barter with Flem Snopes, although not entirely successful, and his appropriation of McCaslin Hardware are analogous to Jason I's trade with Doom for the Compson Domain and his appropriation of Ratliff's store (Mansion 323 and Requiem 12 and 188). Although it inherits the names and personalities of its ancestors, Quentin's generation lacks the ability to deal meaningfully with the world. Even Quentin, who has not only inherited the myths of his peers but has internalized them, lacks the ability to survive within the world in which he finds himself, so he eventually commits suicide. Their actions are ultimately destructive and meaningless. Although they know the stories of their ancestors, they cannot seem to apply the myths of the older régime to make sense of their crises.

Lena Grove provides an interesting contrast to the members of Quentin's generation. According to J. F. Kobler in "Lena Grove: Faulkner's 'Still Unravish'd Bride of Quietness,'" "Lena Grove stands as [Faulkner's] classic example of the endurance of the human race" (339). She does not only endure the turmoil and meaningless of the modern
world that destroys the aristocrats; she is able to infuse her life and the lives of others with meaning.

Like Doom and Colonel Sartoris, Lena is not bound by the restrictions of social conventions. When she discovers that she is pregnant, she climbs out her window and sets out on foot to find her child's father. She does not attempt to hide or deny her condition; instead, at the slightest provocation, she begins telling her story. Once she has left the relative safety of her brother's home, Lena has entered into the chaos of the outside world, but she is not seeking to overcome the chaos or order it. Lena sets out down the road because she believes that she must. The intention of her act infuses the chaos of the road with meaning and order.

People are compelled to come to her aid in spite of how they might feel about her. Just as Colonel Sartoris is able to use his weakness to overcome the Yankee patrol, Lena's frailty enables her to survive the hardships of her journey. Lena's ignorance of the effect of her condition on those she meets--she simply notes that "folks was right kind" (Light in August 22)--illustrates that she is not filling a role or attempting to imitate the actions of someone else; she is simply doing what she believes is necessary. She is not bound to a particular past, like Quentin, young Bayard, and
Gavin; instead, she is flexible and responsive to a world that is hostile and threatening. Nevertheless, her response to the chaos around her is a repetition, whether intentional or not, of the cosmogenic acts of the mythic heroes of Yoknapatawpha County, and Classical Greece. She is bound to the eternal human past.

Because of her flexibility, her ability to adapt to and thrive within chaos, her passing alters the world. Despite her disapproval, Mrs. Armstid gives Lena her egg money. When Hightower encounters her, he is rejuvenated. Byron follows her, renouncing his old life. Burch flees her, forfeiting the reward he risked his freedom for. The effect Lena has on those around her constitutes her cosmogenic act; the archetypal act of creation that ultimately eludes Quentin and Bayard III. Lena Grove becomes a kratophany, an embodiment of the power of the sacred. Her divinization is not simply the result of her pregnancy; instead, it is the product of her complete immersion in that which the inhabitants of Yoknapatawpha County perceive as the sacred.

V. Conclusion

Profane stories, the history of the South, are not sufficient. The characters need something more. Without the myths that order their world, the inhabitants of
Yoknapatawpha are unable to adapt to and survive within the chaos that surrounds them. Unlike Granny Millard who can manipulate and second guess Ab Snopes, the youngest generation of aristocrats can only watch helplessly as the Snopeses overrun the town. The myths that contained and conveyed the shared vision, dream, that bound the community together are no longer effective; or more accurately, they no longer evoke the hierophanies that once characterized them as myths: "Where there is a loss of shared values, communities may break down into mere societies or even be reduced to mobs. The loss is ominous, for when men cease to love the same things, the culture itself is disintegrating" (Brooks, "Faulkner's Criticism" 299).

The myths evoke the cosmogenic acts that helped shape the wilderness and enabled the South to survive the upheaval caused by its defeat, but the community has lost the ability to adapt those acts to fit the existential crises they presently face. In turn, the stories lose their potency and are retained only as a profane record of the past. Once the community stops associating the myths with hierophanies, the sacred stories degenerate into profane stories, history. For this reason, there are no baptisms, only confirmations and 'last rites.' No new members are entering into the community of the belief system.
The air of defeat and bitterness that Shreve attributes to the Southern condition—"What is it? something you live and breath in like air?" (Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! 450)—is dissipating. No longer do the defeat of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, defeated grandfathers, or the bullets in the tables provide the Southerners with the archetypal acts necessary to regenerate their world (450-51). The stories have become chains binding the South to a dead and destructive past that no one can escape, rather than to an evocation of a fertile and creative time of origins that provides them with the ability and the incentive to shape the chaos that surrounds them. The past and present are as dead for Bayard, Johnny, Jason, and their contemporaries as they are for Hightower. Without the ability to evoke the hierophanies and infuse the present with the sacred, without the ability to participate in the chaos of the world around them, these inhabitants of Yoknapatawpha are left in the meaningless world of poverty, defeat, and humiliation. Like Quentin, they must attempt to escape from this mythology, even if their struggle, like Quentin's, is ultimately a vain one.
Byron's pursuit of Lena reflects his desire to integrate a myth into his life. His detached, almost mechanical, performance of his job is suggestive of the inconsequence he attaches to his life. The conversations with Hightower and weekly journeys to the country church, however, indicate his attempt to infuse his life with something more than the daily routine of his job at the mill. When Byron meets Lena, he apparently recognizes something that would provide his life with a purpose. In the novel, Lena embodies a multitude of mythic, religious, figures: the Earth Goddess, Helen, Diana, the Virgin Mary, and Keats's urn. Although Judith Wittenberg warns against reading Lena as "some sort of mythic figure" ("The Women of Light in August" 115), she concedes that the narrator and characters struggle "between an effort to 'read' Lena in realistic terms and a wish to regard her as an almost abstract force" (116). The degree to which Bunch is moved by Lena's arrival at the mill underscores his desire, his need, to acquire a mythology. For mythic elements in Lena's characterization see André Bleikasten's "In Praise of Helen," François Pitavy's Faulkner's Light in August, Deborah Clarke's "Gender, Race,

I will discuss Lena's mythic character at length later in this chapter.

Some critics have argued that the white influence on the Indians has corrupted them, as evinced by their possession of slaves. See Jack Cooley's "Sam Fathers and Doom" and Gilbert Muller's "The Descent of the Gods: Faulkner's 'Red Leaves' and the Garden of the South." Daniel Hoffman, in "The Last of the Chicksaws," argues that the "we should not assume that Ikkemotubbe adopted slavery from the whites" (53).

I began this study by explaining that I was adopting Eliade's model in order to avoid imposing a theology or belief system on the characters. A comparison of the experiences of Faulkner's characters with the sacramental theologies of the Roman Church does not constitute such an
imposition because I have already established the character of the Yoknapatwpha sacraments before comparing them with those of another theological system.

Because the Roman Church has placed such an emphasis on the definition and explanation of specific rituals as an integral part in the spiritual life of its community, its sacramental theologies provide a useful basis of comparison; they represent a self-conscious attempt by a community of believers to codify and document the interaction of the sacred and the profane on both the communal and individual level. The rituals Faulkner depicts in his fiction work in the same way as those recognized and authorized by the Roman Church.


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