THE ELUSIVE MOTHER IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S
MAJOR YOKNAPATAWPHA FAMILIES

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

Phyllis Ann Bunnell, B.S., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1995
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Families in much of William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction are built upon traditional patriarchal structure with the father as head and provider and the mother or mother figure in charge of keeping the home and raising the children. Even though the roles appear to be clearly defined and observed, the families decline and disintegrate.

Five families illustrate the problem of family disintegration. Older and more firmly established families, the Sartorises and the Compsons, decline and practically die out. In contrast, the Sutpens and the Snopeses rise quickly to wealth and prominence in the novels, but then decline and disintegrate. Even those families who simply subsist, such as the Bundrens, begin to decline. In most cases, the families' disintegration stems more from internal causes than from external pressures. These causes are illuminated by seeing the mothers in the light of Virginia Satir's family sculpting models.

According to both traditional patriarchal family roles and Satir's model, the mother of the family or a mother substitute would take charge of family communication and
lead members—not only spouses, but most especially the children—to healthful self-images, workable internal relationships, and solid relationships with the outside community. In Faulkner’s fictional families, the mothers or mother figures are unable to communicate functionally themselves, or they resort to dysfunctional communication to achieve their own personal goals.

Failure to achieve functional family communication was a personal problem for Faulkner who found himself unable to meet the differing expectations his parents had for him. His feelings of neglect and of being unloved caused him to create mother characters who represent his grandmother, aunt, or cousins, but not one who can directly compare to his mother. Even though he remained a faithful and dutiful son as long as his mother lived, he never portrayed her as accurately in his fiction as he did his male ancestors.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In undertaking a study of William Faulkner's characters, the student's first tendency usually is to examine the males. Because of their dominance in the literature, Faulkner's men often seem physically large, even larger than life, at times given to violence, nearly always driven to action by their ambitions. They are the heads of households, the fathers of families, and, in their own estimation, the pillars of the community. These men establish plantations, build and run railroads, become bank presidents, have law practices; they give orders, are pretty much free, and are at times abusive to their underlings, or sometimes they simply sit and control others through their very inactivity. Sexual prowess and the desire for a male heir often occupy a great deal of their psychic and physical energy. In the pre-Civil War South, the men also had control over the female slaves and took advantage of the situation, and they sometimes satisfied their sexual desires with slaves. In the post-war South, dealing with sexual desires sometimes showed up in trips to brothels, in incestuous relations with females in the family, or in miscegenetic relationships with the black servants who remained with the families after the war. In short, the men
dominate the stories or novels in nearly every area of daily life, and their very dominance can cause the women and children to get lost in literary analysis. This study of the women in the major Yoknapatawpha families who function in some capacity as mothers is intended to show that dysfunction occurs because these women do not have the skills to be functional themselves; indeed, they often resort to dysfunctional behavior in order to deal with the men and to survive in a relationship in which they lack the communication skills to respond from a functional stance. As a consequence, they fail to develop these skills themselves and to call them forth in other family members—both spouses and children.

Of course, the novels and short stories are not so one-sided that characters other than white males simply do not exist. Women, children, and blacks abound because they play complementary parts in the history of Faulkner's mythic county, but too often they seem simply to serve as supporting cast to the men, who get analyzed repeatedly. Even at the 1985 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference at which the topic was "Faulkner and Women," many of the speakers discussed the women more as reflected in the men than as separate entities standing on their own in important roles in the writings.

There are few studies of Faulkner's women other than as earth mothers or mythic figures, or as women in the
Scriptural sense of the "two Eves": the first, the "temptress, sinner, and mother of men"; the second, "Virgin, sinless, and mother of the Redeemer of men" (Milliner 268). The failure of critics to give serious study to Faulkner's women may simply be the result of the traditional southern societal structure into which Faulkner was born and about which he wrote. First of all, the southern family was truly patriarchal: the oldest male in the family was considered the head of the clan. He was responsible for all family members, particularly women and children and slaves, who were without the direct protection of another man. William Faulkner was a product of that society and found himself in a situation at least analogous to this traditional structure. At his father's death in 1932, he became the head of the clan, which meant, for example, that he immediately became responsible for his mother and Caroline Barr, or Mammy Callie as she was more familiarly known. When his brother Dean died in a plane crash in 1935, Faulkner, as he was expected to do, added Dean's widow and soon-to-be-born daughter to his care. Both Joseph Blotner and David Minter make a point of Faulkner's being regularly responsible for varying numbers of people, depending on the circumstances within the family at the time (Blotner 783, 828, 916; Minter 141, 152).

A second reason why female characters do not function dynamically in Faulkner's works rests on the traditional
southern view of family. In the South, the family was a
priority: the unit of stability and the means for
maintaining the blood lines, securing the inheritance of
property, and handing on the tradition. Consequently, in
Faulkner's portrayal of families in Yoknapatawpha County,
the older and more entrenched generations protect and
preserve the traditional views of the close-knit family and
take care of all the family's private business and internal
problems. The men would be the recognized heads of the
household; the rest of the family would be subject to the
husband and father's domain, and the wife and mother's
responsibility would be the running of the house and the
care of the children. These women, however, remained
dependent on the will of the husband for what they
possessed, for what they controlled, or for what power they
had. Divorces were not frequent; suicides would be the
exception rather than the rule. But someone as observant
and as experienced as William Faulkner knew that such
families were the hoped-for ideal, not the reality. So,
many of the older, more established families in the major
Yoknapatawpha novels present what superficially appear to be
traditional family units, but which actually have within
themselves the seeds of their own destruction.

Despite the apparent male dominance both in the
southern reality of Faulkner's generation and in his
fictional reflections of that reality, often the key to a
family's survival is the mother. Folk wisdom presumes, and psychologists and sociologists agree, that it is often the mother who holds the unit together, who nurtures its members, who sees to their well-being, and who guides their development and socialization. As the care-giver charged with the welfare, growth, and survival of the children, the mother is presumably the most direct agent for developing the skills necessary for a child to assume a dynamic participative role in a family's healthful functioning.

But, as already pointed out, most critics—Michael Millgate, Cleanth Brooks, sometimes even Sally R. Page—tend to examine women only in the shadow of the men they appear with rather than as creatures functioning in an independently dynamic manner. Most accept the assumption that Faulkner did not really develop women well. Careful study of the women/mothers in Faulkner's fictional families can produce some strong comparisons to the unsatisfactory relationship he had with his own parents, particularly with his mother.

If Faulkner's women generally are hard to delineate clearly, the mothers in his Yoknapatawpha families are even harder to define. Susan Peck MacDonald, writing about mothers in Jane Austen's novels, posits that the daughter in a family could not reach adult status in society unless the mother was "absent, dead, weak, or otherwise flawed" (68); further, MacDonald stated that "while the heroines sometimes receive help from other strong supportive women, they rarely
receive help from their own mothers" (58). The conclusions that MacDonald reached about the female parent’s lack of influence upon the daughters in Austen’s families applies equally well to both male and female children in Faulkner’s works. In the novels and short stories where families, such as the Bundrens, Sartorises, Compsons, Sutpens, and Snopeses, are found, the Yoknapatawpha County men who are the heads of these families act (or deliberately refuse to act), react, fight, marry, and die while the women grope their way ineffectually through the motions of raising and preparing children for an adult life in which to raise their own families. Where these kinds of fathers serve as role models and mothers remain inactive and ineffective as parents, children suffer in their own efforts to grow functional and often do not learn how to build healthier families for their own generation.

Mothers and mother figures in William Faulkner’s major Yoknapatawpha families fail to influence their children as they grow. In As I Lay Dying, The Unvanquished and Sartoris, The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom!, and the Snopes trilogy, the mothers are dead or dying, ineffective, or flawed; where mothers are absent, mother figures try to fill in and help children grow to maturation, oftentimes without themselves possessing or even being aware of any of the skills that go into sustaining functional family dynamics, yet sometimes with really good common sense about
how children grow and learn. In spite of the presence of mothers or mother figures, the children do not develop into functional family members, and the daughters, who will become the next generation of mothers, ordinarily do not develop the skills that would allow them to build functional families.

For the purpose of this study, only five Yoknapatawpha families will be analyzed. Addie Bundren and her daughter Dewey Dell in *As I Lay Dying* make up a family in which the mother is present well into the teen years of the daughter. Mrs. Compson and Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury*, Ellen Coldfield Sutpen and Judith Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom!* and Eula Varner Snopes and her daughter Linda in the Snopes trilogy are families in which the mother is alive throughout all or almost all of the daughter’s formative years. Granny Millard, Aunt Jenny DuPre, and Narcissa Benbow in *The Unvanquished* and *Sartoris* represent a family in which the mother is absent, thereby requiring that a woman learn to act as mother without the help of a strong parenting model.

But how does someone analyze the effectiveness of a family and its functions? It appears that in most family situations methods of communication are a key to the relationships and dynamics within the structure. If families are to be functional, members must know how to be together with other family members, to communicate, to understand the others’ needs at the same time that one’s own
needs are tended. It is not necessary that the situation be perfectly dealt with, but it is necessary that there be nurturing support for one another in the difficulties of growing, maturing, and relating. Inability to understand and accept the concept of self worth and to respect the right of the other to be unique leads to dysfunction and, sometimes, to chaos. Since the women in the above mentioned Faulkner novels essentially had the major role in the care of the children, how the biological mother or the mother figure communicates is a good key to how she perceives self, husband, and children. Analysis of these dynamics allows some conclusions about where mothers succeed and fail. And similar analysis of the growing daughters in the family should allow some speculation about the mothering skills they develop or fail to develop, especially if the daughter is carried through to adulthood in the literature.

When Faulkner wrote about the above families, his objective was not the analysis of family function and dynamics. He quite simply had stories to tell. Since the purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of fictional women in parenting their children, analysis of a mother’s functioning is best achieved by comparing it to studies of methods that seem to foster functional family relationships. A search for a method to examine and name family function or dysfunction led to Irene and Herbert Goldenberg’s *Family Therapy: An Overview*. Examination of
the Goldenbergs' text showed the necessity of eliminating those models of family therapy that were heavily Freudian or Jungian. Because the purpose of my study does not include the analysis of the psyche, interpretation of a person's dreams, or the naming of the "identified patient" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 7), Freudian, Jungian, or any other psychoanalytical methods of therapy are superfluous. My intent is to focus on the dynamics within the family for the purpose of identifying the mother's effectiveness in helping her children grow to a maturity that will prepare them to be instruments of growth rather than of family decline. Out of the numerous models the Goldenbergs described, two, both of which dealt with family communications as a key to identifying dysfunction, seemed applicable: family sculpting and family choreography.

Family sculpting, according to the Goldenbergs' text was developed by F. J. Duhl, D. Kantor, and B. S. Duhl at the Boston Family Institute, and refined by Virginia Satir, who used it extensively in her work (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 264-65). Satir's Family Sculpting method is built upon the assumption that four basic dysfunctional methods of communication manifest themselves: placating, blaming, computing, and distracting; one method of communication is considered functional: levelling (Peoplemaking 91, 72).¹ A further assumption is that if members build models of the dynamics of family interaction,
discuss what they see, and then work on necessary compromises, they can reach an understanding of how to handle their problems more constructively through the improvement of communication. An advantage in using family sculpting for this study is that the analyst, in this case a literary analyst, can take a particular incident from a novel or a short story and freeze it—an effect, in fact, not unlike what Faulkner himself does when he reveals only short clips of conversation and interaction between family members at any given moment in the story. In framing a particular incident, the analyst can then place—that is, sculpt—the characters who appear in the scene, examine what they say and do, and then come to some conclusion about the mother’s ability to receive and transmit facts and feelings in a non-threatened and non-threatening manner. If communication and parenting skills are congruent, then children, particularly the daughters, can in turn learn congruent communication and become mothers who foster a functional family.

One disadvantage of using the Family Sculpting model is that, since it is being applied to a piece of literature, the analyst is not able to move characters around through role-playing and to help them find new ways of dealing with the situation functionally; in short, in literary analysis the characters have to be left forever frozen in their dysfunction. Any projections drawn from the scene about
absences or silences must remain within the realm of what the author has actually depicted or be justifiable in the light of the way the text actually develops.

Family sculpting and family choreography are much alike. Family choreography makes use of much the same kind of communication found in family sculpting; then it adds one further step: the requirement that family members carry the sculpting through stages. Once family members have built a sculpture that illustrates family interaction as it occurred in a particular incident, then the sculpture itself can, somewhat like a liquid, move as the parameters of the communication continue; in short, it can change and present a completely different picture from the one first shown. It is impossible to use this model for a literary analysis because characters who have not been moved by the author cannot be arbitrarily placed in other poses. To use the method and carry it to its logical conclusion would require the literary analyst to alter the text as written by the author. Not only would that destroy the integrity of the author's work, but it would extend the study into realms of fanciful speculation, making it invalid. For the sake of a valid study, family sculpting will be the model used.

The major question to be answered in this study is why William Faulkner developed so many dysfunctional women who are mothers, who serve as mother figures in the absence of a biological mother, or who become the next generation of
mothers. The family therapy model is intended to be a vehicle to expedite analysis of the successes and failures of the mothers involved in each case. But more importantly, analysis of the mother as she functions in the family is intended to serve as a basis for speculation about the relationship between Maud Faulkner and William Faulkner. In short, what, if anything, does the character development of the mother figures in this study show about Faulkner's relationship with his own mother? Does his writing serve as an outlet for him to rid himself of any resentment he has about his early life?

Among recent dissertations, Kae Irene Parks' "Faulkner's Women: Archetype and Metaphor" and Mattie Ann Burns' "The Development of Women Characters in the Works of William Faulkner" deal with women, but from a perspective very different from mine. Thomas William Zelman's "Parents and Sons: A Study of William Faulkner's Life and Works" is more closely related to my topic in that he studies parent-son relationships in Faulkner, but he concentrates more on the father-son than on the mother-son relationship. His study examines closely William Faulkner's choice of literary art for his life's work, more in keeping with his mother's wishes for him, over the more traditional career orientation his father would have had him follow. Zelman's major contribution to the study of Faulkner is elaboration of Faulkner's need for a "hiddenness" in his works and his
attempts, because of the tension he experienced in trying to deal with the fact that his mother and father had different ideas about what they expected of him, to create a "careful balance between concealing and revealing" information (1-2, 14-15).

In the research for this study, books and articles that dealt with women from the point of view of earth mother, mythic figure, or scriptural symbol were excluded, such as David Williams' *Faulkner's Women: The Myth and the Muse*. David M. Miller's "Faulkner's Women" does not really fit because he divides the women into earth mothers or ghosts. John Earl Bassett's "Family Conflict in The Sound and the Fury" deals with Quentin's transference of affection from his mother to Caddy as a masochistic manifestation, his jealousy of the brothers whose births he would have liked to prevent, and his supposed role inversion so that by the end of the novel he has been feminized by having his name given to a girl (5, 8, 10). Bassett does say the blame rests on parental inadequacy, but he does not really treat of Mrs. Compson as mother. Ralph Behrens' "Collapse of Dynasty: The Thematic Center of Absalom, Absalom!" is a good study of the man Sutpen, and not so good a study of Rosa Coldfield, Ellen Coldfield, and Judith Sutpen. In *Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner*, Kenneth E. Richardson states point blank that Faulkner has "clear-cut ideas that a woman's 'proper sphere' is 'the immemorial earth' . . . to
love . . . to bear children . . . and inform them of the
mystery of life" (89). When he gets to the actual analysis
of the mothers who people the novels, he interprets them
from the point of view of Scripture, as Eves, and the like.

Few studies deal specifically with the mothers in
Faulkner's major Yoknapatawpha families. Cleanth Brooks, in
his "Faulkner's 'Motherless' Children," points out that
Faulkner has a great number of characters who have lost
their mothers at early ages. Where there is a mother, he
points out how children in the family often are unaffected
by the mother's actions. He cites Quentin Compson, a son
who does have a living mother, as the only character who
laments that he has no mother, completely ignoring Darl
Bundren's mourning his inability to love the mother he does
not have--also probably said while his mother was still
alive. On the other hand, Brooks demonstrates that children
in the family are often unaffected by the mother's actions:
Caddy Compson and her daughter Quentin are failed and become
failures because Mrs. Compson fails them, and Judith Sutpen,
who does her best to be a mother to Charles Bon's son, is a
dismal failure because she too has had an ineffective
mother. The article also demonstrates, without attempting
to assign causes, that Faulkner could have been expected to
present strong mothers because of the value that his culture
put on the family and because he himself seemed to have
taken family seriously. Brooks dismisses the problem with
the observation that presenting happy, functional families makes for boring novels. A good point that he makes concerns novels "in which the mother’s presence is lacking or else viciously negative"; among these examples he includes *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!* (9). Brooks’ *William Faulkner: First Encounters* and *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country* help with basic understanding of Faulkner’s mythic county and the characters with which he peopled it, the lives those characters live, the goals by which they operate, and the manner in which they shape their world.

In his introduction to Sally R. Page’s book, Brooks points out the need for a book on Faulkner’s women, saying, "women are closer to nature than men, more practical than men, and more realistic"; he sees them remaining true to "their primary role of bearing children, nurturing them, sustaining the family, and keeping the human community in being" (Brooks, "Introduction" xii-xiii). So, Brooks does grant women an important role in Faulkner; however, for the most part, he continues to analyze women only in relationship to their men, rather than as mothers. His main exception is Mrs. Compson, whom he explains as being dysfunctional. He puts the men into perspective alongside this picture of women by saying: "The danger run by all of Faulkner’s men is that they may mistake their ideals and their abstract codes for reality" (xiv).
In *Faulkner's Women: Characterization and Meaning*, a study of the women in Faulkner's fiction, Sally R. Page argues that there are two extremes of women in Faulkner, the creative and the destructive, Page makes clear that, even though she divides women into two categories, she does not see them as stereotypes: "When Faulkner's women are examined in the context of the form and meaning of the works in which they appear, their uniqueness and their effectiveness as fictional characters are readily apparent" (xxv). While she does not study many of the women specifically as mothers, she does provide some good insights into them as women. And uniqueness and destructiveness affect the woman's ability to be the sort of mother who relates congruently to her family.

After the communication and parenting qualities of the mothers in Faulkner's fictional families have been analyzed, this study will attempt to find causes or to assign reasons for Faulkner's developing the mothers as he did. In such speculation the Faulkner family biography itself will be important. It should be possible to draw parallels between the facts of Faulkner's own family history and his fictional families and to extrapolate about which real family member is represented by which fictional character. Primary attention is given to the representation of the mother. In some cases the female parent may resemble Faulkner's own mother, or she may be a completely opposite character.
To illustrate, the father figures in the literature often correspond closely to Faulkner's great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and, sometimes, to Faulkner himself. These characters exhibit tendencies toward alcoholism, violence, and self-destruction that resemble qualities in the Faulkner males. Some of the these characters who compare to Faulkner's great-grandfather and grandfather live the "Southern Code" that Faulkner describes, and as such they illustrate what Faulkner actually thinks of the code, whether he is upholding it or repudiating it. Biographies of Faulkner also indicate the unhappy relationship that existed between William Faulkner and Murry Falkner.² They describe occasions when Murry was cruel in teasing the young Faulkner, possibly indicating Murry's disapproval of William's artistic and literary pursuits as a means of earning a living.

Biographers either cannot make or choose not to posit many direct connections between Faulkner's fictional women and the real women in his family. Several of them agree that the mothers and mother figures almost always reflect some conflict between Faulkner and his mother. Because David Minter's thematic approach attributes causes for the development of characters in specific works, his William Faulkner: His Life and Work is primary to my study. Minter draws parallels between Faulkner's life and the characters and events in the books. Based on these parallels, he
suggests motivations for Faulkner's writings. Judith Bryant Wittenberg also suggests causes for Faulkner's developing the characters he did. She is often more assertive in her conclusions than Minter; consequently, the information she includes about Faulkner's biography is of utmost importance to this study. Among the more significant values of her *Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography* are her presentation of well thought out and succinctly organized biographical data in her first chapter and her numerous comparisons of specific characters with particular Faulkner family members; she is also more direct in her interpretations of the relationships between William Faulkner and his mother and father. Both Minter and Wittenberg deal with as many relationships as possible in Faulkner's life, not the women's issues only, thus presenting well-rounded support to their statements about women.

The purpose in this study is to concentrate on the women, including the men only insofar as the relationship between them and the women affects the interpretation of the mothers. The fact remains that many of the fictional mothers and mother figures in Faulkner's major Yoknapatawpha families remain elusive and shadowy. Faulkner's mother was still living when he created these fictional mothers, and part of the problem of interpreting those women very likely lies in understanding and interpreting the relationship he
had with his own mother. Some believe that his relationship with Maud Butler Falkner changed as he mellowed and became more secure; others disagree. If there were a change, the possibility of that change having anything to do with Faulkner's own improving fortunes has to be investigated. More important though are these questions: Was Faulkner portraying his own mother in his fiction? If so, what was he saying about their relationship?

In order to carry out the analysis of how mothers and mother figures affect functional communication within the family in some of Faulkner's major Yoknapatawpha material, I will present five families. The first family, the Bundrens of *As I Lay Dying*, is a poor farming family that is faced with the task of burying the mother. The second family is representative of the wealthy, long-established Yoknapatawpha families: the Sartorises of "My Grandmother Millard and General Bedford Forrest and the Battle of Harrykin Creek," *The Unvanquished*, and *Sartoris*. In the Sartoris family Granny Millard and Aunt Jenny Du Pre serve as mother figures in the absence of living biological mothers. Third is the Compson family of *The Sound and the Fury* that also represents one of the longer established families in which the mother is present. A fourth family, the Sutpens of *Absalom, Absalom!*, has a strong father figure who comes into Yoknapatawpha County to make his fortune and to establish his dynasty. Finally, the Snopes family is
representative of poor whites who come into town in order to establish themselves and to rise in society; their story is found in "Barn Burning," The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion. Based upon an analysis of these families and the communication dynamics found in them, I will show that, even though William Faulkner had a deep respect for his mother, he also had some unresolved feelings about their relationship that affected his development of the women who functioned as mothers in his major Yoknapatawpha families.
Notes


2 William Faulkner added the "u" to his surname in 1918. Some members of the family also changed the spelling after William Faulkner began to be recognized in the literary world; other family members have kept the spelling as Falkner to the present day. As far as possible, the spelling as used by the family member will be kept.
CHAPTER II

THE SATIR MODEL AND THE BUNDRENS

In psychology the nuclear family, the most basic family unit, is defined as "a family composed of a husband, wife, and their offspring, living together as a unit" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 332). If the nuclear family is functional, then the assumption is that the family members have basic understandings of their environmental reality and how to work out family problems in the light of the demands their world makes upon them. When the family is dysfunctional—by definition, "abnormal or impaired in functioning" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 328)—the family’s methods of interaction within the existing world are different from those of functioning families.

In dealing with dysfunctional families, therapists seek ways to eliminate the obstacles that prevent the family’s continuing to interact as reasonably whole, healthy individuals. A basic principle that appears to flow logically from different methods of therapy is that no one therapy method or therapist ever makes the family completely healthy or whole, but that the right healing processes can enable members to achieve a functional level, one in keeping with the world around them.
Among the leading family therapists was Virginia Satir, whose process of family treatment is referred to in the literature as Family Sculpting. In building the therapy process that she uses, Satir proceeds first from certain standards for the human person and then seeks to examine and make graphic those areas that are dysfunctional in order to promote growth and healing. Basic to her therapy model is the definition of a human being from which she works:

- a person who understands, values, and develops his body, finding it beautiful and useful;
- a person who is real and honest to and about himself and others;
- a person who is willing to take risks, to be creative, to manifest competence, to change when the situation calls for it, and to find ways to accommodate to what is new and different, keeping that part of the old that is still useful and discarding what is not. (Satir, *Peoplemaking 2*)

Operating from her definition for the human person, Satir next bases her therapy upon the belief she has about human interaction:

All of us operate within multiple relationship systems, and our self-concepts and self-images are derived from the context of the system we are in at any particular moment in time. This means that identity is dynamic, constantly changing, and the
individual has myriad potentialities and contingency possibilities that are only neglected through prohibitions and sanctions preventing self-exploration and change. (Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy 179)

Since Satir holds this belief, her therapy methods require that the family identify the relationships to and interaction with one another. She says that her therapy makes "use of principles and ideas gleaned from the disciplines of dance, drama, religion, medicine, communications, education, speech, the behavioral sciences" (Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy 179). Satir further explains that she believes the therapist must make clearly visible to the clients whatever obstacles block family functioning. She calls her process sculpting and describes it as "one method I developed to make this possible"; she explains that she expects family members to assume "physical postures" that illustrate "their communication and relationship patterns" (Satir, "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 13). When necessary, her plan for sculpting provides for the involvement of the entire family: "nuclear family, the family of origin (grandparents and in-laws), significant others, household help, and pets" (Satir, "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 13).

Since Satir claims that her system of therapy "is based on the notions that people's behavior changes through
process and that the process is represented by transactions with other people," Satir begins her therapy with four basic assumptions (Conjoint Family Therapy 182). The first assumption posits that "any symptom signals a blockage in growth and has a survival connection to a system which requires blockage and distortion of growth in some form in all its members to keep its balance" (Satir, "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 12). Thus, the whole family suffers from whatever that block is. Her second assumption is that "human beings have all the resources which they need to flourish" (Satir, "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 12). From this point, the therapist seeks to set up a process that will help to find the keys in each individual case that will promote wholeness.

Satir's third assumption flows from the first two: "everyone and everything is impacted by, and impacts everyone and everything else" (Satir, "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 13). This assumption explains why the whole family needs to be involved in the therapy process. She explains that the fourth assumption is the one upon which she acts and sets up the therapy: "(a) therapy is a process which takes place between persons and is aimed at accomplishing positive change, and (b) the therapist can be expected to be the leader in initiating and teaching a health-promoting process in the family" (Satir,
"The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 13). The implication here is that the therapist is only the facilitator, but she is in charge of the process. It is up to the client family members actually to make the therapy work for themselves.

Out of her definitions, assumptions, beliefs, and experiences, Satir began to develop her therapy process. As she worked with an "identified patient"--a client referred to therapy because of some dysfunction at school, in the family, or elsewhere (Conjoint Family Therapy 1)--Satir was able to define four categories in which a therapist might find a cause for problems or a symptom that indicates a need for change. These categories she calls self-worth, patterns of communication, family rules, and links to society (Peoplemaking 3). In the samples of therapy sessions given in Conjoint Family Therapy, in Peoplemaking, and in "The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model," Satir concentrates her work mainly in the areas of establishing self-worth and in analyzing and correcting/expanding communication patterns; it appears that rules and links to society are dealt with as they show up and develop as she works with the self-esteem and communication problems. And in those sessions, Satir makes use of several methods for helping the family members develop a concept of their interaction and relationships. These therapy processes may at times include the use of cords to link one family member
to the other to illustrate relationships. While family members are linked to one another, they may assume body poses that illustrate their feelings of self-worth, their patterns of communication, and the like, and they may move from one pose to another according to the particular situation being dealt with at the time. It is from these procedures that the process gets its name--family sculpting--and the links and the motions are intended to illustrate to clients that "body, mind, and feelings" are all important ("The Therapist and Family Therapy: Process Model" 18).

When a family comes to Satir, there is usually a child who has been referred by a school or brought in by parents who do not know how to deal with the difficulties seemingly caused by the child. Frequently, Satir works with some or all of the identified patient’s family members from the beginning of therapy.

The Bundren family members, as portrayed in William Faulkner’s As I Lay Dying, can serve as good models for developing, discussing, and illustrating the actual therapy process; however, it will not be possible to use all of the physical settings that Satir describes. And in dealing with the Bundrens, it will be necessary to break apart some situations artificially in order to illustrate each of the four phases being analyzed because the Bundrens are not a family that sits down to have casual conversations or to hold family meetings, either of which would make analysis
for multiple communication patterns in a single setting. In fact, Faulkner's use of multiple narrators and his tendency not to record long passages of families' communicating require that projections about functional or dysfunctional interaction be built upon short passages from a novel or upon projections based upon subsequent observable behavior in the characters.

The fictional Bundren family, at first glance, appears to represent a typical poor farming family in the rural South between the two World Wars. They live in a strangely built house on a hillside through which a "feather dropped near the front door will rise and brush along the ceiling, slanting backward, until it reached the down-turning current at the back door" (19). The family consists of parents--Addie and Anse--four sons, and one daughter. Sons Cash, Darl, and Jewel and daughter Dewey Dell, though all of marriageable age, are still at home helping with the family farm. The youngest child is a five- or seven-year-old boy named Vardaman. Irving Howe says that the Bundrens have all the stereotypical qualities of the poor white: Anse is "shiftless"; Jewel is "obsessive"; Dewey Dell is "placidly promiscuous"; Darl is "finally mad"; and Addie "dominates the book, thrusting her sons against each other as if they were warring elements of her own character" (53, 177). Quite simply the plot of the novel covers the events surrounding Addie's death and burial. Together the Bundrens
make up a family whose members struggle against each other and have no real knowledge and skill in how to communicate with each other, thus portraying a typical dysfunctional family.

The first part of her family therapy model that Satir lists, one that she places at the top of her priorities, is "the feelings and ideas about [self], which I call self-worth" (Satir, Peoplemaking 3). Satir places self-worth first because of the effect a person’s self-image has upon almost every family interaction:

As I went into this more deeply I began to see that the self-esteem . . . became hooked more easily when a person had not really developed a solid, appreciative sense of his own worth. Not having his own, he would use another’s actions and reactions to define himself. If someone called him green, he would agree with no checking and take the other’s comment as one fitting him. He was green because the other person said so. It’s easy for anyone with doubts about his own worth to fall into this trap. (Peoplemaking 59)

The two main characters to consider in regard to self-esteem have to be Addie and Anse Bundren, especially since Satir ordinarily assumes that the parents are the family leaders. Parents generally rank first because they are usually the power/authority figures in a family. If the identified
patient should happen to be an adult, then there would usually be a grandparent who would be the parent figure in the family model. Ordinarily children would not serve as power/authority figures because they are still too dependent to take on such responsibility, but it may happen that a child’s attempt to usurp or undermine the family authority is the cause of the family’s need to seek therapy.

One of the early facts the reader learns about Addie is that she was raised by her father; in fact, she never mentions her mother. Addie’s unhappiness rises from the lack of concern she experienced from her father: "I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time" (161). A parent who would repeatedly point to living as preparing to stay dead, called a nihilistic philosophy by critics, could not prepare the child to function in a society in which living is nearly always thought of as better than dying (Roberts 26-27; Wittenberg 116). Next, the reader learns that Addie is a school teacher, but that she apparently has not taken the job in the little country school out of any concern for the educational development of backward rural folk. Addie does not even like the children; she implies that she could hardly wait for the "last one" with his "little dirty snuffling nose" to leave so that she could go to the spring where she "could be quiet and hate them" (161). At times her disgust for the children is
overwhelmingly heightened by her sense of their selfishness and her sense of how teaching those children was the only way for her to prepare to stay dead, and she would long for the opportunity to apply a switch to them until they got welts and bled. At that point she would exult in having overcome her sense of aloneness in the world: "Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own for ever and ever" (162). Roberts explains well why Addie acts so cruelly to make herself significantly important to others: ". . . she could attain reality only when she imposed herself upon the consciousness of others" (28).

Anse Bundren is no better. He has none of the social graces that one would ordinarily expect of the courting male. He drives by the school, looking hopefully at the school door. On one occasion when Addie comes to the door and meets his gaze, all he can think to do is to look away. Finally, one day when Addie is meditating by the spring, she looks up to see Anse, wearing his best clothes and turning his hat in his hands. Following that is what is probably one of the strangest courtship conversations in all of literature:

"If you've got any womenfolks, why in the world don't they make you get your hair cut?"

"I aint got none," he said. Then he said suddenly, driving his eyes at me like two hounds
in a strange yard: "That is what I come to see you about." (162-63)¹

What follows that terse exchange is a short discussion of families and the familial permissions and approvals that would ordinarily precede marriage. That apparently was the only contact of any kind that Addie and Anse had before marrying. There is no preparation for marriage, discussion of goals, agreement upon what their family would be, nothing. Anse seems to expect that, as the male, he would be the head of the family, that he would have some type of control over the household and its inhabitants, that he would get to make the decisions unilaterally as head of the household, and that Addie would assume the accepted community role of wife and mother. Since what Addie might want would not matter, she almost ceases to be a person long before she physically dies.

In a reversal of the traditional expectation of the man taking a bride, Addie says she "took Anse" as husband, hoping to overcome that aloneness, to have someone aware of her, to build her self-image (162); she is brought up short by the realization that Anse has not really made a difference, that only the arrival of Cash has violated her aloneness and has made someone aware of her even though that someone is a dependent child and even though that awareness may only be the child's generic need of care from another (163-64). According to Sally R. Page, Addie achieves a
family by marrying Anse and thus earns the "acceptance of the community"; Anse is proud of Addie and her ability to keep house and to raise a family (Page 114). Yet what really happens is that Addie fails in the pursuit of her goals. She decides that love is only a word to Anse: a word that she does not need to say to Cash, nor he to her (164). When she is pregnant with Darl, Addie decides that she will get revenge on Anse by demanding that he bury her in Jefferson next to her father when she dies. Anse, unaware as usual and assuming that he is quieting her fears about dying, answers, "Nonsense, . . . you and me aint nigh done chapping yet, with just two" (165). Addie has repeatedly attempted to find meaning for herself by accepting a lesser good, by associating self intimately with an other who would put her into a stereotypical role, and by suffering resentment at her situation silently and angrily. Such interpersonal transactions do not indicate healthful feelings of self-worth; if anything, they underline the fact that Addie could hardly be anything but the mother of a dysfunctional family.

Anse never stops to consider that marriage and a family might put some responsibilities and obligations upon him. Instead he seems to become one of the children. Because Addie says to him, "They tell me you’ve got a house and a good farm. And you live there alone, doing for yourself, do you?" (163), it is only reasonable to assume that Anse had
at one time taken care of himself, worked as other farmers do, and such. It is no longer true; Darl tells the reader that Anse had suffered heat stroke and believed that if he would ever sweat again he would die. But Darl does not really accept that conclusion: "I suppose he believes it" (17). After suffering the heat stroke, Anse quit working for himself and let Addie and the children take care of him and do for him. T. H. Adamowski reinforces Darl’s conclusion: "[Anse’s] perpetually dry shirt requires that others do for him what he should do for himself" (218). Either Anse has no image of his possible role as a dynamic power/authority figure in the family, or he has discovered that he can have an easier life if he domineers by whining, or he would rather remain a child trying to dominate his parent, in this case Addie.

Since children usually learn from and imitate the example of their parents, the Bundren children may be expected to have no more self-esteem than Addie and Anse. But Cash, the first child seems to do fairly well. At some point in his life he indicated his desire to be a carpenter. At Addie’s insistence, he has been trained as a carpenter and apparently has become quite good. Because of his training, he knows measurement well and thinks of most things in terms of what they measure: he is described as looking at things as if he were "measuring them inside of him," much as he would measure a board, and he can tell to
the exact inch the length of the fall that broke his leg the first time: "Twenty-eight foot, four and a half inches, about" (118, 85). His pride in his work shows when, in making Addie's coffin, he cuts and bevels and fits each piece of the box almost perfectly--"tight as a drum and neat as a sewing basket" (83). James L. Roberts says that Cash "works on one level of consciousness, performing one task at a time, slow and calculating" (28). And he is truly methodical: at one point he gives thirteen reasons why he made the coffin "on a bevel" (77-78). At least, Cash can build a major part of his self-image on his being productive.

Of the children, Cash seems to be the one least affected by the dysfunction of his family. He is able because of his job to earn a modest living for the family and some pocket money for himself and is accepted by the community for his skill: the reader is told that Cash had injured himself doing some work for the church, a respectable community project, and that Vernon Tull is waiting for Cash to find the time to work on the roof of his barn. In spite of the fact that Anse complains about Cash having such high ideas about being a carpenter and about Addie's defending the boy's decision to learn the trade, Anse does not really object because the youth can keep the home place in reasonable repair and bring in some much needed money.
Roberts says that Cash also has the advantage of being a wanted child: "Cash had penetrated into [Addie's] aloneness and had thereby given meaning to her life. For this reason, there is no conflict between Addie and Cash" (27). But Addie says, "And when I knew that I had Cash, I knew that living was terrible . . . (163). In the novel neighbor Cora Tull tells the reader that Cash had to bring each board of the coffin to the bedroom window for Addie's approval because Addie was "having to watch him so he would not skimp on it" (22). But since Cora Tull does not always correctly grasp all the details of what is happening, she cannot be accepted as regularly making valid judgments about the family. On the other hand, if, as is highly likely, Roberts is correct, the implication is that this oldest child is at peace with himself and secure in acceptance by his mother; in spite of her earlier qualms about Cash, Addie does not have the dislike for him that she has for Darl. Agreement with Roberts means accepting that Cash can rest in the security of his place in the family and that, because of his very methodical approach to life, he will not have to develop the capacity he is missing--being able to respond emotionally to the death of his mother. The end result could very well imply that, while Cash has an adequately functioning self-image, he will only become whole when he learns to respond with both his intellectual and emotional powers. What Roberts may be overlooking is that Cash,
through the act of building the coffin so methodically, is responding emotionally to the pending death of his mother.

Darl, the second son, does not fare as well in the family. For one thing, the reader knows from Addie herself that she felt Darl was forced upon her because Anse tricked both himself and her with the word "love":

Then I found that I had Darl. At first I would not believe it. Then I believed that I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word like within a paper screen and struck me in the back through it. But then I realized that I had been tricked by words older than Anse or love, and that the same word had tricked Anse too. . . . (164)

Addie’s very deep sense of being tricked by Anse’s empty words, just words and not deeds, causes her to reject this second child. Thus, it is unwanted Darl’s arrival that precipitates Addie’s strange revenge-motivated burial request of Anse, using the helpless child’s arrival to achieve her own ends, so that she could say, "... my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge" (164).

Because he is rejected from his conception, Darl thinks of himself as having no mother; he knows beyond a doubt that he is not wanted. David Kleinbard, in reminding his readers of the importance that psychologists attach to the mother’s
responses of acceptance or rejection in shaping the child's own self image, maintains that Darl must "deny his own existence as an individual" and "suppress all sense of having feelings of his own" because he knows that he is the rejected child (54, 60). All along Darl can say to himself, "I cannot love my mother because I have no mother" (89). Throughout the book, then, Darl will think about all the other members of the family, what they think, what they feel, and never once say for himself, "I think" or "I feel." Oddly, a person's tendency to measure self against what others are, do, and say or how they relate to him could give the individual some criteria to fall back upon in building up or changing his self-image; however, Darl cannot benefit from such reflection because he is too unsure of his real relationship in the family.

Of all the Bundrens, Darl seems to be the most intelligent and certainly the most practical one in the family. Robert Emerick enumerates the following list from the novel as evidence of Darl's practicality: he is in favor of Cash's taking along his tool box to begin working on Tull's barn as soon as possible, wants to call ahead to Jefferson to have the grave dug, is consulted by Tull about the stability of the bridge, and suggests that Cash be taken to the doctor for treatment of his broken leg before burying Addie (71-72).
But while he is the most practical, Darl is also the most poetic. He is able to appreciate the picture of Jewel dealing with his spotted horse, to understand the land because "he’s got his eyes full of the land all the time," and to understand and share in the fantasies of Vardaman (35). In addition, his poetic nature gives him a second understanding that allows him to know the secrets of the different family members--Jewel’s illegitimacy and Dewey Dell’s pregnancy--and to expose them honestly, even if it is only in his own head. But, if he could always intuit accurately, he would have kept both himself and Jewel home for Addie’s funeral so that he could have recognized Jewel’s biological father (Mathews 237). Perhaps because Darl is "so obsessed with possessing more forbidden knowledge" about his mother’s affair, about Jewel’s real father, and about his sister’s pregnancy, he "fails to use his common sense," thus failing to develop any sixth sense about the family’s intention to commit him to the state asylum (Mathews 237). Or maybe he does know, and being committed is his only escape from "the insane and incomprehensible Bundren world": a family in which he has no place and no real esteem except from his older brother Cash (Roberts 36).

Darl also is the only son with a real knowledge of the outside world and of the obligations such knowledge entails. He is the only son to experience the First World War. The
reader is told twice about this phase of his life: First, Anse complains:

And Darl too. Talking me out of him, durn them.
. . . it wasn’t till that ere road come and
switched the land around longways and his eyes
still full of the land, that they begun to
threaten me out of him, trying to short-hand me
with the law. (35-36)

Next, Darl speaks about himself in the third person as he is
being transported to the state asylum for the insane: "Darl
had a little spy-glass he got in France at the war" (244).

Yet, in spite of his unique experiences, Darl most
nearly imitates Anse’s philosophy of life. Darl presumably
worked alongside the other members of the family in the
fields and at chores, but he may have had to be forced to
act. He most often is described as stepping back and
analyzing what everyone else is doing instead of taking hold
and helping: he stands on the porch with Anse and Tull while
Jewel hitches the mules to the wagon, and when his mother’s
coffin is in danger of being washed away, he jumps off the
wagon and comes out of the water empty-handed (10-11, 144).

With the combination of a sensitive nature that is
required to live in a world devoid of his mother’s love, a
poetic nature that enables him to understand things that
others cannot see, and a lack of the personal development
that would enable him to rise above the example he sees and
the rejection and distrust he receives from his family, it is no wonder that he must end up locked away from that society. And, lack of a positive self-image, along with a lack of understanding of himself, his motivations, and his status in the family, makes it impossible for Darl to find himself a place in the Bundren world. Darl's fate is almost an expected outcome.

Jewel, however, has one advantage that the other children cannot have. Jewel is the one child that Addie not only accepts, but that she also loves. In her one section of the novel Addie makes it quite clear that Jewel is her child by the Reverend Whitfield. He is the child of her choice, the one who quiets the boiling "wild blood," and he is the one child who is weak and sickly at birth, thus requiring her attention more than the others had (167-68). Addie protects Jewel from Anse's ire when the boy is having trouble keeping up with his work; she even paid Dewey Dell and Vardaman to do some of his tasks. Darl tells about seeing Addie cry over Jewel's accomplishment the day Jewel brings the horse home and seeing her sit crying by his bed that night, a course of action that confirms Darl's suspicion that Jewel is different and that Addie loves him. If any child in the family could enjoy a good self-image, it should be Jewel.

Jewel, if anything, has to be characterized as the man of action in the novel. Jewel is a straight, thin young
man, frequently described as having strange marble-like eyes that can stare at someone unblinkingly. He accomplishes what he makes up his mind to do; for example, when he decides to work for Lon Quick in exchange for the spotted horse, he does it at night so that he can keep up with his daytime chores on the family farm. He does not complain about his share of the work at home and refuses to accept the special treatment Addie tries to give him as the favorite son. And he is strong, able to perform tasks with a liquidity, and yet an economy, of motion. When he has to deal with the half-wild spotted horse, Jewel is described as moving with

the flashing limberness of a snake . . . his whole body earth-free, horizontal whipping snake-limber, until he finds the horse’s nostrils and touches earth again. Then they are rigid, motionless, terrific, the horse back-thrust on stiffened quivering legs, with lowered head; Jewel with dug heels, shutting off the horse’s wind with one hand, with the other patting the horse’s neck in short strokes myriad and caressing, cursing the horse with obscene ferocity. (12)

Other scenes portray him as being the moving force in getting his brothers to load their mother’s coffin onto the wagon, alone saving it from the swollen river by holding it on the wagon and, again alone, rescuing it from the burning
barn by turning it end over end while the others stand watching (91-93, 147, 211-12).

At the same time that he is the man of action, Jewel is the most inarticulate of the children. An examination of his speaking parts in the novel reveals that he seldom has anything to say unless it is accompanied by a curse. At times that cursing is aimed at the animals that only he seems to have the power to control, for example the spotted horse. At other times his cursing is directed at the inaction of his family, as when he pushes Cash to quit work on the balancing of the coffin and to get moving: "Pick up! Pick up, goddamn your thick-nosed soul to hell, pick up!" (90). Since Anse acts most directly only when he is able to strip his children of some possession or of their money, it is highly likely that Jewel's inarticulate, futile cursing, even when it seems directed at others, may really be his railing at the frustration he suffers with Anse.

Dewey Dell, the only daughter in the family, is seventeen years old, pregnant, and in charge of running the house for a family in which the mother is dying. More than any other child in the family, Dewey Dell reflects the image of Addie. The girl has had her "affair" with the field hand Lafe, who has come to help them pick cotton. In her affair, Dewey Dell echoes Addie's earlier feelings:

It's because I am alone. If I could just feel it, it would be different, because I would not be
alone. But if I were not alone, everybody would know it. And he could do so much for me, and then I would not be alone. Then I could be all right alone. (56-57, emphasis added)

After Addie dies, Dewey Dell goes into the stall to milk the cow and thinks: "I feel my body, my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible" (59).

There must have been some time when Addie did help Dewey Dell. The girl knows not only how to work out in the fields, but also how to cook and keep the house. She is able to get things organized for the family's journey to Addie's burial, to prepare a basket of food for the journey. She is organized enough to slip her good clothes into a package to carry along so that she will be able to dress when they get to town. Yet, considering Dewey Dell's lack of knowledge about the facts of life, Addie must have neglected to teach the girl at least one important lesson she needed. When she goes into Moseley's drug store to get the "medicine" she needs to abort the child, Moseley gives her what is probably the best advice: "And I'd advise you to buy [a nipple] and go back home and tell your pa, if you have one, and let him make somebody buy you a wedding license"; next he tells her: "The Lord gave you what you have, even if He did use the devil to do it; you let Him take it away from you if it's His will to do so. You go on
back to Lafe and you and him take that ten dollars and get married with it" (191-92). That constitutes advice that Dewey Dell cannot follow: Lafe has taken advantage of her lack of knowledge and experience, and the church has already failed her whole family (Addie did have an affair with the minister, and there is no talk about consistent church attendance). She has to go on seeking to get her abortion medicine. But then, Dewey Dell can do no better, for she is the child Addie has to make up for Jewel; she has no real value to Addie except as salve for a guilty conscience. Clearly, Dewey Dell cannot be a complete person with a healthy self-image because she has no example or foundation to build upon.

Finally there is Vardaman, who is still very young when Addie dies. While there can be all kinds of interpretations for Vardaman’s behavior—from madness to shock at the trauma of his mother’s death—the logical explanation probably lies in that he is a neglected boy, unloved by his mother, and conceived to "replace the child I had robbed [Anse] of" (168). Nobody has taken time to help the child learn values, manners, and any other social graces society would expect of him. The reader is told on several occasions about how he "cusses . . . like a grown man," and no one corrects him or tries to stop him (30). Vardaman has had neither the time nor the help to develop a good self-image.
When it comes to the possibility of building the individual self-image necessary for becoming a functional family member, the Bundren family does not have much chance of success. Neither Addie nor Anse has a healthy self concept, and most certainly they do not contribute much to helping the children accomplish anything constructive in this area. Of the children, the only ones who have within themselves the wherewithal to build a positive image are Cash and Jewel, and, in their cases, their strength lies in the fact that Addie accepts them; Anse does not help them since he really only wants them for what he can get out of them—work in the fields or money value from some accomplishment they have outside the family. Darl is unwanted and remains a source of irritation to Addie; Dewey Dell makes up for Jewel; and Vardaman, who has only a small part in the action of the book and who is still very young, is intended to rectify some debt of conscience that Addie believes she owes to Anse.

In developing her system of family therapy, Virginia Satir described a second phase, one which builds upon and works along with self-image, as "the ways people work out to make meaning with one another, which I call communication" and states that "communication is the greatest single factor affecting a person’s health and his relationship to others" (Peoplemaking 3, 58). Consequently, she analyzed carefully what people were saying, watched their body language, and
categorized what she observed. The result of Satir’s analysis was the identification of five patterns of communication—one functional and four dysfunctional. In her writings and examples of therapy sessions, Satir deals at length with identifying the dysfunctional modes and remedying the problems faulty communication raises and does not give a great deal of explanation about leveling, which she describes as

a way of responding to real people in real life situations that permit [sic] you to agree because you really do, not because you think you should; disagree because you really do, not because you think you won’t make points unless you do; use your brain freely, but not at the expense of the rest of you; to change courses, not to get you off the hook, but because you want to and there is a need to do so. (Peoplemaking 77).

Leveling, then, is the communication of a reasonably whole person who knows self, is in reasonable touch with reality, is honest with self, and tells the truth as perceived because that is ordinarily the most healthful response. A leveler will recognize that some of his responses grow out of his own feelings and will be able to handle that in a group situation without threatening others and without being threatened himself.
In *As I Lay Dying* there is at least one clear example of the leveling type of communication. Strangely that incident belongs to Darl, the one in the family who is later to be committed to the insane asylum in Jackson. In that one instance, Darl intervenes when Jewel insults one of the townsmen. Only Darl’s intervention and quick action in calming Jewel and forcing an apology from him save bloodshed, perhaps murder. At that point Darl is a leveler because he defuses a threatening situation and, at the same time, defends Jewel’s right to what he believes is justifiable anger. He makes it clear that Jewel is not afraid of the situation (220-21). And that one instance probably marks the only time in the novel that Darl demonstrates that he can perceive and act upon the clear needs of another person.

At the end of the novel as the family prepares to return home, Cash may be moving toward becoming a leveling communicator. With Darl on his way to Jackson, Cash suddenly turns articulate in his thoughts, responds with the beginnings of true emotional reactions, and makes an entry into the almost poetic role previously filled by Darl. Gone is the ploddingly measured thought; in its place is an almost contemplative Cash who can say of his brother’s situation:

But I aint so sho that ere a man has the right to say what is crazy and what aint. It’s like there
was a fellow in every man that's done a-past the
sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and
the insane doings of that man with the same horror
and the same astonishment. (228)

That statement only marks Cash's first move into the
leveling mode of communication; perhaps he will continue to
develop as the thinker, poet, and leveler for the Bundrens.

In describing dysfunctional communication, Satir
identifies four modes, all of which apply to one or the
other of the Bundrens. The first of the dysfunctional
communicators is the placater. The placater wants peace at
all costs. He will always agree with whatever the other
wants as if he were the servant. In an actual family
sculpting session, this person would assume some kind of
servant-like position, perhaps even kneeling on one knee, to
indicate gratitude, self-abnegation, begging, or the like in
order to portray the inner feelings of being nothing, of
being worthless. His actual communication is meant to
portray the response: "Whatever you want is okay. I'm just
here to make you happy" (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 162;

In the Bundren family one of the placaters is Anse.
While he does not actually say, "I am here to make you
happy," he does keep the family from accepting the help of
others, always responding as if he has consulted with them
and is simply reporting their unanimous response even when
that answer means that the children are left in need. Repeatedly, whenever anyone offers to give the family help—whether it is the loan of a wagon or a team, the offer of food while the family is on the road to Jefferson, the offer of feed for Jewel’s horse and for the mules—Anse’s stock reply is to refuse the aid with some self-denigrating expression, such as "We won’t be beholden," "We won’t discommode you," or the like. Yet in spite of his words, he usually accepts the very aid he has verbally refused. Anse plays the placater role almost perfectly when he takes on the martyr role: he has to let the law "short-hand" him when Darl has to go to the Army in World War I, worries that he might have to pay for Jewel’s horse or its feed, complains about not having teeth for fifteen years because he cannot afford them, and complains at the supposed ingratitude of his children when he wants to take their money and spend it on himself. When he deals with another in this manner, Anse can never look the person in the eye and conduct his business; he always stands, with his humped-back and hang-dog look, playing the abject role perfectly. And he always seems to draw forth from his children the response that the placater is supposed to evoke: guilt; if he can arouse guilt, then he may move them to spare him (Satir, Peoplemaking 91).

Addie too does quite well with the placater role. An examination of her life with Anse shows how she has been the
core that has united the family and kept it from falling apart all along. She must have been a good housekeeper and, to some extent, a reasonably good mother, according to the stereotype of good mother, because Anse is proud (as much as he is capable of appreciating such attributes) of what she does with the home, and the children do know how to work well. It was also probably because of Addie that the children ever had anything they could call their own or any money for themselves: she insisted that Anse let Cash be a carpenter, a job that enabled him to save the money he needed to buy the graphophone; she covered for Jewel when the family did not know what the boy was doing, paying Dewey Dell to do some of his chores and allowing Cash to do others. Dewey Dell seems to have at least adequate knowledge and skill to take care of Addie and, at the same time, to run the household when Addie is dying. Since Anse’s concern is that the children do the work on the farm, Addie probably had to placate him to allow the children to go out to earn some money for themselves.

But Addie is also a silent, unsympathetic, resentful, and revengeful wife. In her one section in the book, she records only the terse courtship conversation and her aborted attempt to discuss with Anse the problem of having too many children too quickly, an idea which he, as cited earlier, rejects summarily according to his concept of his role as the adult male figure, therefore the head and only
decision maker, in the family. To him the question of who makes the decision about child bearing is a closed subject; he is the controlling factor in the matter. Addie, not to be outdone, plots her revenge by making him promise to bury her in Jefferson next to her family, a revenge she believes made all the sweeter, as the earlier cited passage shows, because Anse will be unaware of it. If anything, Addie has been an expert placater; surely, Anse would have felt some guilt if he had not taken her to Jefferson for burial. Anse should have suffered in fulfilling his promise to Addie, yet, in a certain sense, he is the victor because he does achieve his purposes of getting his new store-bought teeth and his new wife. How can he suffer when he is really getting the one person he wants and needs: another Mrs. Bundren?

Addie also fits into a second pattern of communication identified by Satir: that of the blamer (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 162; Satir, Peoplemaking 66). A blamer seeks to exert or attain power in some way. He is usually—contrary to Addie—finger pointing, loud, tyrannical, enraged; on the exterior Addie certainly does not fit the first two characteristics, but the second two abound in her in a quiet, determined, and stubborn way. Because the inside feeling of the blamer is one of loneliness and failure (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 162), Addie is simply building upon her earlier experience as a school teacher. It is safe
to assume that as her children were growing up, Addie
treated them as harshly as she had treated her students: in
at least one instance in the novel, Darl, in reflecting on
Jewel, makes Addie's discipline of her own children clear:
"I told them that's why ma always whipped him and petted him
more. Because he was peakling around the house more.
That's why she named him Jewel I told them" (17, emphasis
added). And those children do obey, even when it is Anse
who gives the orders; someone must have ingrained obedience
into them. Such treatment fits the mode because Satir says
the blaming communication often arouses fear; fear usually
brings about obedience (Peoplemaking 91). If Addie has a
dysfunctional self-image and dysfunctional communication
patterns, so would the family.

Not to be outdone by Addie, Anse also does his share of
blaming. He does not take a leadership role in leveling out
difficult family situations. As a blamer, Anse repeatedly
uses his classic response as, for example, when he takes
Dewey Dell's money over her protest:

    I wouldn't take it. My own born daughter that has
et my food for seventeen years, begrudges me the
loan of ten dollars. . . . It's just a loan. God
knows, I hate for my blooden children to reproach
me. But I give them what was mine without stint.
Cheerful I give them, without stint. And now they
deny me. Addie. It was lucky for you you died, Addie. (246)

Anse, however, carries on his blaming communications in the same whine he uses for placating, and he usually gets what he wants as a result.

Further indication of the blaming type of communication in the family shows up in each family member’s motive for wanting Anse to carry out Addie’s revenge. First of all, Anse himself wants to get to town to get his new teeth; according to Darl, his spoken reaction at Addie’s death is, "God’s will be done, . . . Now I can get them teeth" (51). And, even though he does not say so, he most likely had the intention of getting his new wife too. He had to know the "duck-shaped" woman with the "hard-looking pop eyes" already (249); otherwise it would have been impossible to convince her that she should marry (if indeed they did get married) a widower of eleven days.

In the case of Cash’s and Dewey Dell’s motives for getting to town, there is indication not only of the loneliness of the blamer, but also of the vulnerable feeling that the super-reasonable communicator experiences (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 162). In Satir’s model of family therapy, the super-reasonable communicator assumes a stiff machine-like or computer-like method of response; feeling vulnerable makes the communicator point out what he has done, at great pain of course, to remedy the situation
(Peoplemaking 68). Cash wants to get to town to buy "one of them graphophones" because he thinks music is the exact soother the family needs at night (225, 248). Dewey Dell echoes Addie’s cries of aloneness in her pregnancy: "It’s because I am alone. . . . I feel my body, my bones and flesh beginning to part and open upon the alone, and the process of coming unalone is terrible" (56, 59). She has to do something about her pregnancy before it is too late. Too young really to understand the implication of his mother’s death, Vardaman wants to get to town to see the train in the store window and to buy the bananas Dewey Dell has promised him. Other than two or three brief reflections by Anse on Addie’s passing and Vardaman’s brief outburst immediately after Addie’s death, no one expresses any great grief at the family’s loss; each is wrapped up in his own selfish purpose. The one exception to this selfishness may be Jewel, the beloved son, who strives mightily to get the family to town to fulfill Addie’s request. His motivation may be pure, but it may also be simply the man of action’s compulsion to complete the job.

Darl does a great deal of the super-reasonable communication. As he contemplates any action or event, he carefully works through it, plumbing its meaning and reflecting upon its effect upon himself and his family. When he does respond to the event he is contemplating, he does so without outward emotion. For example, when Addie’s
coffin is washed off the wagon in the flood, Darl simply describes what he sees; he does not discuss how he feels about it, his part in it, the fact that he really does nothing to prevent it or to recover it. The same is true of the barn burning: he calmly narrates the incident doing his part to help get the animals out, giving absolutely no indication that he is the source of the fire. Were it not for Vardaman’s telling Dewey Dell, no one would ever have known exactly what had happened. If Darl had only been suspected of setting the fire, it would have been because he was different from the others, and society distrusts people who are different—who have the land running out their eyes, who laugh at strange things, and who look at people out of strange eyes. Darl has had vastly different experiences from the rest of his family. But no one takes those into account, and Darl is doomed to feel different because he is constantly looking for a place in a family that does not want him and that does not or will not understand him. David Kleinbard describes Darl well: "Moved by his mother’s harsh rejection to deny his own existence as an individual, he must suppress all sense of having feelings of his own" (60). According to Satir, the super-reasonable communicator seeks to evoke envy because envy may make the others his ally; in order to do that he has to suppress his feelings (Peoplemaking 91-92). In Darl’s case the desire to make
allies of his family is never realized because they can never come to terms with his differentness.

Finally, Satir identifies irrelevant communication. The irrelevant communicator is never on target with the issue. He cannot make valid associations because he believes no one cares or that there is no place for him (Goldenberg and Goldenberg 162). The irrelevant communicator is the one who will ask what is for dinner in the midst of a raging family argument. It does not make any difference that he is off target because he thinks no one cares either way. The best he can hope for is that he might create a sense of fun which will allow him to be tolerated (Satir, Peoplemaking 91-92). Vardaman is a good example of the irrelevant communicator with his "My mother is a fish" (79). Along that same line, his rattling on about having to drill holes in the coffin because his mother has to breathe and about his mother escaping into the water when the flood threatens to wash the coffin away illustrates irrelevancy. Vardaman grows less sure of himself as person and less sure whether anyone cares because he does not fully understand the implications of his mother's death. The situation does not improve when no one, except Vernon Tull who is only a neighbor and can make no real difference, takes the time to deal with him and to talk to him.

Later Darl too does some irrelevant communication when he goes along with Vardaman in the word game about the
mother. Since he is still seeking his own identification in the family, Darl understands exactly what is happening with the young boy: Jewel's mother is a horse; Vardaman's mother is a fish; but Darl has no mother (95). While he may provide some relief to Vardaman, Darl does not help his own situation; he can only look that much stranger to society.

If Darl could have let the whole issue of motherhood rest in his fantasy play with Vardaman, he might have survived, but when he persists in pursuing it further, he leads into the next phase of Virginia Satir's therapy process--family rules. Satir starts with the traditional dictionary definition for rule: "an established guide or regulation for action, conduct, method, arrangement"; to that she adds the fact that rules deal with the "concept of should" (Peoplemaking 96). Then she works with the family to discover what they mean by rules. Even though the traditional rules usually show up--"money, getting the chores done, planning for individual needs, dealing with infractions and all the other contributing factors"--that go into family interaction, they are usually quite easily handled through negotiation and compromise (Peoplemaking 96). But when families actually delve into the rules that exist in their homes, they usually find some that are "submerged and much more difficult to get one's fingers on. . . . 'unwritten' rules having to do with freedom of
comment" (Peoplemaking 98). According to Satir, there are four major areas in the freedom of comment category:

What can you say about what you’re seeing and hearing?

Can you express your fear, helplessness, anger, need for comfort, loneliness, tenderness, or aggression?

To whom can you say it?

You are a child who has just heard his father swear. There is a family rule against swearing. Can you tell him?

How do you go about it if you disagree or disapprove of someone or something?

If your seventeen-year-old son reeks of marijuana, can you say so?

How do you question when you don’t understand (or do you)?

Do you feel free to ask for clarification if a family member doesn’t make himself understood? Is your rule if you don’t understand me, it is always because of you? (Peoplemaking 98-99).

In her therapy sessions, Satir finds that the rules governing freedom to comment surface when she is drawing the child, children, or adult who may be the identified patient into the group discussion. When a client responds nonverbally by directing his gaze to a parent or other adult
rather than answering the question directed to him, she recognizes that she has come into that forbidden area. At that point she usually discharges the tension by assuring the person that everyone, including parents and other adults, has agreed that all subjects are open to comment when they are in session with her. Only then can the area of forbidden comment be actually remedied.

For the Bundrens the usual rules show up. For example, Vardaman fusses because he, rather than Dewey Dell, has to clean the fish he has caught (30). Most of the time such situations are resolved when Anse steps in. But the rules about what the family may comment on, those things that family members may not discuss openly in public, cause Darl's final ostracism. When he uses the secret knowledge he has garnered by some sixth sense, Darl steps over into the rule area in which family members would not agree he is free to comment. With no therapist to make it safe for him to comment, Darl finally cuts himself off from the two siblings who most want to rid themselves of his presence. Dewey Dell's pregnancy is not a topic of common knowledge, and she certainly does not want Darl discussing it:

I said to Dewey Dell: "You want her to die so you can get to town: is that it?" She wouldn't say what we both knew. "The reason you will not say it is, when you say it is, even to yourself, you will know it is true: is that it? But you know it
is true now. I can almost tell you the day when you knew it is true. Why won't you say it, even to yourself?" She will not say it. She just keeps on saying Are you going to tell pa? Are you going to kill him? (38-39)

To Jewel, Darl says: "'Jewel,' I say, 'whose son are you?' . . . . 'Your mother was a horse, but who was your father, Jewel?'" (202). By openly discussing Jewel's illegitimacy, Darl has stepped over his bounds and cut off the possibility of gaining a family ally. His setting fire to Gillespie's barn gives the family its excuse to be rid of him. So when the officers come to take Darl away, it is Jewel and Dewey Dell who, angry with Darl because of his intuitive grasp of their secrets, attack him and hold him down until the officers can handcuff him. Darl looks helplessly to Cash for support and explanation, but Cash believes there is no recourse for Darl: "Down there it'll be quiet, with none of the bothering and such. It'll be better for you, Darl" (228). It does not matter that Addie can no longer take his part if she believes that he has been wronged, and most likely she would not have helped the son she had not loved and had rejected.

The last phase of family therapy Satir deals with in her process is "the way people relate to other people and institutions outside the family, which [she calls] the link to society" (Peoplemaking 3). Whereas in functional
families the links to society are open and hopeful, in
dysfunctional families those same links are fearful,
placating, and blaming. An examination of the Bundren
family's links to society, particularly after Addie's death,
makes clear that the people who come around come because of
Addie. The men and women who come as she is dying show
their concern; after her death their reactions to Anse
illustrate quite well how he relates to the neighbors and
what they think of him. Anse uses all the people around him
even while he is protesting, "Hit aint begrudgin the money,"
"We wouldn't discommode you," "I dont begrudge her it," and
"We wouldn't be beholden" (43, 109, 110, 111). Yet, he
takes from them constantly. For example, he does not even
have a spade to use for digging the grave when the family
gets to Jefferson; that he borrows from the woman who will
become the second Mrs. Bundren. But the people see through
him and are honest about him even if it is behind his back.
Samson comments on his laziness; Cora Tull sees his
difficulties as a judgment from God; Vernon Tull says Anse
is his own burden, but does see that any dignity Anse has is
from Addie's death; Mrs. Armstid is outraged at the poor
treatment the dead Addie gets; Armstid calls him a "durn
fool" (108, 69, 70, 81, 179, 183). But Peabody is hardest
of all on him: in speaking of Cash's pain and treatment by
Anse, he says, "You mean, it never bothered Anse much"; and
in suggesting a remedy for the problems associated with the
world’s Anses, he says: "Then you all could have stuck his head into the saw [at the nearest sawmill] and cured a whole family . . ." (230). The people that make up the world of Anse Bundren see him clearly and, though they might be kind to his wife and children, they want to be shed of him at the same time they feel obliged to help him.

*As I Lay Dying* is one of Faulkner’s most puzzling, yet most tantalizing, novels. It is peopled by what could politely be called strange southern grotesques. In July the Bundrens take the unembalmed body of the wife-mother of the family, dead already three full days, and start on what should have been a short journey, even for a wagon, to bury her in her paternal family plot at Jefferson. That journey stretches into an odyssey that lasts another six days, forces them to endure flood and fire, cripples the oldest son, lands the second son in the insane asylum in Jackson, leaves Dewey Dell to deal with an unwanted pregnancy after she fails in her attempt to get an abortion, and leaves the raising of the youngest son to an uncertain fate. Strangely and quite fortuitously, the trip to town obtains Anse a new set of teeth, which he says he has done without for fifteen years, and a new wife, a very unusual outcome if Peabody is right in saying he has not been to town in twelve years (181, 41).

As a family, the Bundrens fall clearly into the dysfunctional classification. No one member has a really
good, strong, or high self-image. At the end of the novel, Cash is closest to achieving a good self-image, but he does that only when he takes over Darl’s role as thinker-poet. Darl, of course, is safe in the hands of the state; whatever he does about his self-image is not likely to be positive in such a setting. Jewel, rough and abrasive throughout most of the novel, has at the end become calmer, quieter, more Cash-like; he is concerned about taking care of the injured Cash and is ready to take over the chores of handling and supervising the wagon as the family prepares to return to its home. Perhaps, like Addie’s, his hot blood has finally boiled away, giving him the possibility of some peace and the capability of developing a more positive self-image. It is also highly likely that he has become more passive because the mother that really loved him is no longer able to defend and favor him. Dewey Dell, having already echoed Addie’s aloneness when considering her pregnancy, will face raising her baby with no father to claim it and may, without a Lafe who might really have been another shiftless Anse, be better off for it. Vardaman will develop as he has been going and make some change in the light of what the second Mrs. Bundren can accomplish with him; his prospects are not really hopeful if the new wife is unable to take over, be more dynamic, and prove more helpful to him and to all of Addie’s children.
There is no real hope for the family to improve in the area of family communication either. Cash will be better able to handle himself because he will be thinking for himself and doing more leveling communication. Jewel, having gotten over his anger, may also become a leveler if he does not allow himself to blend so much into the rest of the family that he becomes too passive. It is highly unlikely that any problems Dewey Dell might have will be discussed openly with the view of the family helping her through her ordeal because the area of free-comment rules will not improve either, so she will remain the same as always. Vardaman remains a puzzle because he still has so much developing to do.

During Addie's time in the family, the Bundrens remained a closed society, making their links to outside society tenuous at best. Those links are not likely to improve, especially when the outraged community sees Anse coming back with a new wife before Addie has been in her grave one day. The continuation of a closed system for relating to society, however, almost insures that the family as a whole will generally continue to have a low self image; to use placating, blaming, super-reasonable, and irrelevant communication; to have covert, inhuman, unchanging rules with continued restraint on free comment; and to forge only tenuous links with society. The continuation in such a pattern will, according to Satir, result in "accidental,
chaotic, inappropriate, destructive" outcomes (Peoplemaking 116).

Throughout the novel, the unifying force has been Addie, dead or alive. By her own admission she has suffered through her father's philosophy of living only to prepare to stay dead, certainly an alienating doctrine. She chooses the wrong method, both with her students and her own children, to overcome that doctrine and become important and make others aware of her. Her marriage has been an onus rather than a consolation to her; she cannot stand Anse's whining talk and his way with words, especially since she cannot find any corresponding action in him. Overcome with her anger at him, she lays upon him the burden of a promise almost impossible to keep, in fact probably kept only because he had some other devious motives. Finally, overcome with the sense of her sin and injustice to her marriage, she takes the last twenty years of her life to set her obligations of conscience straight and to clean [her] house (168). Then she dies because she chooses to die: Anse says, "I knewed hit . . . All the while I made sho. Her mind is sot on hit" (44). Even Dr. Peabody knows it:

I can remember how when I was young I believed death to be a phenomenon of the body; now I know it to be merely a function of the mind . . . The nihilists say it is the end; the fundamentalists, the beginning; when in reality it is no more than
a single tenant or family moving out of a tenement or a town. (42-43)

Or as Bradford would explain it, Addie is still dying even after her physical death: "Addie in her coffin will not turn inward until her will is enacted and she reposes 'saved' and 'free' of Bundren with kindred in Jefferson" (1094). As a mother in one of Faulkner's fictional families, Addie has been the controlling force, but because she is a woman and a wife in a male world, her dominance of family has been cold, determined, and silent. She has not been a co-authority figure along with Anse; she has dominated in spite of him. Except for what Anse accomplishes by whining, everything the family members have gained has been through Addie.

There are some parallels between the fictional Bundrens and William Faulkner’s family. Murry Falkner had trouble in relating to his own father John Wesley Thompson Falkner. He had wanted to inherit the railroad and to be given a chance to run it, but J. W. T. Falkner sold the line instead of turning its operation over to his son (Minter 5-6). From that time on, Murry, feeling that he could not earn his father’s trust, had trouble finding and holding jobs; most of the positions he did hold were secured for him by his father (Minter 6-8). Usually after short stints in each job, he either quit or was dismissed.

Because he felt inadequate, Murry reportedly let his problems carry over into his marriage to Maud Butler. Early
in the marriage, matters had gone well for the couple and their growing family. By the time the dissension between Murry and his father was getting serious, problems were developing in the marriage and Murry was drinking heavily (Minter 5, 9). During insecure periods for the family, Maud seems to have worked hard to protect the children from the fear of what problems in the marriage might bring to the family; this protection proved very important for the sons of the family since Murry was not one to show any love he may have felt for them; as Minter puts it, "... his sons remained uncertain of his affection" (9). As time went on and matters worsened, Maud had a great deal of difficulty keeping up the front. By the time Murry died, it was fairly clear to the boys that she considered herself well clear of a husband who was pretty much a perpetual child to her. By the time Maud herself died, the children, all adults, were well aware of the true state of the relationship between her and their father. In fact, David Minter and Joseph Blotner both report that she told William Faulkner she hoped that she would not see her husband in heaven because she had never liked him (Minter 7; Blotner 1761-62).

Addie Bundren of As I Lay Dying suffers many of the problems that Maud herself suffered. She had to raise a family by herself because her husband sat around instead of getting out and taking an active part in the children's upbringing or in helping her and them do the work on the farm.
In addition to raising the family, Addie had to take care of the house and essentially take care of Anse much as she would any child. If money were to come in, it was usually because of what the children had done or where they were sent to work—for example, picking up the load of lumber for a customer on the day Addie died. Even though Maud did not have to work out in the fields or live in the isolation that Addie Bundren did, she did suffer analogous deprivations: having a husband who could not keep a job and having to raise children mostly on her own. So, much as Addie did, Maud controlled her family in what may have seemed to them a cold, determined, and silent manner. While the life circumstances were very different, Addie Bundren and Maud Butler Falkner had much in common.
Notes

When Faulkner writes dialect he often uses substandard speech, spelling, and grammar. Further quotes of dialectal narration will be quoted exactly as Faulkner wrote them without any special marking.
CHAPTER III

THE SARTORIS FAMILY

In William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha fiction, the Sartoris family ranks as one of the most prominent and most important and represents the most directly autobiographical of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha families. The family's development occurs in two novels—*The Unvanquished* and *Sartoris*—and four short stories—"My Grandmother Millard," "All the Dead Pilots," "Ad Astra," and "There Was a Queen." As part of the community, the different family members also make brief appearances in other fictional works by Faulkner, such as *Absalom, Absalom!*, "A Rose for Emily" and "The Bear."

The family itself covers five generations: from the first set of brothers—Colonel John Sartoris and Bayard Sartoris (Bayard I), both antedating the Civil War—to Benbow Sartoris, who is born on 11 June 1920. The men in the family figure prominently in the life of Yoknapatawpha County and in the city of Jefferson. Colonel John builds the family homestead, helps found and lay out Jefferson, and builds the railroad that connects the area to the line running to Memphis. During the Civil War he collects a group of the local men into a unit for the Confederate Army and is elected their colonel, a position he fills until his
men vote him out of office and replace him with Thomas Sutpen. He returns home and forms another group to continue to fight for the Southern cause. Colonel John is joined in the Confederate Army by Bayard, a younger brother—the first to bear that name. As a member of Jeb Stuart’s cavalry, Bayard is killed when he rides wildly and recklessly into a Union Army mess tent to steal their anchovies.

In developing the family into the second generation, Faulkner gives Bayard II fairly full treatment through the description of his experiences in The Unvanquished and later through his dealings with his grandson in Sartoris. John Sartoris II, the father of the twin sons in Sartoris, is only briefly mentioned and never developed as a character in any of the novels or short stories. In an interview found in Faulkner in the University, Faulkner said that John II is missing because he had no story to tell, that nothing happened to require him to be courageous or strong, two characteristics that all the men in the family are required by their personal/familial code to demonstrate (Gwynn and Blotner 251).

Noteworthy in the two novels is the singular absence of any female Sartoris parent. In no generation is there a mother depicted as present or as having any influence upon the development of the children born into the family. Since the purpose of this study is to analyze what effect the mother has upon the development of the child as a person
functioning in a family and in society and, secondarily, what influence the wife has in the development of the marital relationship, the Sartoris family poses a problem. What ordinarily happens in real life cases where there is no mother is that significant other women, such as grandmothers, aunts, and the like, occupy positions of influence and power. Though they do not actually take over the maternal role, they do, in some way, become responsible for the kinds of guidance and education that a mother usually provides in a family. Such women are prominent in the lives of the Sartoris men and serve as significant influences: Rosa Millard, grandmother to Bayard II; Drusilla Hawk, Colonel John Sartoris’ second wife; Virginia Du Pre, sister of Colonel John; and Narcissa Benbow, wife of Bayard III.

One of the problems within the Sartoris family is what has been referred to as the Southern Code. According to Hyatt H. Waggoner, that code required that all white men of the highest class embody courage, heroism, integrity, and a sense of duty (172). Apparently the code rests in the families who own the plantations and who have slaves; it clearly does not reside in people such as Ab Snopes or Grumby, both of whom are from the south and appear in The Unvanquished because they are not part of the land-owner class. Never satisfactorily settled is the question of whether the code produced the gentlemen or whether the
gentlemen produced the code. Certainly it was expected to be one of the governing principles in the lives of Bayard II and of Granny Millard. Above any of the other people on the plantation, Colonel John Sartoris would have to enflesh it in his person. It is, perhaps, this code that causes Bayard to think of his father as bigger than life:

He was not big; it was just the things he did that we knew he was doing, had been doing in Virginia and Tennessee, that made him seem big to us. . . .

Then I began to smell it again, . . . that odor in his clothes and beard and flesh too which I believed was the smell of powder and glory, the elected victorious but know better now: know now to have been only the will to endure, . . . that optimism which believes that that which is about to happen to us can possibly be the worst which we can suffer. (The Unvanquished 10-11)

To Bayard’s credit, he is able as he grows to recognize that life is not exactly as the Southern Code presents it and to live accordingly.

When The Unvanquished opens, Bayard II is twelve years old, and Vicksburg has recently fallen to the Union Army. Bayard has been left at the Sartoris plantation while his father Colonel John is away fighting in the Civil War. Since his mother has died at his birth, his maternal grandmother, Rosa Millard, has come to take care of him and
to help the family. Because of the war, Granny’s job will be even more extensive than it had been before: she will not only have the care of the boy, but also the care of the slaves who are still there and who do not yet know that they have been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. It will fall to Granny Millard to see that the men plant the crops, bring them in, and tend to the care of the house and the grounds. Granny Millard also believes that the furnishings and valuables within the home are her concern: Bayard, as the narrator, relates in The Unvansquished how the silver, china, and other family treasures are put into a trunk and buried before the Yankees come. "My Grandmother Millard" records all the drills Granny, the children, and the blacks carry out to dig up and bury the trunk in record time, a deed that Colonel John laughs at most heartily and admits later was quite wise ("My Grandmother Millard" 667, 670-72). In assuming the obligation of raising Bayard, Granny also assumes the position of the significant mother figure to the youthful Bayard, and because of that position she will be the one essentially responsible for making the family functional. Since Granny will serve in the place of the parent, she will be the one communicating with the boys. Whether that communication is functional or dysfunctional as defined in Virginia Satir’s family sculpting model will be her responsibility.
In addition to the previous responsibilities, Granny has the care of guiding Bayard's and Ringo's development as functional members of their families and their society. Ringo (short for Marengo) is a young slave born in the same month as Bayard. In keeping with the traditions of the South, Ringo's mother serves as Bayard's nurse, and, in turn, her son is raised along with his white contemporary and future master. Bayard and Ringo live together, sleep in the same room, eat together, and grow up together. When the boys are still young, they are so close to each other that Ringo also called Rosa Millard "Granny" (The Unvanquished 21). By the same token, when the two hear Loosh telling the Negroes that they have been freed and that General Sherman is coming to be sure that they go free, Bayard runs to his grandmother shouting, "They're coming here . . . They're coming to set us free! . . . . It's General Sherman and he's going to make us all free!" (The Unvanquished 26).

Equally significant is the fact that Bayard and Ringo both accept the standards of conduct that Granny Millard put upon them. In this area, Granny Millard illustrates a good example of congruent communication. First, she sets rules that she expects the boys to live up to; second, she enforces those rules. If the rules are fair and they are not applied capriciously, the two youths will most likely function well with them. Near the top of Granny's list of behavior required of young gentlemen is that they use
language in keeping with their position in life. She strongly insists that there be no cussing, which in her list included "damn," "hell," and "bastard." Early in *The Unvanquished* Bayard and Ringo are sent to wash their mouths out with soap for calling a Yankee "Bastud" (30). So consistently does she enforce this rule for using bad language that Ringo automatically says, "Git the soap" when he hears anyone say something unacceptable within earshot of Granny ("My Grandmother Millard" 683; *The Unvanquished* 63). Even though Granny enforces the rules, she also recognizes when she should make an exception. Recognizing and allowing exceptions when they are warranted is also part of congruent communication because logical exceptions are based upon an open system of communication of which change, when necessary, is a part. For example, she allows exceptions at a family wedding when Bayard comments about the groom’s having "a damn good horse"; when Granny demands a pass from General Bedford Forrest so that John Sartoris "can come back home and give away that damn bride"; and when Granny, Ringo, and Bayard, watching the Sartoris house burn after the Yankees torched it, together cry out, "The bastuds! . . . The bastuds! The bastuds!" ("My Grandmother Millard" 683, 697; *The Unvanquished* 86). Quite simply, Granny allows the exception to the rules because she understands that times of extreme stress, hardship, and anxiety may require a temporary suspension.
Next on Granny Millard's list of offenses is lying. Again her rule is very simple: anyone who lies must kneel and beg God's forgiveness for breaking the commandment, for sinning. In this area Granny herself fails. When Bayard and Ringo see a Yankee soldier approaching, they, eager to do their part in the war and to protect the house, rush to the house for a gun and shoot at the man. To their chagrin, they only kill the soldier's horse and have to rush to the house seeking Granny's protection. In this instance Granny must lie to save the boys from whatever harm would come to them for what they have done. She does it quite glibly: "... Granny gave him look for look while she lied" (The Unvanquished 35). Bayard tells how he and Ringo crouch under Granny's skirt, both "thinking how Granny had never whipped us for anything in our lives except lying, ... how she would whip us first and then make us kneel down and kneel down with us herself to ask the Lord to forgive us" (The Unvanquished 32). It is a mark of Granny's integrity that immediately after the Yankee officer leaves, Granny acknowledges that she has violated the code she insists that the boys observe. She gets out of her chair, kneels, and asks God to forgive her for telling the lie, punishing herself in almost the same manner she would have punished the boys. Granny's making herself subject to her own rules is a mark of congruent communication; consequently, she will be able to make the boys her ally without using super-
reasonable communication on them. Waggoner says that in this action Granny is preserving the "functional integrity" of the Southern Code (173), an act for which she cannot be faulted since children should not be the victims of war particularly when their victimization occurs mostly because of the enemy's frustration and anger; if the children had killed the man instead of his horse, the situation could have had a different conclusion. But, whatever her motivation, Granny fulfills Satir's definition of nurturing parents who

see themselves as leaders, not bosses, and they see their job as primarily one of teaching their child to be truly human in all situations. They readily acknowledge to the child their poor judgment as well as their good judgment; their hurt, anger, or disappointment as well as their joy. Their behavior toward him matches what they tell him. (Peoplemaking 16)

Granny also is good at knowing how much freedom to give the boys. In permitting the boys freedom to make choices about their activities, she accomplishes some important family training for them; her rule this time is that, whatever they do, they behave properly. The early part of The Unvanquished makes it explicit that the two children have a free run of the place and may play pretty much as they want to, but they must obey her or Louvinia, whom
Granny sends to call the boys when she wants them. Her consistency in handling the two gives them a good sense of security; there is no record, for example, that they are terrified by the war even though it is fairly near their geographical location. Granny’s rules for them do not vary; they do not change. Therefore, the episodes of breaking them are few, making for a consistency in treatment. The boys know exactly what is expected of them and what will happen if they do not obey. In setting the parameters for the children’s behavior Granny is following Satir’s method for handling the family: "When a child must be corrected, as all children must at one time or another, nurturing parents rely on listening, touching, understanding, careful timing, being aware of the child’s feelings and his natural wish to learn and to please" (Peoplemaking 17). According to Virginia Satir’s model of family therapy, Granny does all the right things: sufficient freedom, adequate guidance, and consistent standards. Children who experience this type of treatment should develop a positive self-image and should have no problems with self-esteem in family relationships. Because Bayard and Ringo know exactly the parameters within which they must operate and know what will happen to them if they disobey, the communication between them and Granny can be classified as leveling--communication that involves the "body," "values," "expectations," "sense organs," the "ability to talk," and the "brain" in healthy, functional
exchanges within the family (Satir, *Peoplemaking* 31). The question is not whether the communication or interaction with a person is the right way to handle people, but that in the family the agreement should be respected because it allows the members to function well.

When Granny decides that she must save the family treasures for Colonel John to use in rebuilding his plantation after the war, she gathers them up to take to her relatives in Memphis. On the way she and the boys run into some Yankees who cut the mules from the harness, take the chest of silver, and leave. Granny sets out to recover the silver and the mules the soldiers took. Regaining not only what she had lost but much more besides is so ridiculously simple that Granny decides to set out deliberately to steal mules from the Union Army on a regular basis. At that point she and Ringo set up a scheme based upon the use of false names and forged orders from fictitious Union officers that succeeds beyond any of their wildest expectations.

At the same time she is carrying out this plan, Granny must deal with her feelings about the morality of what she is doing. Her prayer at church says it all clearly:

I have sinned. I have stolen, and I have borne false witness against my neighbor, though that neighbor was an enemy of my country. And more than that, I have caused these children to sin. . . . But I did not sin for gain or for greed.
... I did not sin for revenge. ... I sinned first for justice. (The Unvanquished 167)

Even when she does something wrong, Granny claims that she has done it for the right motives: she intends giving some of the stolen U. S. Army mules to people who desperately need them to continue to work their land and selling the rest back to the army to get money for those in dire need who probably would not survive if she does not help them. When she doles out the money to the people at the church, she always insists that it be used for the right motives. And Granny's dealings with God show that she expects him, if not to approve, at least to understand—a religion that Cleanth Brooks calls some sort of "worship of the gods of hearth and home" (Yoknapatawpha Country 95). It is also a religion that holds that God (whoever God is) is also capable of congruent communication and will understand. And when Granny engages in her mule trade, she does it for the good of the community. Granny's care for the community is important because a congruent open system in the Satir Model requires not only that the family members be functional themselves, but also that they can establish functional relationships with the larger community in which they live. And Granny does serve the community well.

When Granny sets out on her mule stealing expeditions, she embarks upon what becomes a career for her and Bayard and Ringo, but it is a career that will lead to her death.
Having finally been caught by the U. S. Army and, in effect, put out of business, Granny realizes, as Bayard tells it, "she had made independent and secure almost everyone in the county save herself and her own blood" (172). Her motivation being to make some money for John, Granny enters into an alliance with Ab Snopes and goes after Grumby and his horses. Cleanth Brooks says that Granny is clearly out of her class in trying to deal with Grumby’s scalawags (Yoknapatawpha Country 92). Granny walks alone into the cotton compress to confront Grumby and his men, confident that they will not hurt a woman. After some time has passed, Bayard and Ringo, worried that things are too quiet, rush into the compress and find Granny’s body.

Again Granny has right motives even though her action costs her her life: she wants to salvage something for John and Bayard. Perhaps she even suspects that she will be killed because she makes the two boys stay a safe distance away. All along Granny has put others ahead of herself. The measure of the respect the community has for Granny shows in the numbers of and the kinds of people who attend her funeral. Bayard tells of looking out across the cemetery and seeing all the mules whose "long black smears" on the hip showed that they had come from Granny Millard’s bounty (178). And the townspeople who come in their carriages and bring a Memphis preacher do not get a chance to take Granny’s burial away from the people that Granny had
helped. Brother Fortinbride, after the grave has been filled, simply reminds the people of what they owe to Granny Millard, reminds them of the work they have to do, and tells them to get on home out of the rain (180). Granny Millard has built the best possible relationship with her community. They have survived with her and because of her, and she has taught them all how to care for one another as congruent and functional people do.

After Granny’s death, Bayard and Ringo set out on the strangest of their ventures. These two boys, who have been raised by Granny Millard to live by the rules she set up, but who have been taught to circumvent the law when it is for the greater good of the community, set out with cold-blooded intent and with hardly a word said in anger or hate to get Granny’s killer. For two months these two, accompanied most of the time by Uncle Buck McCaslin, stalk Grumby as if he were prize game. Bayard and Ringo finally catch him because his own men betray him when they begin to worry about how two fifteen-year-old boys can persist so long in their objective. The two boys nail Grumby’s body to the door of the compress and place the right hand on her grave.

It is not functional family interaction or the teaching of Granny Millard that has moved Bayard and Ringo to exact revenge: Granny, according to the rules she has taught them, would have made them tend to the business of the plantation
and take care of the people for whom they are responsible. It is more as Bayard put it: "I was just fifteen, and for most of my life her face had been the first thing I saw in the morning and the last thing I saw at night" (The Unvanquished 174). Bayard and Ringo are also growing up in the midst of a war where father fights against son, brother fights against brother, and revenge is a way of life. While not necessarily admirable, the two depart from what Granny would have expected from them and from what would have been more community-minded behavior, and turn to violent behavior akin to that they have witnessed within a society at war.

By the time Bayard and Ringo return from their mission of revenge, the Civil War is, for all practical purposes, over. When they arrive home, they learn that Colonel John and Drusilla Hawk have returned. By this time the families involved know that Drusilla had gone to join John's troop and to fight alongside the men as though she were one of them; they are not yet aware that she has also made the decision to return to Jefferson with John and to continue to work alongside him in rebuilding the plantation as if she were a man. It has been bad enough for the Hawk family to know that Drusilla has been dressing and acting like a man all along, but when she returns with John and stays in the same cabin with him, it is just too much. The women agree that she has ruined her reputation, and they insist that she marry John. Though she protests mightily against the women,
Drusilla ends up donning the dresses, which her mother has brought and which she insists the younger woman must wear. And she ends up marrying John.

The women who come from town to intervene in Drusilla Hawk’s business, are not interested in striving for functional family interaction or communication. They do not care what Drusilla thinks, what John Sartoris wants, or how their actions will affect Bayard Sartoris. Their concerns do not include the men’s worries about carpet baggers or the politics of the area. Their one goal is that propriety be preserved. Even Bayard can see that they are angry at the men for surrendering. Neither the men nor the women try to forge functional community relationships according to Satir’s therapy model. The women will not compromise; they insist that what they consider the right thing be done. The men ignore them and continue with their political activities.

Drusilla, then, becomes a second possible mother figure in Bayard Sartoris’ life. Fortunately, Bayard has already experienced in his mid-teen years the life and death experiences that many people only meet later in life. When Drusilla enters into the family, Bayard is no longer in great need of the guidance a functional mother provides for a child. In addition, he has had the advantage of Granny Millard’s instruction and, because of that, knows how to make his own decisions about his values and his conduct.
Several years later as Bayard is preparing to go to the university and planning to go into law school, he and Drusilla get into a discussion about whether John Sartoris has been right when he decides to kill people such as carpet baggers. Drusilla insists he is right. She defends it because they were "carpet baggers," "Northerners," and "pirates"; to that Bayard responds, "They were men. Human beings" (The Unvanquished 256). Drusilla, as stepmother to Bayard, could have been helping make the relationships in the family more functional; instead, she spends her time as a super-reasonable communicator, trying to convince Bayard that the supposed Southern Code that his father lives by is the way any Sartoris man should decide the correctness of his actions. In trying to push Bayard into accepting the code his father embraces, Drusilla gives up a chance to move into a congruent mode of communication and opts to continue in the same super-reasonable communication that she has used in her attempt to convince her mother and the other women of the town that she did not need to live by their standards.

Before Bayard leaves to read for the law, he tells Drusilla that the men of his father's old troop believe that John is being too harsh with Redmond, that John is driving Redmond to do something desperate. Drusilla chides him: "This from you? You? Have you forgotten Grumby?" (The Unvanquished 261). When Bayard assures her that he can never forget Grumby, Drusilla responds that she will see
that he does not forget, that "There are worse things than killing men, Bayard. There are worse things than being killed" (261). When she answers Bayard in this manner, Drusilla is resorting to the typical stance of the super-reasonable communicator. She hopes to get his cooperation, his agreement that he may have someday have to kill for his father's or her sake. When Bayard insists that he no longer agrees with killing, she moves from her super-reasonable mode of communication into the blaming mode in the hope that she can win agreement from him, so that, when she needs for him to kill someone--an act no longer allowable in her since she has let the women force her into their concept of feminine behavior--she can demand his cooperation. Instead of putting Bayard's welfare first, she is concerned with control and power. When she has the chance to exert some influence over him, she proves to be more immature than the younger man. In fact, she even tries to drag him down to her level.

When Drusilla's next opportunity to interact with Bayard comes, she tries to seduce him and laughs at him when he, feeling guilty because he has responded to her kiss, says that he must tell his father what he has done. She backs his decision, probably because she knows that John does not even care enough to be upset by it. But by this time, Bayard has changed. He no longer is the same man who, outraged at his grandmother's death, could justify stalking
and killing another man. When he told her earlier that human life was more valuable than revenge, he has really made a commitment to that belief. Bayard has made his commitment to congruent communication and to behavior that will foster functional relationships in the family and in the community. Bayard's action constitutes a reversal of roles between him and Drusilla. Even though at least eight years younger than Drusilla, he becomes more of a parent for his stepmother than she can ever be for him. He commits to his beliefs that the rules governing society are worthy of being obeyed and that functional people must build relationships outside the family in the larger community.

And in that same summer Colonel John Sartoris surprises Bayard by announcing a decision that sounds strangely like levelling communication. When Bayard tries to discuss what happened between him and Drusilla, John does not even really listen. He compliments Bayard on his good work in reading for the law and informs him that he will need him to represent family matters. He tells Bayard that he has accomplished what he set out to do, that he can no longer act as he has in the past, and that the time has come for him to change. The surprising part of his statement to his son is, "I have accomplished my aim, and now I shall do a little moral housecleaning. I am tired of killing men, no matter what the necessity nor the end. Tomorrow, when I go to town and meet Ben Redmond, I shall be unarmed" (The
Unvanquished 266). But the Colonel is not necessarily changing his methods of communication. He may only be tired of having to deal with life as if he were still at war; he probably also realizes that he can no longer live by a frontier code of justice. Whatever his reasons, instead of being a congruently communicating parent in an adult relationship to a young adult son, his action forces Bayard to decide between his conscience and the code that he will no longer allow to govern his choices, but that his father still lives by, a code that would require Bayard to live with courage and honor as his father interprets them, to be "The Sartoris" (The Unvanquished 247).

Bayard is forced to take a stand about his choice not to take human life when Redmond kills his father. First, Ringo, having come to fetch Bayard home, suggests that the two of them stalk Redmond as they had Grumby: "We could bushwhack him, ... Like we done Grumby that day. But I reckon that wouldn't suit that white skin you walks around in"; to that Bayard answers a pointblank "No" (The Unvanquished 251). Next, a member of his father's old troop offers to get the men together to take care of Redmond. But Bayard takes responsibility for himself: "I reckon I can attend to it" (The Unvanquished 268). Finally, Drusilla meets Bayard in the parlor where John's body is laid out and, in a marvelous and ghoulish seduction scene, gives
Bayard the dueling pistols with which she romantically and callously thinks he will avenge John's death.

When Bayard actually does go to face Redmond, he has to choose between the rules he believes in because of what his grandmother taught him or revenge. But it is really no choice; Bayard, having already made his decision, walks steadily across the room, knowing from the "foreshortened slant of the barrel" of the pistol that the shot would not be true, that it would miss him (The Unvanquished 286). And Redmond, knowing that he has met the braver and better man, walks out of the office, goes down to the depot, gets on the train, and is never heard from again. Bayard's action takes its toll on him: he leaves town, wanders out into the fields of the plantation, and spends most of the day by the creek sleeping, a sleep from which he awakens crying as he and Ringo had cried at Granny Millard's grave. His tears may mourn the loss of his father, but they may also relieve the grief of a man who has learned that he has to live in relationship with his community and who knows that the relationship requires that body, heart, and brain be put on the line.

When Bayard returns home, he is met by the woman who must next assume the role of mother figure for the family. Aunt Jenny, who also has seen enough of killing and is upset that in facing the killer unarmed he has put his life in jeopardy, greets him with a statement that both recognizes
his courage and curses his foolhardiness as typical of all the Sartoris men:

Then she put her hands on my shoulders. . . . Then she gave up or she was not strong enough because they came up and took my face between them, hard, and suddenly the tears sprang and streamed down her face like Drusilla's laughing had. "Oh, damn you Sartorises!" she said. "Damn you! Damn you!"

(The Unvanquished 292)

Significant for Bayard is that he has to make his decision himself and that he makes the choice to stand by the functional behavior that he had learned many years before from the most significant mother figure in his life: Granny Millard.

When next the reader meets Bayard in Sartoris, he is "Old Bayard," an old man with a heart condition (20). A whole generation between him and his twin grandsons--his son John II and John's wife--has passed away. It has been left to him and Aunt Jenny, who still lives with him, to finish the task of raising the twins, John III and Bayard III (called "Young Bayard" to distinguish him from his grandfather). Another war, World War I, has intervened; John III has not survived, and Bayard III is coming home, not a proud hero, but a nondescript who hops off the freight in Jefferson as if, according to the servant, he were just another hobo (Sartoris 22). And when he returns, not only
has he lost his twin, but he also is a widower, having lost in childbirth the wife he had married before he left for the War.

Young Bayard does not show up at home until late in the evening. He comes across and up onto the veranda where his grandfather sits smoking a cigar, and without even a greeting, he tells—the first of four times he does so—the story of his brother: "I tried to keep him from going up there on that goddam little popgun" (Sartoris 50-51). When Aunt Jenny, hearing the commotion, comes out and demands to hear John III's story, he elaborates:

He was drunk . . . or a fool. I tried to keep him from going up there, on that damn Camel. Air all full of hunks of cloud, and any fool could 'a' known that on their side it'd be full of Fokkers that could reach twenty-five thousand, and him on a damn Camel. But he was hell-bent on going up there . . . I couldn't keep him from it. He shot at me . . . I tried to drive him back but he gave me a burst . . . They flew all over him. Hemmed him up like a damn calf in a pen while one of them sat right on his tail until he took fire and jumped. (Sartoris 52)

Instead of listening actively to what Young Bayard is saying to them, Old Bayard and Aunt Jenny pursue their own thoughts. At least Old Bayard has expressed his relief that
the young man has come through the war all right, but Aunt Jenny chooses to use a blaming mode of communication with Young Bayard: "What did you expect, after the way you raised him? . . . You’re the oldest. . . . You’ve been to the cemetery, haven’t you?" He can only answer, "Yessum" (Sartoris 52). Later that night when he wakes himself with his own groaning, he turns to find Aunt Jenny sitting beside his bed. He says, "I need a drink"; in answer to that she reaches for a glass of milk on the floor beside her chair. He insists that he wants whiskey; to that she replies, "You drink that milk, Boy . . . You think I’m going to sit up all night just to feed you whisky? Drink it, now" (Sartoris 54). So, neither Old Bayard nor Aunt Jenny has really responded to the young man’s anguish or has taken note of the fact that John had fired at him and that by such a rash act could have, in effect, killed his own brother. Young Bayard has reached out to both the father and the mother figures in his life for comfort, using the placater’s method of communication, indicating the guilt he is feeling. When Young Bayard reaches out as a placater, especially Old Bayard who understands the anguish of killing another and the courage of deliberately choosing to be unarmed when facing an armed man, could have helped Young Bayard with the same congruent communication Granny Millard had used with him. He could have possibly helped the young man to come to some reconciliation with his guilt and have led him to some
peace within the family and with the larger community of Jefferson. But Old Bayard does not interact much with Young Bayard; he appears to leave all that kind of activity to Aunt Jenny.

Aunt Jenny continues to be a blaming communicator to Young Bayard. One thing she is honest about is the Sartoris men; she blames them for living the way they do. She points out to Narcissa Benbow that people like Narcissa’s brother learned how to live profitable lives in spite of war and that the Sartoris could have learned something too. When Narcissa is taken aback by Aunt Jenny’s attitude toward John Sartoris’ death, Jenny retorts: "Fiddlesticks . . . The war just gave John a good excuse to get himself killed. . . . I know, my dear. . . . I’ll never give a single ghost of ’em the satisfaction of shedding a tear over him (Sartoris 41-42). She knows that, with the exception of Old Bayard, the Sartoris men still believe that to die young and heroically in a cause may be of more importance than to live a long, honorable life as a lawyer/banker and landowner.

Even though Aunt Jenny shocks her peers by telling stories they consider beneath someone of her standing, she is popular with the younger people: "Young people liked her, and she was much in demand as a chaperone for picnic parties" (Sartoris 40). She often serves as a significant other woman in their lives, a type of mother figure to whom they could look for levelling communication. Strangely
enough, in spite of being a blamer with Young Bayard, Aunt Jenny does seem to be levelling with young women. Consequently, Narcissa Benbow sees her regularly and discusses personal problems with her. Aunt Jenny talks with her about why she is concerned about her brother Horace Benbow and his behavior, his affair with Belle Mitchell, and the like. Because she trusts the older woman completely, Narcissa also shares with her the anonymous "love" letters she receives. Aunt Jenny, the younger woman's congruent mother figure, advises her to turn them over to Old Bayard or to a detective. For some reason, Narcissa chooses to ignore Aunt Jenny's advice; rather, she insists, she will tear them up. By choosing to ignore Aunt Jenny's advice, Narcissa is stepping outside the parameters--the rules--that govern functional relationships between individuals and the larger community. As any congruent mother would do when a child ignores the parameters of acceptable behavior, Aunt Jenny takes up the issue of Narcissa's wanting to keep the letters. The older woman's response to Narcissa borders upon being a blaming communication, accusing Narcissa of making wrong choices. If Aunt Jenny really blames Narcissa, then Narcissa's response should be a fear of the consequences of her action that causes her to obey the suggested solution. Actually Aunt Jenny is really trying to lead Narcissa to be responsible for her decisions; Narcissa keeps the letters and explains that she shares them only
because she thought she would feel less filthy if she showed them to someone else. Aunt Jenny allows Narcissa to make her own decision and indicates her acceptance of it when she replies, "Fiddlesticks. Why should you feel filthy? You haven't encouraged it, have you?" (70). Aunt Jenny reinforces her true empathy with the younger woman's plight, thereby reassuring Narcissa that, even though she does not agree with her choice of action, she does not blame her for her choice and understands that Narcissa is not the cause of the insult, but rather is the victim.

In spite of Aunt Jenny's attempt to help, Narcissa has to face the issue of the letters again. Many years later, Byron Snopes, the secret letter writer, breaks into Narcissa's room and steals the letters. Narcissa tells no one; she even acts, if her silence about any investigation of the break-in can be used as evidence, as though nothing has happened. Narcissa's silence, however, gains nothing for her: the letters, because of Byron's robbing the bank as he leaves town and his being sought by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, fall into the hands of an unscrupulous agent. They cause Narcissa's reputation-compromising trip to Memphis ("There Was a Queen" 738-741). The shock of that revelation proves too much for the aged Aunt Jenny and causes her death.

Eventually, Young Bayard, driven as always by the feelings he has about his brother's death, buys himself a
car and tears around the countryside with complete disregard for his life and safety. The boy’s recklessness becomes the topic of many of Old Bayard’s and Aunt Jenny’s conversations. Believing that Old Bayard wants her to go with the young man, Aunt Jenny refuses to give up her daily responsibilities to accompany Young Bayard: "I’m not going to do it . . . I’ve got too much to do with my time to spend it keeping him from running that car too fast"; she also has enough sense to know that she cannot change anything: "Besides, you ain’t foolish enough to believe he’ll drive slow just because there’s somebody with him, are you?" (Sartoris 81). Aunt Jenny knows that, as long as Young Bayard does not respond to their attempts to help him with his guilt, nothing will change his behavior. Aunt Jenny knows Sartoris men and can see through Old Bayard’s motivation for deciding to ride with Young Bayard instead of using the carriage. Aunt Jenny speaks the truth and tries to get the rest of the family to deal with the situation with the same honesty: "You don’t waste your afternoons riding with him just because you think it’ll keep him from turning that car over. You go because when it does happen, you want to be in it, too" (Sartoris 85). And Aunt Jenny knows that Young Bayard will not rest until he is dead.

The inevitable finally happens: Young Bayard wrecks the car. In one sense the accident makes Bayard face his feelings about his dead brother. He goes to the old chest
in the bedroom he and his brother had shared; removes his twin’s Bible, hunting coat, bear claw trophy, and picture; and burns them in the attempt to ease the guilt he feels for being the one to survive the war. Even though Young Bayard ritually buries his brother by himself without the help of family members, he does not really resolve his guilt; in order to resolve guilt, he would have to face his actions, take responsibility for them, and live with them. Bayard’s injuries require him to spend a long time bedridden. Aunt Jenny enlists Narcissa Benbow’s help by asking her to sit with him and read to him. Even though Narcissa’s stay with Young Bayard begins so inauspiciously, a relationship does develop between the two of them, and before long they are married. By agreeing to sit with Bayard and then to marry him, Narcissa becomes another mother figure in the novel. But she is so inexperienced that she is virtually without influence over him; he is so abrupt and cranky with her that she almost leaves him alone. But she does stay and attempts to build a marriage with him, thereby placing herself in the position of being the one woman who can communicate with him.

This turn of events gives Narcissa the possibility of becoming the congruent communicator, able to deal with Bayard in a genuine adult-to-adult relationship. But the relationship is doomed from the start because Narcissa is afraid of his abruptness, his recklessness, and his
violence. For example, when Narcissa could have said something to help him with his nightmare about losing his brother in the war, she is at a loss for words. When the topic of his almost killing himself in his car comes up, she asks him to promise not to be so reckless again. He promises repeatedly, but has no intention of living up to the promise. And when Young Bayard’s first act with a car—this time Narcissa’s car—is to drive the same hill on which he had crashed in the same reckless manner, Narcissa reacts with fear. She makes no effort to remind him of his promise; she does not get out and walk away, refusing to return until he acts more responsibly. Because she is terrified of Bayard and his violence, Narcissa will not be able to communicate with him from the congruent mode, the one method that, according to Satir, might have helped him act responsibly.

Bayard disappears after his grandfather’s death, which occurs because of one of those wild car rides. By that time, Narcissa, pregnant and patiently waiting alone for their child, experiences his presence only through his sporadic post cards, which show where he is at the time and request needed funds. Aunt Jenny tries to act as a good mother or adult figure: she talks for long periods of time to Narcissa, filling her in on John’s and Bayard’s youth, making the latter come alive to the wife who hardly knows him; she wires him to come home when they finally find out
where he is. But her motivation is not entirely because she sees Narcissa’s need for a levelling communicator in an adult marital relationship: she speaks too frequently about the coming child and what "his" name will be, convinced that he will have to be the next John (Sartoris 285). At this point in the novel, Narcissa shows some of her own maturity:

Narcissa realized that Miss Jenny was getting the two confused; and with a sort of shock she knew that Miss Jenny was getting old, that at last even her indomitable old heart was growing a little tired. It was a shock, for she had never associated senility with Miss Jenny, who was kind, looking after the place which was not hers and to which she had been transplanted when her own alien roots in a far-away place . . . had been severed violently. (Sartoris 285)

Narcissa seems finally to have come into that period of her life where she will take over the task of being the adult communicator that is necessary to raise a child well.

In the light of Aunt Jenny’s advancing age and her inability to keep the family members straight in her mind, Narcissa’s maturation into a congruent mother happens at exactly the right time, for Bayard has taken a job as a test pilot and allows an inventor to talk him into test flying an aircraft built upon faulty aerodynamic principles. The inevitable happens, and Bayard, as if he knew ahead of time
that he would die in the plane and finally resolve his guilty feelings about John, plunges to death on the same day his son is born. He is finally free of his guilt, and he has left a son to carry on the family name.

Aunt Jenny is the first to get the message about Bayard; having gone to the telegraph office the day after the baby's birth to try one more time to get Bayard home, she is stopped by Dr. Peabody who shows her the newspaper article about Bayard's dying in the crash. Aunt Jenny does not even have to read the article; she simply says: "I don't have to read it . . . They never get into the papers but one way. And I know that he was somewhere he had no business being, doing something that wasn't any affair of his" (Sartoris 294). To Dr. Peabody's affirmative she responds, "Thank God that's the last one. For a while, anyway. Home, Simon" (Sartoris 294). Then she goes home to face Narcissa and to help the younger woman rebuild her life. Narcissa, however, is not in as much need as Aunt Jenny believes.

The fact that Narcissa has finally become one of the strong female figures in Faulkner's fiction becomes clear with two events. The first of these occurs when it is time to name the baby at his christening. Up until that day Aunt Jenny assumes that the baby will receive one of the traditional Sartoris names: "He's a Sartoris, all right, . . . but an improved model. He hasn't got that wild look of 'em. I believe it was the name. Bayard. We did well to
name him Johnny" (Sartoris 296). Narcissa says nothing at
the time, but when she and Aunt Jenny are together one
evening and Jenny keeps talking about Johnny, Narcissa says
quietly, "He isn’t John. He’s Benbow Sartoris. . . . His
name is Benbow Sartoris" (Sartoris 302). Even though Aunt
Jenny remonstrates that a different name will not change
anything: "Do you think . . . that because his name is
Benbow, he’ll be any less a Sartoris and a scoundrel and a
fool?" (Sartoris 303), Narcissa persists. For the first
time, Narcissa holds her own against the Sartoris family
even though Aunt Jenny insists on calling the child Johnny
("There Was a Queen" 728).

The second incident occurs some ten years later.
Shortly after a young man comes to dinner one evening,
Narcissa makes a mysterious journey to Memphis and stays two
nights. When she returns, she tells Aunt Jenny the truth
about keeping the obscene letters she had shown the older
woman some twelve years earlier and about knowing that Byron
Snopes had written them because they were stolen the very
night he had disappeared. The letters have ended up in the
possession of the young man who came to dinner and who told
her that he was an agent of the Federal Bureau of
Investigation. Narcissa explains that she promised to sleep
with the agent in exchange for the letters and that she had
finally gotten them back and destroyed them. She takes
great pains to explain that she had done it for Benbow and
for the Sartoris name, as well as for her own reputation ("There Was a Queen" 739-741). It is this revelation, mentioned earlier, that causes Aunt Jenny's death. Narcissa has finally taken over for herself and has learned to make and follow through on decisions. And so the family history closes with only Narcissa and Benbow Sartoris surviving.

Since The Unvanquished and Sartoris are considered to be Faulkner's most nearly autobiographical novels, the characters should have some clearly recognizable family correspondences in William Faulkner's family. The active influential roles the women have in the Sartoris family is overshadowed by the fact that it is actually the Sartoris men's story. The male figures in the family are quite recognizable as corresponding most closely to the Faulkner family history. The Old Colonel is Faulkner's great-grandfather and Old Bayard is his grandfather. John II, the man who should be a figure for Faulkner's father, as mentioned earlier, does not enter into the Sartoris history. The fact that he did not appear because he had no story points to the difficult relationship Faulkner had with his father, whom he felt he could not please and who he felt did not love him. Significant too is that Bayard III and John III should represent William Faulkner and his brothers. They differ in that there are only two and both end up dying. The guilt found in Bayard Sartoris III apparently refers to the feelings Faulkner had toward his brothers,
particularly Dean, because he thought they received more love and attention than he did.

In this strange family created by William Faulkner, the one outstandingly noticeable fact is that there is no active mother in the entire narration. In the early generations there is Granny Millard, the mother-in-law of the old colonel, who raises the colonel’s son. Granny Millard is remarkable in that she cares for Bayard, works with him, and helps him form his values and develop a relationship with the community of which he is a member. He learns from her how to live with rules and parameters and to be responsible for his behavior. In all of these instances, Granny Millard is, rather than a figure for Maud Falkner, a figure of Lelia Butler, Maud’s mother. Lelia encouraged William Faulkner to use his hands and his imagination to be creative in much the same way Bayard and Ringo build a model of Vicksburg. Maud Falkner did encourage Faulkner’s creative talents and encouraged him to develop them, but she did not participate in them.

Drusilla Hawk has no correspondence to Falkner family members. She has no real sway over the family members, and she also cannot be compared to any Falkner relative. Aunt Jenny takes over some years after Granny Millard’s death and continues to be the family matriarch until the history closes. Aunt Jenny may be patterned on Faulkner’s great-aunt Alabama, who corresponded with and encouraged William
Faulkner in his career and whose strongest characteristic was her outspokenness (Wittenberg 63). Certainly Aunt Jenny illustrates outspokenness as she criticizes the Sartoris men. Even though Narcissa Benbow closes out the mother figures in *Sartoris*, she too is not patterned after the women in the Falkner family.

The important role that the women, who actually appear in the Sartoris stories and novels have, is strange in that no one woman serves as one of the progenitors of the line. There is no great-grandmother, only one grandmother—Granny Millard during the Civil War, who does not live through Bayard’s teen years—and no mother. All these generations were alive and active in the Faulkner family line, in some cases surviving the men and taking active roles in the continuance of the family. William Faulkner, having been in touch with strong active women all his life, for some reason chose not to include those women as mothers in his novels.
Notes

1 The Unvanquished will be treated as a novel even though critics disagree about how to classify it. Two reputable critics say the following about the novel: Cleanth Brooks, while recognizing that the novel was originally a collection of short stories for The Saturday Evening Post, believes that the final version is unified because it reveals the maturation of a young boy who first finds his father romantically bigger than life, but who then comes to reassess from a mature point of view the man's ruthlessness and corruption in his search for power. Judith Bryant Wittenberg states that the "stories" illustrate as their unifying theme Bayard Sartoris's "movement from childhood to maturity during and after the Civil War." See Cleanth Brooks, William Faulkner: the Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963), 75, 84, and Judith Bryant Wittenberg, Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1979), 158.

2 William Faulkner first presented the Sartoris family in a novel called Flags in the Dust. The original text was a good deal longer than the novel Sartoris. The family history was not significantly changed by the shortening process.

3 The full title of the short story is "My Grandmother Millard and General Bedford Forrest and the Battle of
Harrykin Creek." As is the custom with most critics, the story will be cited simply as "My Grandmother Millard."

Faulkner sometimes forgot what he had written earlier. In Sartoris there was mention of Bayard II's having two sisters, but these sisters never show up in any other of the writings. In The Unvanquished it is said that Bayard's mother died at his birth. For the purposes of this study, I will operate from the latter assumption.

Benbow Sartoris is discussed in other Faulkner works: "Knight's Gambit," The Town, and The Mansion. But the history of the family is not further elaborated.
CHAPTER IV

THE COMPSON FAMILY

In William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels, the Compson family is another of the old families that occupies a prominent position before the Civil War. Even though the Compsons are well established in the area, they do not occupy as central a position in the history and politics of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County as the Sartoris family does. According to William Faulkner's "Appendix: The Compsons," the Compsons of The Sound and the Fury had once been a reasonably wealthy family, but having fallen upon hard times, they have sold off parts of the square mile of land the family has owned since 1840, until only enough land remains for the house, one cabin for the Negroes, and the various outbuildings necessary to sustain the home place ("Appendix: The Compsons" 709).

According to Harry Runyan, the generations of the Compson family start with Quentin MacLachan Compson I, the progenitor of "the American Compsons," and end with the family members found in The Sound and the Fury (43-47). More detailed descriptions of these family members are found not in the novels, but only in the appendix that Faulkner wrote especially for The Portable Faulkner (704-21). The last Compsons—mother, father, and children in The Sound and
the *Fury*—portray the disintegration of a nuclear family that does not understand communication, family interaction, and relationships within the larger community. They are a physically intact family that disintegrates, at least in part, because of the failure of a parent, more particularly of the mother, to act and because her attitudes about parenting permit and, in fact, precipitate the events that occur.

As *The Sound and the Fury* unfolds, the reader meets Jason Richmond Compson III and Caroline Bascomb Compson, the parents of four children—Quentin III, Candace (Caddy), Jason IV, and Benjamin (Benjy). In Quentin's 1910 section of the novel, all of these family members are still alive and, with the exception of Caddy, are still under the care of their parents. By the time of the fourth and last section, set in 1928, the only original family members left at the family home are Jason, Mrs. Compson, and Benjy: Mr. Compson and Quentin are dead; Caddy has left home, married, divorced, and sent her daughter back to her mother; and Miss Quentin (as Dilsey Gibson, the black servant, refers to Caddy's daughter) has just run away from home with a carnival entertainer. In this Compson family there are two women who are biological mothers—Mrs. Compson and Caddy—and Caddy's daughter Quentin. But their capacities to act as mothers are shaped by their way of life, by the men around them, and by their own interaction and communication.
What happens to this family, according to Lyall H. Powers, is that "the general collapse of the Compsons is focussed in the fall of Caddy" (34). Powers goes on to describe it as follows: "As Caddy is failed--deprived of sufficient control and loving care--so Benjy is failed"; Quentin fails Caddy; and "Jason fails Miss Quentin" (34-35). All of these failures Powers attributes to a failure in the love needed for nurturing all the family members, but especially for Caddy, Miss Quentin, and Benjy (34). Of course, the collapse of a family is not that simple. It is not just the failure to love a single child--Caddy--it is the failure of parents to love and nurture all their offspring. When the Compson family deteriorates, it is simply the repetition of a pattern; Mary Jane Dickerson puts it as follows: "to be motherless either literally or figuratively is part of . . . the Compson [legacy]" (323).

John Earl Bassett argues that the dominant themes of the novel are

sibling rivalry for love of the mother; bad mothering and ineffectual fathers; homes from which young people seem excluded or homes to which they have a hard time returning; pathologically alienated young men; and incestuous connections between brothers and sisters that suggest a displacement of love for the mother. (2)
In fact, he actually says that the failure of the Compson family rests in "maternal betrayal and paternal inadequacy" (1). Certainly those statements are accurate, but they only point out the final diagnosis of the problem. The key to the cause of inadequate parenting lies in the interaction and dynamics among all the family members.

Even though Cleanth Brooks says that Mr. Compson is an important factor in the family's disintegration because he is a weak, defeated man, a man who loves his children but who, at the same time, does not know what to do with them, he too puts the real burden of blame upon Mrs. Compson:

The basic cause of the breakup of the Compson family . . . is the cold and self-centered mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family, the Bascombs, who feels the birth of an idiot son as a kind of personal affront, who spoils and corrupts her favorite son, and who withholds any real love and affection from her other children and her husband. Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships. (Yoknapatawpha Country 334)

Sally R. Page not only agrees with Brooks about Mrs. Compson; she puts it even more strongly: "The Compson family is dying because Mrs. Compson is incapable of loving or
caring for her children; she is a total failure as a mother" (47). Even though the spoiling of one child and the withholding of love from the other family members is extremely significant and even though one person ordinarily cannot or does not bring about the disintegration of a family by him or herself, still the failure of a mother to take charge of guiding familial relationships and of teaching family members to communicate functionally has to weigh heavily in the lives of the children.

Therefore, whatever complex reasons bring about the disintegration of the Compson family, among the major causes are a lack of congruent communication within the family and the inability or unwillingness of family members to form functional relationships among themselves and with the outer community. Virginia Satir's family-sculpting model of family therapy provides a good vehicle from which to analyze this family's dynamics. Part of Satir's purpose in building her family-sculpting therapy model was to help dysfunctional families, even those in which a member has been diagnosed as having a major personality disorder such as schizophrenia, to develop into a functional unit. The method works if the family members are willing to work at communicating with one another and with the community at large (Peoplemaking 31, 90; "Process Model" 17). What is required of such families is that they examine their roles, strive to understand the implications of those roles, and learn how to communicate in
ways that permit fulfillment of a role at the same time that the person learns to function in a healthful relationship ("Process Model" 21). If the family members do not develop a congruent mode of communication—according to the family-sculpting therapy model, the healthful method of relating—they hide themselves behind their responses: according to Satir, a placating response, occasionally found in Mr. Compson, hides the need for self; a blaming response, often seen in Mrs. Compson, hides the need for others; a superreasonable response, frequently found in Mr. Compson, hides the need for self and others; and a distracting response, upon occasion Jason’s characteristic mode of communication, hides all those same needs and the relationship to "time, space, or purpose" (Peoplemaking 93). Without a doubt, Compson family members respond out of these characteristic stances. Taking the steps necessary to develop the skills to communicate and interact healthfully seems to be the very change that every single member of the Compson family will not or cannot make.

As a mother Mrs. Compson is a puzzle. There is a temptation for the reader to vacillate about where Mrs. Compson belongs. At times she sounds like a superreasonable responder; at other times she reacts from the blaming response. While the problem is to classify what her responses really are, the predominance of the blaming response is very clear; and any crossover into another mode
of communication is more of a misdirection than an actual communication pattern.

One of Mrs. Compson's sensitive areas lies in her own background and the social position of her family. Early in The Sound and the Fury Mrs. Compson gets upset when Mr. Compson makes gentle but pointed fun of her brother Maury Bascomb: "Maury says he's going to shoot the scoundrel . . . I told him not to mention it to Patterson before hand"; and in response to Quentin's query about whom Maury is going to shoot, Mr. Compson replies with an irrelevant or distracting response, which he hopes will put an end to the discussion: "Nobody . . . I don't own a pistol" (32). At this point Mrs. Compson begins to cry and to upbraid Mr. Compson for making fun of her brother in front of the children. In spite of Mr. Compson's assurances that he was joking, Mrs. Compson responds by defending her family's social status in Yoknapatawpha society: "My people are every bit as well born as yours" (33). If Mrs. Compson had only said, "My people are every bit as well born as yours," she would be a congruent communicator because she is simply stating the truth as it is. Because she cries, showing her emotional response to the statement, she argues from the blaming response. Since this exchange can be said to evoke fear so that the listener will obey her wishes—that is, give in to or agree with her—then it is clear that Mrs. Compson is blaming, and her purpose is an attempt to ally her husband
with her so that he will support her pride in her family and be embarrassed at his flippant attitude toward her brother.

Because Benjy is an idiot, he is a problem for the Compsons: he cannot communicate with family members as well as others because of his limited ability. Yet, according to Satir’s description of her model, even seriously impaired people can succeed at some reduced, but functional, level of communication. Benjy’s handicap simply requires more effort from others in order for him to participate at whatever level of congruency he can understand. Mrs. Compson’s treatment of and responses to this youngest child point clearly to her blaming mode of communication. Early in the novel when she does not know what to do with the boy, Mrs. Compson speaks to her brother about Benjy as follows: "It’s a judgment on me. I sometimes wonder" (3). Why would she have to worry about being judged because of Benjy? Is it that she is concerned only about what neighbors think instead of the boy’s welfare and needs? Or does she worry that they will think she has caused this handicap because she is weak? Because she does consider the handicapped Benjy her personal failing, Mrs. Compson insists that the child’s name be changed: she has the boy brought into her room so that she can tell him herself that he is no longer Maury (after her brother), but that his name is now Benjamin, a name picked out for him by his brother Quentin ("Appendix: The Compsons" 718). Obviously it is not
important to her that such a significant event as a name change can be, and in Benjy’s case probably is, traumatic for a child with Benjy’s limited understanding. Later, Mrs. Compson fails Benjy again when the physically mature man is accused of trying to molest some young girls, whom he probably approached because he thought they were Caddy; Mrs. Compson, instead of defending the boy, allows her other son Jason to have him castrated, an act tantamount to admitting that he is responsible and, therefore, guilty. Yet, Benjy did not have trouble communicating with people like Dilsey or Caddy; if his mother had made some effort to understand and help him grow, his capability to be functional may have been stretched.

All of the above incidents indicate Mrs. Compson’s blaming mode of dealing with Benjy in order to evoke fear in her listeners—fear about what she will do if she really means what she says, a fear that will get others to assume her responsibility for the boy. By evoking this fear, she can shift responsibility for Benjy to others—Caddy, Mr. Compson occasionally, Dilsey, and Luster. In the Compson family history, there is only one recorded point at which Mrs. Compson steps forward and defends the boy: Jason supposedly sends Benjy to the state asylum in Jackson after his mother dies ("Appendix: The Compsons" 717-18), but according to Faulkner in The Mansion, Jason sends Benjy off while his mother is still alive and has to give in and have
him returned home when she insists upon it (322).

Insistence upon the return of Benjy to his rightful home is a significant step for Mrs. Compson because it indicates that there may be a glimmer of real concern on the mother’s part for the handicapped son, a move that would indicate a congruent response to a family situation. Equally possible is the argument that the mother’s insistence upon the boy’s return might still be a blaming response on Mrs. Compson’s part that will force Jason to obey her and to suffer with her and that will hide her shame of Benjy from people outside the family.

Benjy is not the only child to suffer from Mrs. Compson’s selfish concern for herself. Caddy is growing up quickly. She has no guidance from her mother; at least, there is none recorded in The Sound and the Fury. Instead of finding the expected mother-daughter conversations that would prepare the girl for her adult life, the reader finds the mother fussing at Caddy because of Benjy’s behavior. All along, it is Caddy who, according to Sally R. Page and Charles D. Peavy, most nearly serves as a mother to Benjy and who early assumes the mother role for all her brothers (Page 47; Peavy 115). In the evenings the boy is taken to Mrs. Compson’s bedroom—where she is usually already lying in bed, nursing one of her imaginary illnesses—to give his mother a chance to see him for the day. Of course, Benjy is not really interested in his mother and her wishes; it is
Caddy he cares about. When he begins to cry, Mrs. Compson tries unsuccessfully to get him quiet, becoming upset herself when he does not respond to her. Caddy knows that all she has to do is carry him to a chair where he can see the fire and give him his favorite pillow. In this case, Caddy serves as the congruent communicator, taking the time to figure out what Benjy is trying to communicate and making it possible for him to experience, limited of course by his mental capacity, healthful family dynamics.

While Caddy serves quite well as a mother figure for Benjy, no one seems to be taking care of her needs as a daughter. Only one incident deals directly with any mothering Caddy might receive. That incident takes place when Quentin, Caddy, Benjy, Jason, and Versh are playing in the branch. When Caddy squatted down in the water, she got her dress wet. Versh and Quentin remind her that her mother is going to whip her for getting wet. The discussion that ensues makes it clear that the one way Mrs. Compson will interact with her children is to whip them if they disobey some of her rules, one of which is obviously that Caddy should act like a lady even when she is romping around with the boys. Important in this particular relationship is the fact that the parenting Caddy does receive from her mother is not the one-on-one guidance that most people would expect between mother and daughter; therefore, Caddy's relationship with her mother is controlled by threat. Significant in
this same passage is the following exchange that takes place between Caddy and Quentin: Caddy, reacting to the threat that her mother will whip her, says, "I don't care . . . I'll run away"; to that Quentin, unwittingly playing the prophet, replies, "Yes you will" (13). Quentin's taunt, most likely intended to be sarcastic, underscores that Caddy, lacking congruent, nurturing guidance, will give up on the family and leave it.

Clear fairly soon is that Caddy does not know or does not care about the facts of life. When Dalton Ames wants to have sexual relations with her, she does not object or try to talk him out of it. When she finds she is pregnant, she manages to persuade Herbert Head to marry her without any questions. Mrs. Compson and Caddy seem not to discuss the girl's pregnancy and any alternatives she has for dealing with it. In this instance too, Mrs. Compson clearly fails in her duties as mother: failing to work with her daughter about matters concerning feminine maturity and sexual behavior. Caddy, left on her own, soon decides to make a break with her family.

Still later, when Caddy's husband has left her and she has no way to provide adequate care for her daughter Quentin, Caddy sends the child home for her mother to raise. At least, Caddy still has enough conscience to send money to her mother to provide for the little girl. True to her consistent pattern of behavior, Mrs. Compson again fails to
be a mother: she indulges herself with anger and shame that
she blames upon Caddy's lifestyle, refuses the money, and
tells Jason to burn the checks; she never bothers to take
control of the money and to see that young Quentin gets a
better opportunity at life than Caddy had. Mrs. Compson
does not even have the presence of mind to look into what is
happening; thus, it is quite easy for the avaricious Jason,
the son whom she indulges, to squirrel away the money for
himself, leaving the child with no money for her own use.

To add insult to injury, Jason gets away with keeping
only the letter, not the spirit, of his promise to Caddy to
let her see the child for a minute when Caddy comes for her
father's funeral. Even though there are overtones of comedy
in the way Jason handles the arrangements, it is quite sad
when he simply holds the child up at the carriage window as
it passes by the spot at which Caddy waits for what she has
thought would be a happy, even if brief, reunion with her
daughter. Caddy has the capability to be a levelling mother
figure in a family, but every time she makes the overtures
necessary to be congruent, she is thwarted by Jason or by
her mother who should have stood by her and helped her to
grow up, but who simply ignores Caddy and concentrates on
her own imagined feelings and illnesses. As a result, a
more mature Caddy no longer tries to develop her skills as a
mother; she gives up a levelling mother response of any kind
and gets on with her own life, leaving the daughter to repeat the mother’s mistakes.

When questioned about Caddy, Faulkner referred to her as his "heart’s darling" and other such endearing terms indicating that she was his favorite (Gwynn and Blotner 6). Still it is hard to see any of the attributes of Maud Falkner in Caddy. Caddy for one deals with Benjy very tenderly, soothing the boy when he is upset at not being able to express his needs. She is quick to calm him and see to it that he is happy. Caddy does not manage as well with Quentin and Jason as he does with Benjy, probably because Quentin was older than she and Jason was Mrs. Compson’s spoiled favorite. Maud, too, tried to meet the needs of her children, but she had sole responsibility for a family of four boys and also often had to care for an unemployed, alcoholic husband. By the time the youngest Falkner boy was born, Maud was preoccupied with him and with the death of her mother; consequently, Maud often appeared to her oldest son as unconcerned for him, as not loving him as much as the other boys (Wittenberg 24). In Caddy’s case, it is more likely that Faulkner saw in her an idealized sister or twin, much like the roles his Cousin Sally Murry or even Estelle Oldham filled in his boyhood (Wittenberg 22).

Faulkner disposes of Caddy’s final history with the city’s librarian’s recognizing a newspaper photo of Caddy on the Riviera with a German military officer. The well-
meaning librarian mistakenly assumes that when she shows the photo to Jason, he will agree that they need to go after Caddy, to "save her"; when a similar appeal to Dilsey meets with an unsatisfactory response, the librarian has to give up her quest, accepting the fact, as Dilsey already knows, that "Caddy doesn't want to be saved hasn't anything any more worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose" ("Appendix: The Compsons" 712-16).

In the Compson family, as in any other family, a child looks to a parent for leadership, support, guidance, and teaching. Quentin, the eldest son in the Compson family, suffers from a lack of parenting similar to Caddy's. Since Mr. Compson, according to Faulkner's appendix to the novel, "sat all day long" at home, rather than in his office, with "a decanter of whiskey and a litter of dog-eared Horaces and Livys and Catulluses, composing . . . caustic and satiric eulogies on both his dead and his living fellowtownsmen," ("Appendix: The Compsons" 709), his wife and his children cannot look to him for much help. One point in his favor is that he does seem to care for the children and treats them tenderly: he is kind to Benjy and Caddy when he talks to them; he caresses them in a fatherly way, and he tenderly checks on all the children after they have gone to bed. He does correct Jason when the boy acts obnoxiously, an act expected from a parent who cares about socializing his children. Although he seems to care about how his children
grow up and fit into their society, Mr. Compson does not really spend time with them when it comes to dealing with the important problems of growing up and learning to become a part of society. Notably, he does not give Caddy guidance in her handling of teenage boy-girl relationships. He is silent through Caddy’s pregnancy and short-lived marriage.

Mr. Compson’s most notable lapse as a parent comes when he is trying to deal with Quentin’s feelings about supposedly committing incest with Caddy. Consequently, when Quentin has serious trouble with whether he fantasized or actually committed the act of incest with Caddy, he keeps coming back to the question of what, if anything, he had actually done and what his moral responsibility in the matter is. Probably too embarrassed to discuss his feeling and his concerns with his mother, Quentin goes to his father for help, discussing rather extensively with his father the agony he feels over the fact that he may have violated his sister. Even though there is some doubt as to whether Quentin really talks with his father or imagines the conversation in his head—Faulkner says it took place in Quentin’s head (Gwynn and Blotner 262–63)—the fact remains that the boy knows enough about how his father would communicate with him to be able to imagine how the conversation would go and to see it as super-reasonable, or computing, communication. He receives no real help and no real assurance that he has dealt with the problem to the
best of his ability. If he and his father actually discuss his feelings, Mr. Compson, already more into alcohol than into reality, simply passes Quentin's problem off:

it's because you are a virgin: don't you see?

Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It's nature is hurting you not Caddy and I said That's just words and he said So is virginity and I said you don't know. You can't know and he said Yes.

Instead of remedying the situation by introducing a levelling mode of communication in which he could deal directly with Quentin's feelings, real or imagined, and attempt to deal with the guilt the boy feels, Mr. Compson, responding from the super-reasonable mode of communication, acts as if the boy has no cause for concern. From that moment, Quentin's problem is not so much whether the incident really occurred as it is the manner in which Mr. Compson deals with the boy's anguish. Finally, Quentin must accept that he cannot expect to get the advice he needs from someone who sees the problem as intellectual or philosophical and who can neither teach him nor help him to become a functional human being capable of dealing with and living with his guilt.

In the absence of the kind of parental communication that would have assisted him in dealing with his dilemma,
Quentin could quite possibly have turned to Caddy for help. The choice of Caddy would be completely logical in the light of her tender motherly care of Benjy; she perhaps could have served in the same capacity for Quentin. But three important considerations cause Quentin to reject such a solution. First, Quentin is older than Caddy, and an older brother usually does not want to appeal to a younger sister for any advice, much less in the case of something as significant as incest. Second, Caddy herself has physically matured, and she is more interested in her own sexual experimentation than in her brother's problem. Third, since she is the supposed victim of the incest, she certainly would not be the one to advise Quentin about how to handle the situation. In the final analysis, Caddy herself no longer appears interested in being a good mother figure/communicator even to Benjy, much less to anyone else, and especially not to an older brother who tries to pick fights with her possible suitors. Consequently, Quentin probably had no choice for dealing with his problem in any other way than as he did; Caddy would be, in the light of the supposed incest, more of a distraction to the older child.

In spite of his mixed-up feelings and his misunderstandings about life, Quentin is certainly as perceptive about the family as Caddy. Quentin watches his father drink to excess day after day. A young man who has been accepted by Harvard University, no matter how mixed up
he is in his personal life, certainly can figure out what the consequences of such drinking will be for the family; rightly Faulkner has the young man think: "Father will be dead in a year they say if he doesn't stop drinking and he won't stop he can't stop since I since last summer and then they'll send Benjy to Jackson I can't cry I can't even cry one minute . . . (96-97). In his own strange way, mixed in with his anguished attempts to deal with his questions about incest with Caddy, Quentin knows that when his father dies, as happens within two years after Quentin's suicide, the disintegration of the family will simply be a matter of time. And part of his anguish has to be his own sense of powerlessness as he attempts to deal with his own life and with his family's dysfunction.

Finally, Quentin clarifies a major source of his anguish and uncertainty: his lack of ability to deal with the problems of growing up. On the day he takes his own life, Quentin once again goes through what he perceives to be the family's lack and his own personal sense of deprivation: "a girl Girl had no sister but Benjamin Benjamin the child of my sorrowful if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother . . ." (134). In his mind he is clear about the source of his trouble: he has no mother in spite of the fact that Mrs. Compson is still physically present with the family. If he had a mother, he thinks that she would help him figure out what really happened between
him and Caddy and would help him deal with and sort out his feelings about the situation—in short, would help him grow through the guilt to a healthful response concerning incest and a workable solution that would enable him to live life from that point on; a functional mother would also know what was wrong in the family and would be honest about the remedy necessary to keep the family functioning. Therefore, while Quentin may not be the major character with whom the novel deals, he is the one with the vision and perception to know what the root of the problem is; and, according to Quentin, the problem is that his mother is not really a mother: she is perhaps the most dysfunctional member of the unit.

Jason Compson IV serves as one of the focal points in The Sound and Fury because he, his mother, and Benjy are the only survivors of the Compson family and because he is the decision maker in family affairs. As with both Quentin and Caddy, everything that happens in Jason’s adult life follows logically from his childhood experiences and from the type of parenting he receives from his mother. But, in his case, instead of rejecting what he has experienced as he grew up, Jason becomes the same kind of communicator his mother is: he operates within the blaming mode. His hope is that he will strike enough fear into the people with whom he must deal to make them cooperate with him.

As the third child and second son in the family, Jason has some problems asserting himself from childhood on. Both
Quentin and Caddy and even Versh, one of the black children, give him a hard time. On one occasion Jason tries to run into the house ahead of the other youngsters, but, because he has his hands in his pockets, he falls. Versh helps him up and says: "If you keep them hands out of your pockets, you could stay on your feet," a harmless enough remark if Versh had not added: "You cant never get them out in time to catch yourself, fat as you is" (17). While Faulkner does not attribute any defensive response to Jason at that point, the incident would ordinarily have a doubly negative effect on a young southern child: most children learn early on that to be fat makes them undesirable, but to be told that one is fat by a black servant's son adds insult to the injury.

In addition, Jason has the child's ordinary resentment at being one of the younger children and being subject to the older children's domination. As do most young children, he threatens to tattle on the others when they do something their mother has forbidden. Caddy and Quentin try to talk him out of tattling; Caddy finally ends it all by saying, "Let him tell . . . I dont give a cuss" (14). In other instances, when Jason threatens to tattle, the other children, absorbed in what they are doing, simply ignore him. Even Dilsey ignores his tattling: Jason announces, "I already told on her," to which Dilsey responds, "I bound you would" (57). Both the older children and Dilsey have successfully defused Jason's attempts to dominate.
Caddy's behavior toward Jason is quite different from her motherly attitude toward Benjy. She is quick to rub in Jason's lack of success in controlling her by tattling to their father when Jason is chewing paper, and she, in contrast to Jason's efforts, has the satisfaction of their father's responding to the information. On another occasion, she shows open dislike for Jason. Mr. Compson actually has to break up a fight between the two of them, and, when he gets the two children apart, Caddy rages at Jason for cutting up Benjy's paperdolls: "He cut up all Benjy's dolls . . . I'll slit his gizzle" (49). Only her father's continued intervention prevents Caddy from physically trying to carry out some sort of mayhem against Jason. Yet, at times Caddy can be quite nice to Jason: on the night Damuddy dies, Jason is fussing because all the children have to sleep in the same room. In complaint he says, "I want to sleep with Damuddy"; Caddy tries to make peace: "You can sleep with her when she gets well. . . . Our nighties are here, and everything. . . . It's like moving" (56). Whether such incidents of kindness are too infrequent in his life or whether he simply manages to ignore his better instincts, Jason remains unchanged.

Conversely, Jason is the one child who does get some parenting other than a whipping from his mother. Jason, the brother who could never get along with his brothers and his sister, will be the child to whom Mrs. Compson will look for
shelter and care later. By that time he will be bitter and hate-filled, carrying on the Compson tradition of not being able to build meaningful relationships. In Jason's version of the family history, Mrs. Compson, totally in keeping with her idea of who a Bascomb is or should be on the social ladder, makes it quite clear to Jason that he is her favorite: "Thank God . . . it is you left me and not Quentin. Thank God you are not a Compson" (156). After Mr. Compson's death, Mrs. Compson shows, at least implicitly, that she knows she cannot depend on her brother to take care of her because he too is (as was Mr. Compson) an alcoholic, that she understands that she has to rely on Jason for everything, that she believes this favorite son is her only hope for continuing the lifestyle to which she has grown accustomed: "thank God you are not a Compson except in name, because you are all I have left now" (153). Out of her own false concept of her background and social position, she even tells Jason: "You know if I had my way, you'd have an office of your own to go to, and hours that became a Bascomb. Because you are a Bascomb despite your name" (141). Even being his mother's favorite does not satisfy Jason; in response to his mother's "You are the only one of them that isn't a reproach to me," Jason answers from the blaming mode of communication: "I never had time to be. I never had time to go to Harvard like Quentin or drink myself into the ground like Father. I had to work" (141).
Another facet of Jason's blaming communication manifests itself in his attitude toward other members of his family. In addition to the above mentioned attitude about Quentin and Mr. Compson, Jason adopts a derogatory attitude toward the other members of the household. Unable to forgive Quentin for getting the advantage of attending Harvard at the expense of a large piece of the family's property, Jason says: "I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim and at Sewanee they don't even teach you what water is" (152). Never merciful to Benjy because he is retarded, Jason is even less kind about the fact that Benjy has been castrated: "you can send Ben ... to the cavalry anyway, they use geldings in the cavalry" (152). All his life Jason has had trouble getting along with the others in the family; as the family provider, the adult Jason clearly expresses his hatred of anything and anyone that he believes robs him of a better job or a controlling position.

There is still another important area in which Jason expresses his blaming mode of communication: his attitudes toward women. For Jason it is important that he be in a position of power; consequently his method of dealing with others, especially women, is to "manage" them all—his mother, young Quentin, his girlfriend, and Dilsey. In addition to all the already mentioned ways in which Jason
manages his mother, Jason seeks revenge against Caddy for, as he perceives it, tying him down with the upbringing of her daughter. When Jason is left to manage the money Mrs. Compson receives from Caddy, he uses his mother's bitter anger and disappointment in Caddy to his own advantage. It is quite simple for him to bank the checks for himself and to forge others to take to his mother, knowing that she will have him bring her the shovel and hold it while she burns the forged ones. When Quentin insists that her mother takes care of her expenses and that she would rather starve than accept any money from him, Jason simply reminds her that she has seen her grandmother burn one of her mother's checks. Once, when Caddy sends a money order directly to Quentin, Jason opens the letter, tricks Quentin into signing it without seeing that it is for fifty dollars, gives her only ten dollars, and keeps the rest for himself.

In managing his girlfriend, Jason, as with young Quentin, measures everything in the terms of money. But he doesn't just bestow money upon her lavishly; he dangles it before her at his own whim in order to keep her dependent on him: "Last time I gave her forty dollars. . . . I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I'm going to give her. That's the only way to manage them" (150). In the instances in which Jason manages women, he allows his blaming communication to manifest itself through his avariciousness. In almost every instance, Jason's
motivation has been to grasp money for himself, reinforcing in others the same fear he has instilled in his family through his control of their money.

Ironically, Jason may be troubled by a hypochondria akin to his mother's, and he too often handles it in the same blaming manner his mother handles hers. The first indication of the problem in the novel is Jason's reflections upon Uncle Maury's surreptitious drinking at the cemetery behind the tombstones. When Maury has exhausted his supply, he "rescues" his distraught sister from the grave side with the excuse of getting her out of the elements and away from the dreary scene. Barely restraining himself from creating a scene, Jason reacts by thinking: "Little they cared how wet I got, because then Mother could have a whale of a time being afraid I was taking pneumonia" (157). Still later, when Jason jumps into his car to make an effort to catch young Quentin, he is overcome by his anger, by the gasoline fumes, and by the wind blowing on him; knowing that one of his severe headaches is coming on, he searches through the car for the camphor-soaked cloth he always uses to control the pain and nausea. Not finding it, he chooses to go on in the hope of catching the young girl. After reaching his destination, headache and all, and having a confrontation with a man he believes knows where Quentin is, Jason is so ill that he must pay a black man to drive him home. Not only does he have to suffer what to him is a
real illness, but he blames his niece for that too. Therefore, while Jason may have received the most advantages from the parenting of his mother, he becomes in his own way the same type of communicator and the same type of dysfunctional parent she was.

Finally, there is Caddy's daughter Quentin to consider. As a daughter and a young woman, she would logically be the next one to serve in the capacity of a mother. But she has the misfortune of being illegitimate, of coming from a broken home, and of having Caddy Compson for a mother. As shown earlier, Caddy is the one who knows how to take care of Benjy, to figure out what it was that Benjy wants, and to quiet him down when he is upset; it is always Caddy who knows that the young boy just wants the cushion off the chair, wants to hold a "flower," or simply wants to stare at the fire. But when it comes to her own daughter, named Quentin after the deceased brother, Caddy herself appears to be a dismal failure. Left to her own resources after her divorce, she sends the baby home to be raised by her mother. The normal conclusion about such an action is that Caddy has no motherly instincts, that she may be using Satir's super-reasonable mode of communication upon herself to convince herself that she is the martyr, saddled with a burden of responsibility she cannot handle. Actually, Caddy may still be playing the role of the leveller, admitting honestly what her situation at the time is and that she is ill equipped to
handle child-rearing. To her credit, she begins being a mother when she shows that she has enough conscience to send money home for the purpose of caring for young Quentin.

Unfortunately, money does not take the place of a mother’s care and a mother’s love. And Quentin is a child who experiences neither. When as a tiny baby she is brought home by her grandfather, no one but Dilsey and Mr. Compson show compassion for her: Mr. Compson wants the child to be reared in the family home; Dilsey wants to love and nurture the child in the same way she has taken care of all the children born into the Compson family. Jason is preoccupied with the fact that he will be the care provider and that both Caddy and her daughter have cost him a job somewhere else and a chance to make something of himself other than as a cotton buyer; to him it is the same as when Quentin and then Caddy got their chances at a better life and he does not even get to go to college. Mrs. Compson does show some concern for the child, but her major fear is that Mr. Compson probably admitted to Herbert Head that he was not the father, thereby assuring that they would get no financial help. She really gets upset when the child is going to be put into Caddy’s old room at home. To Dilsey’s demand "How sleepin in dis room gwine hurt her," Mrs. Compson replies: "But I know that people cannot flout God’s laws with impunity"; in answer to Mr. Compson’s objection to her silliness, Mrs. Compson responds: "You can say nonsense
... But she must never know. She must never even learn that name. Dilsey, I forbid you ever to speak that name in her hearing. If she could grow never to know that she had a mother, I would thank God" (155). When Mr. Compson tries to reason with her, Mrs. Compson even insists more strongly: "I have never interfered with the way you brought them up.

... Either that name is never to be spoken in her hearing, or she must go, or I will go. Take your choice" (155). At the center of this controversy is a tiny child who is dependent upon a super-reasonable grandfather, a blaming grandmother, and a blaming uncle and who must grow up one day to take charge of her own life and her own future.

In the household into which the young Quentin is thrust there is no one who really cares for her except Dilsey. For example, when Jason and his mother discuss Quentin’s skipping school and he assures her that he will take care of the problem, Mrs. Compson appears at first to switch to the placating mode of communication, a change from her ordinary stance. At that point Mrs. Compson seems to be trying to make Jason feel guilt, probably so that he will not harm the child physically: "I’m afraid you’ll lose your temper with her. ... Don’t lose your temper, ... She’s just a child, remember" (142). Actually Mrs. Compson still is blaming: she wants to get Jason’s obedience to her wishes at the same time that she blames her late husband (also named Jason) for
the burden of the child: "Jason, Jason, . . . How could you. How could you leave me with these burdens" (142).

After this exchange Jason goes right down to confront young Quentin. At this point it is Dilsey, the old black servant— the one person all along who has seen that the child gets meals, who has taken care of her needs, and who many years back had made a pallet for herself in a room across the hall from the baby’s so that she could take care of the little girl in the night— who in this instance prevents Jason’s beating the child, prevents it with great risk to her own personal safety. When Jason, knowing that he cannot win the confrontation, says, "We’ll just put this off a while. But dont think you can run it over me," Quentin turns to the old black woman and says, "Dilsey, I want my mother" (144). Dilsey, trying to comfort Quentin, responds, "Now, now, . . . He aint gwine so much as lay his hand on you while Ise here" (144). Once Jason is gone, Quentin turns on the very source of her aid: "You damn old nigger" (144). There is no real hope for the young woman, who has never in her short life experienced parental love, to become a levelling communicator herself.

Jason has meddled repeatedly in his niece’s life since Mr. Compson’s death. Quentin believes that her mother has paid for her school books; Jason says he has paid for them. Caddy writes Jason asking about Quentin’s Easter dress; it is not even certain that she has been given the dress.
Caddy knows exactly what is happening: in that same letter she writes, "You are opening my letters to her. I know that as well as if I were looking at you" (148). As mentioned earlier, Jason manages to keep all but ten dollars of a fifty-dollar money order Caddy had sent for her daughter because Quentin admitted that the amount was not mentioned in the letter. It is no surprise that in the earlier school-skipping episode when Jason takes Quentin to school that they continue to argue. Quentin is determined to stand on her own and take nothing from Jason; therefore, she threatens to remove her dress rather than to let him claim he provided it for her. As she tries to tear it off, Jason forcibly grabs her hands and says: "You do a thing like that again and I'll make you sorry you ever drew breath"; Quentin's response is: "I'm sorry now, . . . I don't see why I was ever born" (146-47). Later she adds: "I don't care, . . . I'm bad and I'm going to hell . . . I'd rather be in hell than anywhere where you are" (147), strong words from a desperate child.

If she had had the chance to live with Caddy, Quentin might have had the chance to learn functional communication. But deprived of the guidance and the instruction that would have taught her to be functional, Quentin repeats her mother's mistakes. She never learns to love and care for any member of the household, not even Dilsey. She has to scrabble for everything she receives, and she has to put up
with an uncle who wants to control her with threats and abuse. Experience has taught her that Mrs. Compson will not be of real help to her because Jason is the adversary. Quentin, convinced that life with both Mrs. Compson and with Jason is intolerable, takes the same escape that Caddy had used; instead of a formal wedding, she runs away with a man from a carnival. Needing money on which to live, Quentin, ironically, steals money from Jason, an amount that he claims to the sheriff is three thousand dollars (236), but which Faulkner claims was almost seven thousand dollars of her own money ("Appendix: The Compsons" 719). With that last act Quentin completes the repetition of her mother’s history; she remains unable, as is the rest of the family, to learn the levelling mode of communication so that she could at last establish a functional Compson family.

In Mrs. Compson, William Faulkner created a woman who is the opposite of Maud Falkner. Other than for the fact that they both had four children, comparing Mrs. Compson to Maud Falkner is almost impossible. Totally unlike Maud, Mrs. Compson is a whiner and a hypochondriac. She lies in bed and waits for other family members to take over her responsibility. Maud, by contrast, took charge of her family, pulling it through hard times when Murry Falkner was out of work or having one of his bouts with alcohol. Where Mrs. Compson, by giving up her responsibility, neglected all of her children except her favorite Jason, Maud Falkner
tried to consider what was in the best interests of her children. Even Maud's best efforts, however, did not always succeed; William, as the oldest often felt neglected and unloved by his mother. While there are signs that Faulkner resolved most of the negative feelings he had about his mother, there are also signs that he never got over some of the pain: for example, unlike his father, he never conquered his dependence on alcohol (Minter 15-16). Where Mrs. Compson is a blaming communicator and unable to hold the family together, Maud Falkner, who set goals for her children and then saw to it that they worked at those goals, is super-reasonable and is able to take charge of the family. While she kept the family together, at least her oldest son suffered because he thought he was neglected. Perhaps, William Faulkner was experimenting in fiction with what it would be like to have a mother totally the opposite of his own.

In discussing the disintegration of family in The Sound and the Fury, Cleanth Brooks claims that setting the novel in the South is important because "the breakdown of a family can be exhibited more poignantly and significantly in a society which is old-fashioned and in which the family is still at the center" (341). And the Compsons, as were the Falkners, were one of the old families in which the old traditions had been preserved: the mother stayed at home to run the house and to take care of the children even though
the real work was done by the black servants that she was
supposed to direct, and the men went out to earn the living
so that they could take care of the women in the manner to
which they had grown accustomed. But somewhere along the
line, the tradition of loving and caring for children and
teaching them to communicate and work together in a
functional manner gets lost as the family degenerates into
dysfunctional modes of relating to one another. To prevent
that tradition from dying, the women in the family have to
take an active role in which they give the example of
healthful communication and through which they direct the
children to relationships that will enable them to carry on
in the future generations. When that dysfunction progresses
far enough, the family members destroy one another even when
they try to keep up the outer appearance of the traditional
southern family. Thus, the Compsons of The Sound and the
Fury, are the last of a degenerating nuclear family—a
family that does not understand the type of congruent
communication that Virginia Satir teaches. Their inability
to communicate in a functional mode affects family
interaction and the family’s ability to form functional
relationships with the larger community. The family
disintegrates even though the mother is present because her
failure to interact with her children and her attitudes
permit and even precipitate the events that occur, a family
that dies from its own lack of familial structure, particularly the lack of a maternal parenting role.

Caddy Compson was one of William Faulkner's favorite characters. In speaking of her, he said, "To me she was the beautiful one, she was my heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book about . . . to try to tell, try to draw the picture of Caddy" (Gwynn and Blotner 6). Caddy Compson, a child at the beginning of the novel and an absent mother at the end, serves as a mother figure only to Benjy. Shortly after her own child is born, she sends the baby back to her own parents to be raised. Since she never functions as the mother of a family, living together and growing together, she too cannot serve as a Maud figure.
Notes

'Dilsey Gibson, the black woman who works for the Compsons, is also a mother. Even though any real mothering some of the children get—especially Benjy and young Quentin—actually comes from her, she will not be analyzed in this study as one of the mother role models. To include her in the same way as the biological mother or grandmother would ignore the effects she would have on her own family and would place her in a role within the Compson family that would give her more power than she actually had. Part of Dilsey's story with the Compsons is told in the short story named "Dilsey," The Portable Faulkner, Malcolm Cowley, ed., Rev. ed., (New York: Viking, 1974), 445-77.
CHAPTER V

THE SUTPEN FAMILY

Developed in a completely different vein in *Absalom, Absalom!* is the Sutpen family. In this novel, which nearly all critics consider Faulkner's greatest artistic achievement, Thomas Sutpen enters into the Yoknapatawpha county history in 1833, a mysterious figure about whom no one has any information. As Faulkner puts it: "he first rode into town out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion apparently out of nothing and married Ellen Coldfield and begot his two children" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 11). His story—his history, his motivation, and his actions—are brought to light in September 1909, when Miss Rosa Coldfield tells it to Harvard-bound Quentin Compson because "she wants it told" (10). After his interview with Miss Rosa, it falls to Quentin to complete the tale by using what he knows, what Miss Rosa says, what his father tells him, and what his own southern heritage and history convince him is true.

In this fictional family, according to Judith Bryant Wittenberg, there are no *direct* Faulkner family figures to be found except that the relationship between Charles Bon and Sutpen somewhat parallels the treatment Faulkner felt he got from his father (131). She argues that his brother
Dean's death, which occurred in 1935 while Faulkner was working on the novel, caused the author to feel a great deal of guilt over the fact that he had given the younger man the airplane in which he met his death; she claims that he had to deal with his feelings about the death of the "brother-rival," such as portrayed in Sartoris. Wittenberg also sees the completion of Absalom, Absalom! as a possible catharsis for his childhood jealousy of Dean, who he believed received more attention and affecion from their parents (141).

Wittenberg asserts that Faulkner's strongest novels have "family-centered cruelty and violence, the emotional deprivation of a young man, individual obsession, and the themes of the burden of the past and the divided self," all of which are strongly present in Absalom, Absalom! (141). Carrying this idea of Faulkner's obsession with the theme of "the burden of the past" a step further, she says that Sutpen's story might have had its imaginative origin in the tensions that the author felt in his early life as he struggled with "his own turbulent family heritage" (143). Among the terrible possibilities of family violence that Wittenberg names are "monomania, fratricide, incest, miscegenation, wife-abandonment, and the slaying of a new father by his enraged 'grandfather-in-law'" (131). And Wittenberg's argument that Sutpen is very likely a more realistic and maturer assessment of the great-grandfather
that Faulkner had idolized until this stage in his career rings true (151-52).

As is the case in both *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!* is a story told by several different narrators. According to Michael Millgate, Sutpen is presented to the reader "piecemeal"; each narrator, with a limited knowledge of the man, can only reassemble his character piece by piece (162). Multiple narrators are only a part of the problem of dealing with the family history of the Sutpens; the rest of the problem grows out of the fact that almost all the principal participants except for Rosa Coldfield, whose view of the events is colored by her anger and hatred, are either dead or presumed dead. And while the entire tale, except for one episode, unfolds on a September day in 1909, it actually covers from 1808,¹ the year of Sutpen's birth, until 1910 when the rotting remains of Sutpen's Hundred burn.

In the Sutpen story, there are several women to be considered: Ellen Coldfield, Rosa Coldfield, Judith Sutpen, and Clytemnestra (Clytie) Sutpen, Sutpen's daughter by a slave and, thus, a half-sister to Henry and Judith.² Mrs. Goodhue Coldfield, the mother of Ellen and Rosa, hardly counts; all the reader is told is that she dies giving birth to Rosa, who is almost thirty years younger than Ellen. Thus, any analysis of Mrs. Coldfield would have to be indirect and speculative, based upon what can be deduced
about Ellen's upbringing, a problem because any interpretation of Mrs. Coldfield's role in Ellen's life must come solely from Rosa, who was not present for her sister's first thirty years. There is some difficulty in analyzing for the mother function or looking for Maud Falkner comparisons in Rosa Coldfield, Judith, or Clytie because only one of them is actually a biological mother: Ellen is the mother of Henry and Judith Sutpen, both of whom are older than Rosa. When Mr. Compson tells Quentin about women, "Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do . . . but listen to them being ghosts?" (12), he speaks not only a symbolic truth, but almost a literal truth for the Sutpen story.

Another basic problem in understanding the women in *Absalom, Absalom!* is the necessity first to understand Thomas Sutpen and his motivation; as Irving Howe states it: ". . . no other Faulkner character rules a book so completely as does Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!*" (222). Certainly, Sutpen does dominate the entire family throughout the book: what he decides for the family is what happens; to disagree with him means a break with the family unit, as in Henry's case. Further, both Howe and Hyatt Waggoner see Sutpen as failing because of his innocence (Howe 223; Waggoner 159); however, Howe goes on to point out that regardless of innocence and the fact that Sutpen "harms no
one out of malice or sadism," he "neither searches the source of his fall nor assumes responsibility for its consequences" (223). Sutpen, a man unknown in the county, simply shows up suddenly and expects to come in and fulfill his purpose, a purpose that only he knows and no one understands. He proves a source of amazement to the community because he brings with him some wild, mysterious blacks--two of whom are women--with whom he must communicate in a language that few county residents recognize as a civilized language. So, he obtains his land (some think by trickery) from the Indians, prepares to develop it, and makes plans to build his home with the help of his slaves and the French architect he has brought in with him, a project that takes five years.

During the process of establishing himself in the community, Sutpen stays at his place and works on developing his land and building his home. The townspeople see him but rarely; only those who go out with him to hunt know anything about him, but what they know is very little. During all this time, he remains a mystery to all of his contemporaries except General Compson. It is this Grandfather Compson to whom he unfolds the mystery of his life and his motivation. General Compson knows about Sutpen's childhood spent in poverty, about his moving from the mountains of what would become West Virginia to the tidewaters of Virginia, about his seeing his sister bear two children out of wedlock (his
half-siblings, perhaps?), and about the incident of his being told by a black slave to go to the back door and never to come to the front door of the house again. In relating this last incident to Grandfather Compson, Sutpen makes it clear that he was not angered at the event, only confused. He tells about going apart in quiet to think out what has happened. It is this tendency for Sutpen to stay still and quiet, thinking through what is happening around him, in which some critics see a Faulkner likeness. Minter records the fact that Maud Falkner put the young William Faulkner into a very restrictive back brace to correct a tendency to stoop; during the two years that the boy wore the brace, which prevented his active participation in the sports he loved, he continued and deepened "his experiments with stillness and silence," and "he experimented more concertedly with withdrawal" (15). These experiments could very well have been the source of the type of behavior that Faulkner attributed to Sutpen's plotting of his life.

In the course of his conversations Sutpen reveals to Grandfather Compson how out of his reflection upon his experience, he came to the conclusion that to be someone in southern society, he had to have land, a grand home, and slaves, no matter whether he believed in or agreed with the system. And so, he set out to acquire money, to attain power, and to earn respect as he saw it, albeit it a grudging respect. He was unusual in the South in that he
apparently did not consider black slaves as necessarily inferior human beings; for example, the novel makes clear that after the Civil War he did not join in the revolts against Reconstruction nor join the Ku Klux Klan. It shows instead how he worked and lived alongside his slaves during the building of his house, how he dressed, or rather undressed, as the slaves did for work, and how he slept in a tent or on the floor of the unfinished house as they did. It reveals how he spent time teaching the slaves what he wanted done on the house and how to do the job properly rather than just ordering them to do it and then criticizing what they might have done wrong. It also appears as if Henry and Judith both knew that Clytie was their half-sister and that Clytie, even when they had reached their adulthood, enjoyed the privilege of being on a first name basis with Henry and Judith as opposed to addressing them as "Miss" or "Master" respectively. Thus, it is clear that Sutpen not only is not angered and put off by his earlier experience with Southern black slaves, but that he also may really, to some extent, appreciate that the slave is also a person with thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Once he had thought his life through and made his plans, Sutpen dedicated himself to active participation in whatever effort was necessary to attain his goals, taking an active role in the dirty and the hard tasks. He decides that he cannot allow anyone to interfere with his design.
All must conform to his will. That means that the women necessary to reaching his goal cannot refuse what he asks or orders. Consequently, they will not be able or may not be allowed to become what Virginia Satir calls enabling or congruent communicators who have the skills to raise a healthily functional family (Satir, *Peoplemaking* 72-73; Satir, *The Satir Model*, 65-66).

After constructing and adorning his house, Sutpen had to further his plan; he had to have a wife from whom he could get sons to continue his line and through whom he could preserve his name and his property. Some call that founding a dynasty; Sutpen called it his design. Only General Compson knows and passes along the story of Sutpen’s time in Haiti, about the revolt among the workers, and about the arranged marriage as a reward for his putting down the revolt almost singlehandedly. The only matter about which General Compson has no exact information is the reason for Sutpen’s leaving his first wife; he knows only that she did not fit Sutpen’s design. Sutpen, thus, makes his first serious mistake when he puts aside Eulalia Bon, his octoroon wife, and the partially Negro son and justifies his action because the information about her heritage had been withheld from him; as Cleanth Brooks says it: "Human beings cannot be dealt with in terms of mere justice—certainly one cannot deal with one’s wife in such terms" (*First Encounters* 211). As Faulkner put it, Sutpen "wanted sons and got sons who
destroyed him" (Gwynn and Blotner 73); but when he seeks to apply the same concept of justice he had used against Eulalia Bon to those sons, they thwart his plans.

Sutpen establishes himself as the type of communicator that Virginia Satir would classify as super-reasonable. Every phase of his life is all thought out, planned during his great reflective silences; the grand design must prevail; anything that gets in the way must be set aside so that the plan can succeed. In his early experience at the rich man’s door, an incident in which he experiences being the target of super-reasonable communication, Sutpen does appear to experience envy. His envy manifests itself in his desire to have the same power and respectability that others seemingly enjoy as if the position of the empowered over the powerless were their own special divinely granted right. Once Sutpen arrives in Yoknapatawpha County, he tries to provoke envy in others by becoming a self-made man, able to wrest his fortune and his plantation from the land and to gain respect from the community through his own efforts and planning. The next step for Sutpen to accomplish in his grand design requires that he have a wife who would be acceptable to the community and who would give him sons to carry on his name.

What little is known of Ellen Coldfield starts with her engagement and marriage to Thomas Sutpen. For Ellen the arranging and planning of the marriage is traumatic. Mr.
Coldfield's agreeing to Ellen's engagement and marriage is not completely understandable. First, she does not seem to have been given much choice about whether she wants to marry Sutpen. Second, she must work with Mr. Coldfield's dislike and distrust of Sutpen, feelings that arose from some questionable business deal that Sutpen instigated and got Coldfield involved in. Perhaps the Coldfields push Ellen toward marriage because she has not had many suitors, or perhaps Ellen is forced to marry Sutpen to keep him quiet about Mr. Coldfield's part in their business deal.

Mr. Compson tells Quentin that the wedding itself is a problem for Ellen: the argument about how large it was to be, the aunt's insisting on Mr. Coldfield's allowing her to wear powder—a decision that Ellen, even though old enough to make up her own mind, apparently was not allowed to make—to cover the tears, Ellen's crying all the way to the Church; Mr. Compson says, "It was the wedding which caused the tears: not marrying Sutpen" (49). Finally, Ellen had to endure the insults of the town riffraff's throwing dirt and rotted vegetables at Sutpen. Ellen, who must have felt helpless in what appears to be an arranged marriage and felt trapped between the arguments of her father and her aunt, would probably assume the role of what Satir calls placating communication through which she would try to please both parties and make them feel guilty for what they are doing to her. Or she could turn to blaming communication, which,
according to Satir, may provoke fear in the receivers and cause them to cooperate with her wishes.

Another striking phenomenon is that through all of this, except for the tears, Ellen’s words are not recorded. Nor is any mention made of why it is the aunt who takes such a prominent part in the arrangements of the wedding. Where was Ellen’s mother? She was not to die until seven years later when Rosa was born. Was she perhaps angry and upset over the fact that Mr. Coldfield would allow Ellen to marry someone like Sutpen? Or, was she merely content to sit back and let the aunt and the father take the active roles? Is this any indication of Mrs. Coldfield’s being a blaming communicator, who, in order to control her husband, would leave her daughter in the lurch on her wedding day? (Or did Faulkner just forget—as he often did with characters’ names, dates, and the like—that she would still have been alive at the time of the wedding?) If Mrs. Coldfield simply refused to attend the wedding because she could not agree with its arrangement, then Ellen, profiting from this example and perhaps from her mother’s earlier similar reactions, would quickly have come to believe that provoking the other into fear or guilt is how a woman gets what she wants from a man. She would thus have established blaming communication as the best method by which she could hope to get cooperation from Thomas Sutpen.
Following Ellen’s marriage, the relationship that developed between Sutpen and the rest of the Coldfield family points to Sutpen’s reciprocating the feelings that Coldfield had for him. Once Sutpen marries Ellen, he has gotten what he wanted from Coldfield; having no more use for the man, he never visits his father-in-law’s home. If there is any contact with the family, it is on Ellen’s part. Even after his two grandchildren and Rosa Coldfield are born and Coldfield himself has become a widow, all visits are arranged so that Ellen and the children come alone or that, when Coldfield goes out to Sutpen’s Hundred, Sutpen is gone. Whatever the motivation really was, Sutpen certainly had great control over Ellen and the choices she made in her married life.

The manner in which Ellen deals with the problems and disagreements that arise over the children and their upbringing indicates the extent to which Sutpen controlled the woman he married. Ellen gives birth to Henry in 1839 and to Judith in 1841. Apparently she did a somewhat creditable job as a mother because, according to Brooks:

Ellen, the mother of Judith and Henry, was by all accounts a vain and shallow woman. But otherwise, there seems to have been plenty of rugged strength in both the Coldfield and Sutpen families. The Sutpen children would need it: they would have
much to test their powers of endurance. (First Encounters 199)

Whatever strength Henry and Judith develop has to come from someone showing them how to take decisive action when necessary or allowing them the freedom to be decisive. Somehow both Henry and Judith develop the strength and personality to endure. But taking care of children and giving them a fairly decent home life does not assure that they are prepared to be functional family members, and in this case there is not enough evidence to say whether Ellen guided them or failed them.

There are, however, a few indicators of the kind of communication that does exist between Ellen and Sutpen and of what effect their interaction must have had on the children. Henry seems to have much of the character possessed by Mr. Coldfield—settling upon an issue, forming a point of view about it, and sticking with it until completion, resolution, or defeat—a characteristic more strongly apparent in his dealing later with Charles Bon. His personality is more like Ellen's in that he is not the more daring of the two children. On the other hand, Judith is more like Sutpen: she loved the wild drives when the family carriage raced up to the church door each Sunday morning, a ride that terrified Ellen and Henry. Judith's only recorded tantrum occurs when she comes out of the house to find not the team, the carriage, and the Haitian black
driver, but Ellen's "phaeton with the old gentle mare which she drove and the stableboy that [Sutpen] had bought instead of the wild negro" (25). At that point, Rosa, who is telling Ellen's story, argues that Judith is just like Sutpen: "... it had been Judith, a girl of six, who had instigated and authorized that negro to make the team run away. Not Henry, mind; not the boy, ... but Judith, the girl" (25). This point is important because it indicates Sutpen's influence, though not necessarily the type of influence Ellen would have preferred him to exert, in the raising of the children.

Akin to the racing carriage incident is the recording of what is apparently a regular event on the Sutpen land--Sutpen's stripping to the waist and fighting with one of his Haitian Negroes. Again, it is Rosa who tells how Ellen, missing the children, rushes into the stable just as Sutpen wins his fight with the black man and takes the terribly upset Henry into her arms. Even as she cradles the boy in her arms and comforts him, it is Judith she asks about. Sutpen's response indicates that he thinks the little girl is in bed. Ellen's response is: "Don't lie to me, Thomas, ... I can understand your ... wanting Henry to see this; ... I will make myself try to understand it. But not Judith, Thomas. Not my baby girl, Thomas" (30). Actually neither Sutpen nor Ellen has control in this matter; it is quite clear that Judith has been the leading force in this
case. Ellen responds to this situation by blaming, trying to make Sutpen feel some fear for what he has done and to get some future cooperation from him. Being super-reasonable, he responds exactly as expected: "I don't expect you to understand it . . . Because you are a woman. But I didn't bring Judith down here. I would not bring her down here. . . . I swear to it"; to this, Ellen, still blaming, answers, "I wish I could believe you" (30). Most striking in the encounter is that a young child shrieking in fear gathered into Ellen's arms does not receive her immediate attention; rather she turns angrily on her husband, accusing him of allowing them to be there—in spite of the fact that only Henry is visibly present—to witness such violence. Though Ellen's response to the situation is exactly what one would expect from a mother whose child has been exposed to a sight that to her is unthinkably horrible, but it is still the blamer's response and would not be likely to lead to a satisfactory settlement of her objection to Sutpen's parenting of the children. It is a self-centered type of behavior in a person without a positive self image, and logically, if Ellen has the greater influence upon the children, then they will either learn to respond to life in that same manner she does or to reject that method of response because of their experiences with it. A more constructive approach on her part would have been to remove the children from the situation and to work through with
Sutpen what she thinks and feels about the situation and to
express her opinion about how it should have been handled,
perhaps with the two of them agreeing about how to prevent
the children from getting involved in the future. But none
of that happens in the family where the father has almost
total control and uses super-reasonable communication to get
cooperation.

Another of the enigmatic responses that Ellen makes to
the reality of her existence is found in the discussion with
her father about her unhappiness and difficulty of her life
with Sutpen. It is Rosa who tells Quentin how, once when
she was too afraid to go outside to play at Sutpen’s
Hundred, she stood outside the door when Ellen and her
father were talking. She overhears her father telling
Ellen, "Think of the children," and Ellen answering, "What
else do I lie awake at night and do but think of them?"
(27). Mr. Coldfield, knowing that Ellen will not do what he
suggests because separation or divorce was not ordinarily
the way marriage problems were handled in those days, does
not urge Ellen to return to her childhood home. He does
say, "Do you love this . . ." only to have her interrupt,
"Papa" (27). So, though Ellen has not complained, it is
clear that she is unhappy with her life as it is and that
she also chooses not to change it. Even as she speaks with
her father, she is using the blaming mode of communication.
She must have made Mr. Coldfield feel some fear over how her
life will change her and over his part in causing her such anguish by allowing or forcing her into the marriage.

Mr. Compson tells Quentin about how, as her children mature and her marriage deteriorates, Ellen retreats into a world of "pure illusion" (69). At this point, Ellen has moved into the distracting or irrelevant mode of communication in the Satir model. Her responses to life and her behavior are skewed, having no relevance to the dynamics occurring in any interaction. For example, Ellen continues her shopping trips, but instead of going into stores as other customers would, she demands that the workers bring the materials and other goods she wants to look at out to her carriage; she handles and disarranges and rejects everything they show her, all the while imposing upon their gentlemanliness and leaving her mess for them to clean up.

Mr. Compson concludes the following:

if she had had the fortitude to bear sorrow and trouble, [she] might have risen to actual stardom in the role of the matriarch, arbitrating . . . the pride and destiny of her family, instead of turning at the last to the youngest member of it and asking her to protect the others. (69)

And Mr. Compson tells Quentin that Sutpen "had corrupted Ellen in more ways than one" (72). Ellen no longer cares that, in spite of Sutpen's wealth and power, the people do not really like or trust him and that it no longer matters
to her, assuming she knows the story, that Sutpen, having achieved so much of his design, is now acting the same part as the rich man whose black slave had driven him from the front door of the grand house. He enjoys fully the advantage he has gained by careful planning and hard work. And Ellen too not only accepts, but also acts out her role of "chatelaine to the largest, wife to the wealthiest, mother of the most fortunate" (69).

With the advent of the Civil War and the departure of the landowners and their sons for the military, the fortunes of the area change. Ellen too is forced to change. For one thing, she does not really know where her son is: by this time Henry, having had a falling out with his father over Charles Bon, has disappeared. As maintaining appearances gets harder and the comforts of life diminish, Ellen loses even more of her sense of reality, discontinues her routines, practically shuts herself into her home, and declines, a pattern of behavior much like that found in her father. Finally, she takes to her bed and dies. From that deathbed, Ellen turns to Rosa, who is only a teenager and is most inept for the job, and begs: "Protect them," a plea that she refines to "Protect her, at least. At least save Judith" (21, 22).

Ellen can be excused for her lack of parenting skills and even for her lack of communication skills. She was raised by a father who had a very narrow concept of what is
right and wrong and of how to handle the discrepancies he finds between his concepts and reality. His handling of the questionable business deal he and Sutpen once engaged in indicates that he runs from difficulty rather than trying to correct what he objects to. His nailing himself inside the attic during the Civil War, which he does not agree with and in which he does not want to get involved, and then choosing to die rather than to follow through with his protest point out how much he allows his self-centeredness to supersede his responsibility to his other daughter who, as an unmarried teenager, is still his dependent.

Mrs. Coldfield's absence from Ellen's life is strange and unaccounted for. As pointed out, she takes no part in Ellen's marriage, and even though she must still have been around for some of the family dinners that Ellen and later the children attend four times a year at the Coldfield house, no mention is made of her participation in the family. It would seem that she would also go occasionally to the Sutpen home with Mr. Coldfield, but no mention of her, either by Ellen or the children, occurs. At Rosa's birth she dies, leaving the baby to be raised by the father and his unmarried sister. Ellen, left to fend for herself without maturely thought out advice from other women and seemingly without the drive to effect change herself, can hardly be expected to control the situation in which she finds herself: helpless in a marriage to a determined,
power-hungry husband whose only desire is to have a son to carry on his name and to maintain his power through the influence of his wealth and his, as he must view it, empire. Ellen can hardly be expected to develop the skills necessary to be a strong mother figure, able to institute functional dynamics within her family through congruent communication, especially when her husband wants to be the one in complete control.

Ellen, when proposed as a figure for Maud Falkner, serves best when she is thought of as being much the opposite of Mrs. Falkner. Maud was direct and dynamic; she knew her own mind, said what she thought, and required what she believed was appropriate for the family regardless of what her husband and children thought. That she most often was right is to her credit. Not so with Ellen: she seldom stands up to Sutpen when she disagrees with him and has to carry on family activities without his help and his presence because he simply ignores her wishes. Maud was often critical of Murry Falkner because he drank to excess, because he was unhappy with the way his own father had treated him over the issue of the railroad, and because he seemed unable to settle into a stable job that would make the family more secure, and she stuck by that belief. The fictional Ellen, by contrast, seems to have changed any convictions she may once have had and to have begun to enjoy the standard of living that Sutpen could provide for her and
to ignore those things she disagreed with so that she could continue to live well. Perhaps Faulkner created Ellen so different from his mother because he felt the pressure of Maud's influence and wanted at times to be left alone to live as he saw fit.

Of the women found in *Absalom, Absalom*, Judith Sutpen is the strongest. As already mentioned, when she is quite young, she shows much of the same daring and determination as her father. In the daily activities the children participate in, Judith seems to have been the leader even though she is younger. Where Henry is afraid, Judith seems to revel in the activity and, at least on the occasion when she slips into the stable to watch her father fight, she finds an ally in her half-sister Clytie who is apparently as daring as she. Thus, Judith, for the most part, is the opposite of Ellen.

But Judith is unusual in that she appears to be able to change as conditions in her life warrant it. As a child she apparently experiences normal everyday activities, as do other children of her culture and society. As she grows, she has Negro slaves about her all the time, but one to whom she is especially close is Clytie, her half-sister who is seven years older than she. Her acceptance of Clytie as a part, albeit it an unusual part, of the family indicates that she has absorbed her father's apparent lack of prejudice toward the black; Clytie, thus, can enjoy special
privileges that other blacks at Sutpen’s Hundred cannot. So the reader is not surprised to find Clytie more closely associated with both Judith and Henry in their various antics than would normally be expected.

Apparently Judith is able, in spite of being a dynamic tomboy, to develop the good social graces required by Jefferson society. She accompanies her mother on the courtesy visits to the women in town, even to some of the very ones "whom the aunt had tried to force to attend the wedding twenty years ago" (69). Judith could very well have become the same kind of social figure her mother was if circumstances had not altered her life. The first change to influence Judith’s social development occurs when Henry brings his college friend home. Naturally, Judith accepts quite readily the friend of her older brother; in fact, she is quite fascinated by him. Even though Judith sees Charles Bon only three times—-at Christmas, the following summer, and the next Christmas—-she agrees to his proposal of marriage. And when her brother disappears along with Charles Bon, she hears none of the details of the conversation that took place between Henry and their father; she knows only of his fight with their father and his repudiation of his birthright. Neither Sutpen nor Henry sees fit to tell her the reason for the rift.

Meanwhile, Judith, directed by Ellen, who obviously does not know the truth about Sutpen’s relationship, begins
preparing for her marriage. In accordance with Brooks's earlier mentioned assessment that Ellen is shallow, Elisabeth S. Muhlenfeld says that "when [Ellen's] own daughter falls in love, that love is not worthy of mention—her concern is only for the engagement" (300); it is after the engagement that Judith, being guided by her mother through all the social preparations for a marriage (never mind the development of a personal relationship that should occur between the two parties), begins to exhibit a romantic attitude toward her surroundings. During the shopping excursions to Jefferson and Memphis, the formerly dynamic leader of childhood activities is now described as "the dreamy and volitionless daughter who had not spoken one word" (71). This change is significant: the former Judith, who could at best have been characterized as a blaming communicator throwing tantrums or as a super-reasonable observer of violence, now seems to be a vague, off-the-subject distracting communicator. As such, it would not have been long before she would have been a good reflection of Ellen.

Almost fortuitously, the Civil War begins. When Bon and Henry leave for war, Judith gives Bon a case with a picture of herself in it and begins to plan for her fiance's return and the wedding that they will celebrate. What follows has to rank high among the strangest courtships in literature: Judith plans for her eventual marriage; Henry
and Bon go off to the same regiment, and Judith and Bon apparently never communicate in writing during the entire Civil War except for the one letter, which she later gives to Grandmother Compson. And still neither Henry nor Sutpen bothers to tell Judith that Charles Bon is Sutpen's son, a condition that she would logically be expected to agree would make the marriage impossible. In fact, Henry's lack of reaction to the revelation of the relationship is quite surprising. Could it be that Henry is not too concerned about incest and miscegenation because he is a product of the south in which both were quite common between the black slave and the white master? Has he perhaps even sought his own pleasure in the slaves' quarters? Or is it more likely that the son has unconsciously accepted the attitude of a father who may have seen two incestuous children spawned by his own male parent during childhood? Whatever the cause for his reaction—and all are good possibilities—Henry cannot accept that incest is the problem.

Because of the war, it is only a matter of time until the decline in the South's resources makes life hard. There is no way to keep up the agricultural economy. The men will not be able to see to the management of the plantations, the family, and the slaves. What living a person may hope to wrest from the land under such hard conditions will disappear if the enemy soldiers pass through and need for themselves what they find growing in the fields or the
horses and mules they find in the stables. Naturally, it will fall to the women to keep the family and the home together until the return of the men. And that is exactly what Judith does. She takes control of the situation and begins the task of survival along with Clytie and Wash Jones. In the midst of the war, Ellen, wooed no longer by the hope of an advantageous marriage for Judith or of being able to live as she had been accustomed and crushed by her son’s repudiating his birthright, simply dies. The fact that Judith gathers her strength and resources in the face of the war and Ellen’s collapse represents another change in the younger woman. Now Judith appears to become a congruent communicator: she appears to look upon the reality of her existence and to deal with it in a mature, adult fashion. Missing in her response, if one takes time to examine it, are the feelings that her situation would be expected to evoke; for example, what are her reactions to Ellen’s death? No emotional outburst on Judith’s part is recorded. What appears to be a mature response that is simply absent of feelings may actually be a super-reasonable response. And had Judith not taken the direct actions she did—that is, making the logical responses to the changes in her life—it would be too hard to see her as congruent.

While Judith plows, plants a kitchen garden, and struggles to survive at home, Henry and Charles fight through the war relatively unscarred except for Bon’s wound.
All during this time, Henry, troubled by the information about Bon’s background given him by Sutpen, watches Bon. Supposedly he has met Bon’s octoroon mistress and son and has wondered about whether there has been a marriage or just an affair. Having been told by Sutpen that Bon is his half-brother, Henry seems not to know whether to believe it, or, if he does believe it, he cannot make the decision to do what is necessary to stop Bon. Henry, still more Coldfield than Sutpen, perhaps hopes that the war will take care of the situation for him, that he will not have to make a decision about how to handle the proposed incestuous, and perhaps bigamous and miscegenational, marriage. If Henry were capable of congruent communication, he could simply have confronted Charles Bon on the issue. Lacking congruent skills, Henry cannot take that step.

Of course, the solution does not remain that simple for Henry. Late in the war, Sutpen travels to the place where Henry’s regiment is located and meets with him. His purpose, since the news about the possible incest has not moved Henry to action, is to tell the boy that Bon has black heritage. That information does provoke a confrontation between Bon and Henry, in which Bon gives Henry his pistol and tells Henry to shoot him. Even that does not move the uncertain Henry to action. Still acting out of his Coldfield nature, he has to wait and make sure he is right, or perhaps he hopes that the bitter activity of the war as
it draws to an end will solve the problem. Henry acts only when the issue is forced: Bon says to him, "No I’m not [your brother]. I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry" (358). Even in the light of that provocation, Henry still prolongs the situation until the two ride through the gate at Sutpen’s Hundred. Finally, he is forced to act, according to Brooks, because of knowledge which he still has not shared with the sister he loves and which forces him to choose between his sister and his half-brother ("History, Tragedy, and the Imagination" 350). Brooks is kind to Henry in that he attributes Henry’s inaction to the love he holds for both Judith and Bon. But in reality, the inaction is thoughtless procrastination. Thus, Bon is shot down just before he gets back to Judith, and the result is that Henry is again forced to flee his home this time out of fear of prosecution. If Henry had been more decisive, he could probably have found several other solutions to the problem that would have spared Judith the shock of seeing her dead fiance and of having to bury him. Certainly, he could have faced Judith directly with the information and allowed her to make her own decision in the matter. If her later actions towards Bon’s other family are any indication, she may possibly not even have been too shocked by the discoveries of her fiance’s past.
In the actions of the Charles Bon who insists on pursuing his objectives there can be found a likeness to William Faulkner. Bon knows that Sutpen is his father, and he comes to Yoknapatawpha in order somehow to make his father acknowledge and recognize him as the son he is. Sutpen, of course, ignores the relationship publicly, choosing only to confide the information privately to Henry. When Bon persists in his purpose by proposing to Judith and following through with plans for marriage as he did, he most likely hoped to force the issue into the open and to make Sutpen recognize him; instead of openly dealing with Charles, Sutpen counteracts by using Henry to solve the matter. Comparison between Faulkner and Bon is possible in this case because Faulkner felt that his father never recognized him as the son he was, much the same as Bon felt unrecognized by Sutpen. Because he felt unable to please or impress his father, Faulkner, as did Bon, felt that he was the unloved son. This tension grew because Faulkner liked more to pursue the artistic and literary tendencies that his mother encouraged rather than really going out for the sports and hunting activities that his father preferred. The fictional Bon thus becomes the instrument for Faulkner to portray and perhaps relieve his sense of inadequacy before his father, a feeling of inadequacy that he could no longer remedy since his father was already dead and Faulkner
no longer had the option of facing his father and talking through the difficulty (Wittenberg 150).

One further shock still awaits Judith: in preparing Bon's body for burial, Judith finds on his person the picture case she had given to him. Opening the case in which she expected to find her own picture, she is confronted by the face of another woman and a boy. Anyone weaker than Judith would have collapsed emotionally at learning that she was not the choice of or the object of her fiancé's love. Still a strong, stubborn Sutpen, Judith not only is able to handle the shock of her discoveries about Bon, the truth of which Henry may or may not have shared with her before he fled to escape the consequences of the killing, but she also later invites Bon's mistress and son to Sutpen's Hundred to visit his grave, all in spite of the fact that she cannot offer the woman any refined accommodations comparable to what she is accustomed to in New Orleans. Judith, through her sufferings and hardships, learns the skill of caring for and easing the grief of others. She learns to be the congruent communicator even though she appears largely emotionless, if the silence of the novel on the subject is any indication of the facts.

In the years following the war, Judith must still deal with more hardship and difficulties than most ordinary people would be expected to face in one lifetime. Her father returns from the war to find that Rosa Coldfield has
moved in with Judith. Silently, as has been his pattern all
his adult life, he watches Rosa, thinking over his options;
within a short time he is engaged to her. Before he will
agree to set a date for the marriage, he persists in
advancing his grand design by proposing—again the super-
reasonable communicator—that they conceive a son to replace
the missing Henry so that the dynasty will survive. As
would be expected in the face of such an insult, Rosa is so
outraged that she moves back to her father’s house and lives
there dependent first upon Judith and later the community to
provide her with what she needs, even her food. From that
time on, her relations with the Sutpen family remain distant
and estranged. Her responses to Thomas Sutpen contain the
same blaming quality found in much of Ellen’s responses.
And Sutpen has already proved in the cases of both Eulalia
and Ellen that a blaming communication is not going to
provoke the expected fearful compliance from him. Thus Rosa
who has had to struggle to grow up, guided by a father she
hated for making her mother pregnant and bringing her into
the world at the expense of the life of the one person who
she believes could have helped her, cannot be a mother
replacement for Judith because it is crystal clear that Rosa
is the one in need of mothering. And it is Rosa’s very need
of such care that makes it impossible to see in her any
parenting qualities or to compare her in any way to Maud
Falkner.
The responsibility of keeping the home place going, raising what is needed to feed and clothe the people still living there falls largely on Judith. Sutpen, apparently unremorseful over his own inability to act in solving the problem of Charles Bon and thus losing his only male heir through flight from prosecution, continues to be obsessed with his grand design and takes no interest in running the plantation and providing for his household. He seeks a man child to carry on his name; upon Rosa’s refusal to have a child prior to marriage, Sutpen impregnates Wash Jones’ granddaughter, who thwarts the plan by giving birth to a girl. Sutpen’s outrageous behavior will not be ignored in this case: he is not pursuing a so-called gentlewoman when he makes an alliance with Milly Jones. When Sutpen tries to treat Wash and Milly as he might treat a farm animal, Wash, having no position in society to protect or lose, does not simply get angry and walk away as someone in the plantation society might have done. Finally, Sutpen is faced by someone who demands that he take responsibility for his actions and who kills him when he tries to abandon the mother and child.

Sutpen’s death requires Judith, as the survivor, to step forward and permanently to become the decision maker for the family. She has to bury a family member who perishes because he cannot face reality, and again she emerges as the strong woman who steps in and takes over to
retrieve the situation for those who have to live on. Again, as has happened several times in this family, Judith's response to the death of her father is strikingly different from what is expected. There is no recorded emotional outburst, only calm handling of whatever actions the situation requires. Such a controlled response on the daughter's part in dealing with such a catastrophic event so calmly is strong evidence of congruent communication in the face of stark reality.

As time goes on, Judith continues to work on what is left of the original home place. In addition, she saves up hard-earned money until she is able to purchase a stone for Charles Bon’s grave. When word comes that Bon’s octoroon mistress has died, Judith sends for Charles Etienne Saint-Valery Bon, the son, intending to raise him as he should be raised, thus ironically becoming a mother when she takes responsibility for Charles Bon’s family, a family that could have been hers. Once Judith has taken Charles Etienne in, she and Clytie do as much for him as they are able. What must have been hard for him is being brought to the house by Clytie, "the fierce brooding woman who had come and got him" and being taken to "the calm white one who was not even fierce, who was not anything except calm," but "who was somehow so closely related to him as to be the owner of the one spot on earth where he had ever seen his mother weep" (197). So he comes without resistance, but also without a
feeling of being embraced in warmth and love. The reader is told that the boy notices that he receives the choicest food from what the two women have prepared, often at sacrifice to themselves. He sleeps on a trundle bed next to Judith's, not on a pallet like Clytie's, and when he moves into the hall, he is given a cot while Clytie humbly remains on a pallet. So, to a large extent, he receives treatment akin to that a son of the family would receive, as opposed to the treatment that would ordinarily have been given a Negro child.

There is nothing Judith can do about the anger Charles Etienne has over his life and his deprivation, but she can and does try to help him shape his future, all guidance that he rejects. She accepts it when, after Charles Etienne's fight with the black dice players, Grandfather Compson tells her that the young man has to leave the area for a while to avoid going to jail. After Charles Etienne returns to what is left of Sutpen's Hundred with an obviously black wife who is almost ready to deliver a child, Judith speaks to the young man about his future: she promises to raise his child and to take care of the woman too; she offers him the money necessary to go up North; she encourages him to pass himself off as white and to make something of himself. She even offers to pass him off as Henry's son; he answers, "No, Miss Sutpen" (208). She asks him to call her "Aunt Judith," a request he apparently refuses. In spite of her failure to
have any real effect upon Charles Etienne's life, Judith, continues trying to help. And taking care of Charles Etienne proves to be the cause of Judith's death when she contracts yellow fever while nursing him.

What is left to say about Judith? She certainly tries to be a good mother for Charles Bon's son, and she does it without showing any resentment for her own deprivation in the matter. Is she merely being a good super-reasonable mother substitute who really has no feeling for the child and the man? To conclude that would be unfair. Even as a child she was an incurable adventure seeker. In spite of the fact that she changed some as she went through her adolescence and engagement, she still remains, inasmuch as she is able, the same efficient and effective Judith she was before the war. If she is recorded as being unusually solemn and if her calm demeanor seems too uncaring, she can be justified in the light of what she has had to experience and to suffer personally. Certainly, as a mother figure, Judith has to be classified as a congruent communicator from sometime during the Civil War on until her death. Her only failures, if they can even be termed failures, are that she cannot change her own demeanor which comes across as cold and unfeeling--making her appear super-reasonable--and that she cannot overcome the effects of the other person's experiences, those parts of his life that makes him refuse to respond to her congruent parenting.
With Judith's death the emphasis in the novel shifts from her to Clytie and draws to a close the Sutpen family history. This black daughter of Sutpen is the same type of character and communicator as is Judith, proven in her willingness to join Judith in adventure seeking as a child, in the struggle to survive through the Civil War, and in the effort to take care of Charles Bon's family. As she makes her way through life alongside Judith, Clytie proves to have the same quiet strong character needed to live off a dying land. She not only survives after Judith's death, but she also scrimps and saves money—extremely hard to come by after the war—in order to pay off what is still owed on Judith's gravestone. In addition, she is able, with Jim Bond's help, to maintain the plantation homestead to some degree even though the wood is rotting and most of the windows no longer have glass in them.

Finally, she rounds out the family story when, on that September night, Rosa Coldfield convinces the reluctant, but intrigued, Quentin Compson to go out to the house to find out what Clytie is hiding. When they discover that an old and sick Henry has returned to the rotting house to live out his days, Rosa begins to fret about the care she believes that Henry needs and desires. Clytie, knowing exactly what he wants, watches as Rosa tries to get an ambulance up to the house; then, believing that the real purpose of the journey is to arrest and prosecute Henry for the murder of
Charles Bon, Clytie sets fire to the house, a fire in which both she and Henry perish.

In writing about *Absalom, Absalom!* several biographers discuss Faulkner's resentment over the treatment he received from his parents. Wittenberg dwells most on the relationship between Faulkner and Murry, his father. Her theory is that Faulkner had finally come to grips with the fact that he would never be able to be what his father wanted him to be and that he had found his place in being the artist-writer that fit more into his mother's vision of what his life should be—a decision that tied him more closely to his great-grandfather; in addition, since Murry Falkner had died in 1932, four years before *Absalom, Absalom!* was completed and published, Faulkner would never be able to reconcile with his father and would never receive from his father the recognition he had sought (Wittenberg 150, 152). Both Minter and Blotner deal with the dominance exercised by Maud over the Falkner boys and their resentment of it (Minter 10; Blotner 631). Even though Minter posits resentment in William Faulkner's seemingly deliberate attempts as a young man to rebel against Maud, he attributes actions such as Faulkner's daily visits to her during his adult life as admiration (16-17). If it is not admiration, those daily visits indicate dutifulness, possibly even some fear, in a son who has learned respect for his mother's values and goals. Certainly Judith, in her determination to
survive and to help others survive and in her calm and almost cold pursuit of caring for those dependent upon her, is most like the Maud Falkner who raises four sons, teaches them to read, sees to it that they have the training that could help them to succeed in their world, and does her best to see that they do not fall victims to the same weaknesses their father had: alcohol and the inability to hold a steady job. But as did Maud Falkner, Judith has to endure those who resist her efforts and fear her domination and whom she does not succeed in leading to live up to her ideals. The young Charles Etienne who stands before Judith Sutpen, unwilling to raise his head, to look her in the face, and to call her Aunt Judith, is reminiscent of the young Faulkner who resists some of his mother's attempts to change him. Even though Judith really proves to be a congruent communicator who should be a successful mother figure, she cannot reach through the resentment of Charles Etienne to what may have been a more stable person inside. In the same way, Maud Falkner, while inspiring the artistic talents in her oldest son, cannot reach through to what she considers the better core of a William Faulkner whom she wanted to be able to resist alcohol. Of all the women in Absalom, Absalom!, Judith functions best as a figure for Maud Falkner.
Notes

1There is some confusion when ages of and dates for some of the characters given in the novel are compared to those in the "Chronology" and the "Genealogy" found at the end. For more information on incorrect dates, see Cleanth Brooks, "Chronology and Genealogy of Absalom, Absalom! as Given in the Modern Library Edition," William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country (New Haven: Yale UP, 1963), 424-26.

2Milly Jones who gives birth to Sutpen’s child in 1869 is not mentioned in this list because she only bears another daughter to Sutpen and does not enter into or affect the family directly. A better elaboration of her affair with Thomas Sutpen is found in the short story "Wash," The Portable Faulkner, Malcolm Cowley, ed., Rev. ed., (New York: Viking, 1974).
CHAPTER VI

THE SNOPES FAMILY

Another family contributing significantly to the everyday life of Yoknapatawpha County is the Snopeses. From the first appearance of Abner (Ab) Snopes in the county until the death of his son Flem Snopes, this particular group ranks among the most entertaining of Faulkner’s fictional families, and, at the same time, among the most peculiar. Whereas the older families in the county had the custom of naming children after other family members for generation after generation (e.g., the Sartoris or Compson families), the Snopeses’ given names show no such sense of family history and, in turn, provoke laughter:

Among the Snopeses, children are named for neighbors (Colonel Sartoris), or saints (St. Elmo), or politicians (Bilbo and Vardaman), or animals (Mink); or heroes (Admiral Dewey), or mail order houses (Montgomery Ward), or poets (Virgil and Byron), or historical events (Wallstreet Panic). (Minter 180)

But at the same time, the Snopeses prove a puzzle, one that apparently Faulkner himself never solved to his satisfaction. He is recorded in Faulkner in the University as saying that they were "like ants or like mold on cheese"
(193) and that he was "terrified" of them (197) as though he believed they could perhaps be responsible for the downfall of any remnant of the southern genteel society that survived, or perhaps that they might be the very instruments that would cause an already weakened and corrupted southern society to become even weaker or to die out. Hyatt Waggoner's definition for Snopesism—"avarice married to pure animality"—only partially describes this family: he compares Flem with ruminant animals because of his constant chewing, but elevates him to humanity through his avarice (184).

As illustrated by Flem, the central Snopes figure, these people are the poor whites trying to move up in their society, practicing their avarice by trying to become the newly rich in the county, and they are determined to accomplish their goal at any cost. And there is one quality that the Snopeses do share with several of the other Yoknapatawpha families: the men are the dominant force within the family. In the Snopes family, for example, the men's decisions control what the family does and how the family lives. If the men decide to move, the whole family is forced to concur with the decision. The family may not like it and may complain about it, but the family moves.

The Snopes family is large; as the reader traces the members through the Snopes Trilogy, the impression is that they form a long line slowly approaching Frenchman's Bend,
waiting one behind the other in the wings until the immediately previously arriving Snopes has moved on to whatever advantageous job has opened so that the next in line may move up into the village to assume the vacated place. In all the maneuvering and moving around that goes on, the source of the movement, the one with the motivation and the know-how necessary to get ahead politically and economically, is Flem, who, of course, is the wealthiest member of the family. Flem, as the head of his family and of the Snopes clan, is in charge in much the same way as a Sutpen, a Sartoris, a Compson, or a Falkner. He decides where the family lives, makes the rules for the family, takes care of the money, and promotes the others to their new positions. The difference between him and, for example, the Falkner men lies in his motives—as said earlier, Flem wants to get rich and powerful. The Falkner men occupy the chief position because they inherit it as a part of southern family tradition from an already previously established generation of the family.

Flem’s responses to other people are based only upon what he believes will achieve his goal to get rich. Faulkner himself gives the clue: "Snopes’s design was pretty base—he just wanted to get rich, he didn’t care how"; further, he only wanted respectability when he "found out he had to have it" (Gwynn and Blotner 97–98). Flem, having grown up in a male dominated family, has gone without the
type of feminine parenting he needs to equip him for the 
communication and personal interaction that would have 
fitted him to achieve his goal in a more acceptable manner. 
In his family there is no mother figure able to initiate the 
kinds of dynamics and communications that foster functional 
family relationships. Consequently, Flem manipulates people 
around him in the same manner he has seen his father treat 
the mother, the sisters, and the younger son in the family. 

As Flem grows up, he lives with dysfunctional family 
communication. Ab Snopes, who participates in Granny 
Millard’s mule trade in *The Unvanquished*, is Flem Snopes’ 
father in "Barn Burning." Flem stands by in almost total 
silence, watching how Ab controls and dominates the entire 
family, doing exactly what he is told to do, and not 
protesting what happens to the family. As do the mother of 
the family, the aunt, the two daughters, and young Sarty, 
Flem moves from place to place under the cloud of disgrace 
brought on by Ab’s propensity for arson when he is angry 
with his landlords or imagines that they have mistreated 
him. The mother and aunt complain to one another about the 
constant moving from one tenant farm to another, never 
confronting Ab, the cause of the problem and the one person 
who is able to change the behavior. And certainly they 
would accomplish nothing by remonstrating with him; he, 
believing in the traditional family structure in which the
male parent's word is law, would simply tell them to do as they are told. He is quick to enforce obedience to his will.

When it becomes apparent to Ab that Sarty, Flem's younger brother, is planning to warn Major de Spain about impending arson, Ab drags the boy to Lennie Snopes, his mother, ordering her to hold him; in the event that she should refuse to obey, he threatens to enforce his order by tying the child to a bed. Ab's implied blaming of Lennie for lack of cooperation, a dysfunctional mode of communication identified in the Satir model, provokes the expected fearful response: Lennie promises to hold the boy, even though she knows it is a physical feat beyond her strength. If she had hoped that placating Ab would arouse the expected guilt in him and would prevent his burning Major de Spain's barn, she is placing too much hope in her husband's being functional.

As for Sarty, not even the love of his mother can prevent his leaving the family because he can no longer survive with his father, whose personal code requires that one "learn to stick to your own blood or you ain't going to have any blood to stick to you" ("Barn Burning" 8). It is in this dysfunctional family that Flem Snopes will mature and plan his own future, a future that he pursues in order to achieve a place in society beyond that of any other member of the clan. Flem, too, eventually leaves the family home, but he goes in order to find his own future.
As the major figure in the Snopes Trilogy, Flem is an enigma. Lyall H. Powers believes that Flem is the "paradigm" of Snopesism, the "super-Snopes," and that all Snopeses are "parasites": from this base he draws two principles: "Snopeses appear wherever they can take advantage of human frailty, human weakness, human sinfulness," and "they represent the unnatural—the corruption, spoiling, frustration, or misdirection of natural (and hence good) tendencies" (146). Certainly, most Snopeses are outside the ordinary expectations that people generally have for society.

Flem is the central focus of the trilogy: *The Hamlet* is the story of Flem's taking over Frenchman's Bend, *The Town* of his venture into Jefferson, and *The Mansion* of his conquering the de Spain family, not the rise to prominence in the state that Waggoner projects (232). And the Flem Snopes who moves into Frenchman's Bend and proceeds to fulfill his own personal goals has some considerable, perhaps even devious, degree of intelligence. In order to achieve what he wants, he can allow serious opposition from no man, woman, and child. He surveys the situation and figures out that Will Varner is the most successful man in Frenchman's Bend: Varner has control of the real estate in the area, of the general store, of the lending and borrowing for the farms, of the local cotton gin, of the blacksmith shop, and of the veterinary practice. In most of these
ventures, Will Varner is willing to sit back and let someone else do the supervising. Apparently, Jody Varner, Will's son, has become the clerk in the store so that he can begin taking over the whole operation, but perhaps he has not advanced beyond that and the gin operation because he is not sharp enough. And it is not long before the men of Frenchman's Bend who lounge in front of the store notice that Flem is telling Jody what to do or is being assisted by Jody. Flem has managed to arrive at this point in his life without having to learn the congruent communication ordinarily expected to keep customers and co-workers satisfied. Once established in the local society Flem prepares his advance into power and wealth and goes on to establish himself more firmly as the moving force in the hamlet. To achieve his ends Flem becomes expert at the computing response, thus evoking in the residents of the village the expected envy at his success; at the same time, the villagers express their dislike and distrust by trying to outwit him.

For Flem to achieve his goal, he must oust others from their positions in society for his own personal gain, and, to be true to the blood as his father has taught him, he must reward his own family members. Having already displaced Jody Varner, Flem moves to the next step in his advancement. In taking over as the store's clerk, he occasionally departs from his usual silent, chewing stare
for blaming communication when it suits his purposes. He even has the temerity to treat Will the same as other customers: "'You ain't paid for it,' the clerk said. . . . 'The tobacco'" (The Hamlet 54). And, having gradually taken over in Frenchman's Bend, Flem begins to appoint other Snopes men to positions from which he evicts other villagers. Subtly Flem advances his cause by "out-Varnering" Will Varner: by driving a harder bargain, by being a sharper trader, by cheating borrowers more subtly. Flem, then, fits fully Sally R. Page's defining of the men in terms of bartering, rarely willing to pass up the opportunity to make a trade (154). In all such ventures, Flem still has not had to develop any personal relational skills or any communication skills; he has fine-tuned the art of simply chewing his tobacco endlessly and silently staring down his opponent, or when a verbal response is required, his answers, short and direct, are much the same as he has heard his father use.

Certainly if Flem can brook no opposition from other males, still less can he allow a woman to have the upper hand. Judith Bryant Wittenberg characterizes Flem, and most other Snopeses as well, as "morally" stunted (186). Kenneth E. Richardson refines that definition:

Flem Snopes is the particular creation of Faulkner to represent . . . predatory amorality; in Flem's actions we read the destructive record of man's
inhumanity to man under the cloak of
respectability for the express purpose of material
reward. (114)

Those definitions seem a bit strong when they are applied to Flem, especially when he uses his cunning to overcome someone like a Will Varner who himself is a slick trader and not above some chicanery. But Flem carries Will Varner’s traits one step further. Flem may simply stare down the men with whom he deals, but he treats the women as if they were senseless creatures, unable to understand the world of men, and lacking the ability or character to match wits with a man. To illustrate, Will Varner controls the women in his household, but he does not cheat other women when they suffer a misfortune. Flem takes advantage of women because he believes they are weak and inferior. When Armstid’s wife comes to reclaim the money the Texan left with Flem to be returned to her, Flem, the very correct emotionless super-reasonable communicator, denies receiving it: "He took all the money with him when he left. . . . I reckon he forgot it" (The Hamlet 315-16). Then he insults her by giving her a few cents worth of candy to feed her children. As Mrs. Armstid leaves, the store clerk voices what everyone understands about Flem: "By God, . . . you cant beat him" (317). Later, he will repeat this behavior by consciously using his wife and her daughter to satisfy his greed for
wealth, to buy a better position for himself in the community, and to further his plan for respectability.

Even Flem’s acquisition of a wife is a means to fulfilling his goal, merely another part of his rise to economic affluence. He is already on his way to controlling Frenchman’s Bend: many of his relatives have reasonably good positions in the village because of him. He has successfully moved Jody out of Varner family prominence, and he is biding his time until he can take over without much cost to himself what he perceives as a lucrative piece of Will Varner’s property: the Old Frenchman’s Place. Maneuvering to acquire the place even gets Flem the daughter of the leading citizen of Frenchman’s Bend as wife.

While Flem secretly covets the Old Frenchman’s Place, Jody provides the catalyst that brings the whole issue to a head, for it is Jody, not Mr. or Mrs. Varner, who insists that Eula Varner must go to school. Prior to Eula’s enrollment in school, she has remained so magnificently silent and motionless that Page can say that “the feminine quality of motionlessness is so exaggerated in her that Faulkner’s description of it merges into the ridiculous” (16). Eula is portrayed in The Hamlet as physically developing very quickly and as being so lazy that she will not move off a chair to walk across a room or will place all her dolls on a chair around her so that she does not have to move to play with them. During that period of Eula’s life,
Mrs. Varner does not teach Eula the social skills she needs for future relationships. Yet, what is this daughter but a mirror of her father’s profound idleness in his hammock at home? Her constant eating, particularly of cold, baked sweet potatoes, smacks of the absurd. She should be quite unattractively fat, but apparently she is only voluptuous. And where is she to get the guidance she needs from her mother so that she can acquire the social skills necessary to become a wife and mother in the next generation? How can such a female be taken seriously? In this case, the communication skills in the Satir model would have prevented some of the difficulties Eula had to go through. If she could get past the blaming communication of her mother and brother and cut through the super-reasonable communication of her father, she could possibly have gotten to congruent communication through which she could have convinced her family to let her make her own choices about her relationships outside the home.

When Jody insists that Eula go to school, he puts her on display in the community. And the expected happens: every male who sees such a well-developed, voluptuous female begins to long for her and to dream of possessing her, not as wife or possible mother for a family, but for pleasure. Once Eula starts attending the social functions that other young men and women go to in the community, the Varner home begins to be haunted by males. Her attractiveness is
obviously sexual: most of the would-be suitors do not have any intention of marriage; they want only one ecstatic instant of gratification. During all this social maneuvering, Eula is silent; because she is silent there is no way to judge her thoughts and her frame of mind. When Labove, the school teacher, is actually the first to try to possess Eula, she speaks out, soundly putting him in his place: "Stop pawing me . . . you old headless horseman Ichabod Crane" (*The Hamlet* 122), a remarkably strong-minded statement from a young woman who supposedly has gotten nothing from her educational experience.

Eula’s response to Labove is significant. Here is a girl, at most sixteen-years-old, who can assert herself when a man she does not want tries to rape her. "Stop pawing me" is a most direct statement, worthy of being called congruent communication: Eula takes charge, makes her will known, and stands up for what she wants or believes is right for her. When she adds "you old headless horseman Ichabod Crane," she lapses into the typical blaming mode that she hears so often at home: no longer is she simply taking charge of her life as any adult would, she is trying to make Labove fear that he will be found out. Were it not for the fact that no parent or older brother or other suitor came after Labove for trying to seduce Eula, it would be a temptation to say that she is successful in her communication. But no one challenges the teacher before he leaves the community; Eula
believes him unimportant. And if Eula had been completely confident of herself and her place in her circle of existence, she could simply have let Labove know that she did not appreciate his attentions and left the school, and that would have been the end of the incident. Still Eula has indicated the possibility of developing into a congruent communicator, and has done so without help from her mother who would ordinarily have been in charge of the skills the daughter learns. And where is her mother during this period? Mrs. Varner places her own activities—baking for the church, canning vegetables, getting her afternoon nap, and the like—ahead of spending time talking to or instructing her daughter. Eula is left much to her own resources. In this particular instance, she appears already to have developed a sense of and, at least, some notion of how to get what she wishes.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to believe that Eula is immature and does not understand what is going on; when she returns to the schoolroom and sees Labove embracing her bench, she understands perfectly the implications of his longing: "[Labove] knew that she not only recognized the place at which he knelt, but that she knew why" (The Hamlet 120). She treats all her suitors in the same way she has treated Labove, albeit it more gently, sending them home at night, tensely watching each other to assure that no one of them gets an unfair advantage or extra recognition from the
young woman. Clearly Eula is watching for some young man that she cannot resist, one worthy of her. Hoake McCarron, willing to fight off the five young men who attack them when they are out riding, appeals to that inner element within her that demands a partner masculine enough to match her extraordinary femininity.

When a sixteen-year-old girl finds herself pregnant, the response of other family members often indicates the true degree of communication and interaction present. And Eula’s pregnancy provides some insight into the dynamics among Will Varner, Mrs. Varner, Jody, and Eula. Jody figures out the situation first, and, in his usual rough manner, resorts to blaming in order to extract information about the father from the girl: "Which one was it? Tell me which one"; Eula, in the throes of morning sickness, avoids answering by using irrelevant communication: "Stop shoving me, . . . I don’t feel good" (The Hamlet 141). How long it would have taken Will Varner, who was mixed up in his own clandestine affairs, to learn of Eula’s predicament is uncertain, but Mrs. Varner, upset at having been disturbed, sees to it that her husband is shaken out of his lethargy and sent to protect Eula: "Eula’s got a baby. Go up there and knock that fool in the head" (The Hamlet 141). Had it not been for Will’s intervention, Jody may have actually ended up beating the young woman. When Eula most needs congruent communication, Mrs. Varner responds irrelevantly:
"I'll fix him. I'll fix both of them. Turning up pregnant and yelling and cursing here in the house when I am trying to take a nap!" (The Hamlet 142).

This above scene illustrates how a person cannot be put into one mode of communication and be kept there. Eula and Mrs. Varner have both slipped back and forth between blaming and irrelevant communication as it suits the situation. No one cares that Eula might benefit from understanding, offers of which would have constituted congruent communication. Not one member of Eula’s family approaches her with an offer of help. Her father takes care of the situation in the final analysis by arranging a quick marriage to, of all people, Flem Snopes and by sending the couple off on a prolonged honeymoon to Texas. It is highly unlikely that anyone sat down with Eula and tried to work out alternatives for handling the situation since no one besides Jody actually tries to discover the identity of the father. Judging from the above exchange, Jody and Mrs. Varner engage in blaming communication; Mr. Varner operates from the super-reasonable mode in that he seems to have calmly and coolly, perhaps even rationally, planned Eula’s future, and then insisted that Eula cooperate in the subsequent events, a plan that helped the super-reasonable Flem Snopes to further his plans to take over Frenchman’s Bend. The plan saves face for the family, but it also certainly indicates lack of concern for Eula’s happiness. As Page puts it:
"Eula is sold to Flem" in order to give her child a father (163).

Stranger still is that with so little guidance and help from her mother or any of the other members of her family, Eula apparently develops into a good mother. As with Eula’s story in *The Hamlet*, her story as mother to Linda is engulfed in silence; in order to assess Eula as parent, the reader must put much together from the periphery because any mother-daughter conversations Eula and Linda might have had are not in *The Town*.

Having divested himself of the Old Frenchman’s Place through trickery, Flem leaves Frenchman’s Bend and moves his family to Jefferson. Once situated in town, Flem takes advantage of the opportunity to continue pursuit of his goal, and Eula finds the chance to carve out some satisfaction for herself. After living in a tent behind the restaurant that he has acquired, Flem eventually is able to move his family into a rent house and take a job as superintendent at the power plant, a position created for him by Manfred de Spain as reward for Flem’s not making an issue of or causing scandal over Manfred’s and Eula’s affair. Flem does not even expose the couple when his graft at the power plant costs him his job.

The mayor’s affair with Eula and the issue of graft at the power plant bring Gavin Stevens into the Snopes’ lives and give Stevens, as the town’s attorney, his chance to get
even with de Spain and to gain Eula’s attention for himself. Stevens prepares a suit against Manfred de Spain for creating the position. A maturer Eula, who seems much more perceptive about the needs of others, comes to meet Gavin in his office at night because she understands that he is not outraged by the political maneuvering, so much as he is disturbed by her feminine attractiveness. Eula’s offer of herself to Gavin indicates her perception of his unhappiness and his pain and her belief that she can ease that pain by giving herself to him. The Eula who comes to Gavin to ease his pain is no longer the silent and selfish girl waiting to pick out the one male that can satisfy her. Regardless of what townspeople may think of her and her affair with de Spain, Eula has grown into an individual who cares whether a person is unhappy and who is not upset when the person to whom she offers her help refuses her. Both recognizing another’s unhappiness and seeking to ease it are marks of a perceptive parent. Eula is the one that night who really listens to what is said and responds to what she hears; she is the one who attempts to free Gavin to say what he thinks and feels, even to assure him that it is all right to think and feel the way he does. There is no insult to Eula’s femininity or morals in his desires. The qualities Eula exhibits that night are the marks of a congruent communicator.
If Eula can communicate as congruently with Linda as she does with Gavin Stevens, then Eula can help Linda develop the same capacity. And Eula does find and nurture within herself the capacity for such parenting through the recognition of the need of her child: Faulkner himself says she changed from *The Hamlet* to *The Town* because "she suddenly realizes that this child was growing up and had to be protected" (Gwynn and Blotner 115). Her desire to give her daughter the maternal help that she herself never knew causes Eula to stretch her capacity to respond congruently to life for the sake of another and enables her to put the needs of a child before her own. She believes that it is her obligation to provide for Linda the protection she needs against the manipulation of the man she still believes is her father. It is this Eula, with a concern to parent her child, who returns to Gavin several years later to plead that he help Linda and who, still later, even asks Gavin to marry the younger woman. Where Gavin may have failed only himself when he refuses Eula’s offer, he fails the daughter more seriously by leaving the girl to fend for herself against Flem.

Despite all Eula’s ability to grow in the art of functional, congruent communication, she finds communicating with Flem impossible. Flem has operated so long as the silent chewer who stares down or wears down his adversary that communication is defeated. Flem is on the way to
achieving his goal—becoming president of the bank and defeating Manfred de Spain; and he has it in his power to use Eula and Linda to get what he wants. By the time it is all over, he is named president of the bank, obtains many of the old traditional homes in the town, razes them, and starts building new developments. In short, he has gotten what he wants and controls what he set out to obtain. And use Eula and Linda he does, even when it means that Eula will be destroyed.

Gavin Stevens, who still loves Eula Varner and who becomes aware of Linda Snopes when she is thirteen or fourteen years old, begins to meet the young girl on the street, offers to buy her sodas and ice cream, undertakes to aid her education by discussing books with her, gives her books from time to time, and even convinces himself that he is saving her from Snopesism. He continues in this manner until Linda has finished high school, trying to convince the girl that she should attend a college away from home, the only way he can think of to get her away from Jefferson and out of her father’s clutches. Flem, who has figured out already what he wants and what he has to do, refuses to let her attend even the state university in Mississippi; Linda is forced to attend the young lady’s academy in Jefferson.

Gavin Stevens, not one to let the issue rest, goes to the Snopes’ home to discuss Linda’s future schooling with Eula. At this meeting he finally recognizes that Flem has
been the one to refuse the girl permission to go to school out of town. During this interview Eula asks Gavin for the first time to marry Linda, a request that he not only refuses but that he also does not understand. Gavin will understand only at the last interview he has with Eula before her suicide: if Linda marries, Eula is free to leave Flem Snopes; if Eula leaves Flem, he loses any property she would inherit from her father. When Flem finally outsmarts them all by getting Linda to make him the beneficiary of whatever she is to receive from the Varners, he no longer has any objections to Linda’s enrollment in the state university.

As mentioned earlier, Eula changes because of having the child and realizing that the child needs a mother’s protection. Flem’s manipulations not only free Linda to take charge of her life, but they also free Eula. Once Linda is free and in charge of her own future, Eula faces her own options: if she leaves Flem, she achieves her own happiness; if she takes her own life, she leaves Linda "a mere suicide for a mother instead of a whore" (The Town 340). Eula’s choice of suicide is a harsh one, hard to take, hard to believe in the light of Eula’s vitality. How can a woman so full of life kill herself? Perhaps she already realizes that Flem will only use her death as "another opportunity to enhance his respectability," finally bought with the monument erected on her grave (Richardson
Yet, how can she leave her daughter to handle a father like Flem by herself? Can she be sure that Linda will really be free of Flem? Should she not have been suspicious that Flem could still find some way to control the girl in order to maintain his aura of wealthy respectability? Even though Eula also has her own desires and her own happiness in mind as she strives to free Linda, she can be admired as a mother for caring more for what she left to her daughter than for her own satisfaction. As Page puts it: "The Town portrays Eula's resistance to Flem's powers, and finally her sacrifice of her own life in order to free her daughter from him" (166). The fact is that Eula herself, even though she will not give up her affair with Manfred de Spain, has changed much for her daughter's sake: she has communicated to the girl what she needs to interact to some degree with her peers, has gotten Gavin Stevens to be Linda's mentor as she goes through her education, and has even tried to marry her off to Stevens so that she could be independent of Snopeses.

As she matures, Linda Snopes becomes more and more like her mother except for one attribute: Linda shows herself more articulate than her mother. Even though she suffers the same uncertainties about self and about her relationships with her male classmates as other teenagers, she is already better able to communicate with others than the teenaged Eula had been. She knows that she wants to go
away from Jefferson, but she also accepts gracefully that Flem will not permit her to leave. She has received every opportunity to build her own future: education, proper social skills, more freedom to mingle with her peers. In order for her mother's sacrifice to be meaningful and for her to reach mature adult status, Linda must overcome Flem Snopes' manipulation and control. For a while after Eula's death, it does seem that Eula's sacrifice has been fruitful. Linda exerts her independence by deciding not to go to the state university and, instead, making her way to Greenwich Village where she can live without Flem's influence and where she meets her husband.

Having assumed Eula's parenting role, Gavin Stevens is responsible for one more revelation to Linda about her background—he makes sure that Hoake McCarron comes to her wedding to Barton Kohl. Linda herself realizes the significance of the stranger who shows up, attends, and takes her out to lunch after the ceremony: having become straightforward and perceptive in communication, Linda looks Gavin straight in the eye and says: "That was my father" (The Mansion 175). Stevens fails Linda in the same way he has failed Eula: by denying her the truth, even swearing to the lie about her father when asked to do so. Linda underscores that she is a congruent communicator who can accept the limitations of the other by replying without anger or accusation: "I love you . . . Do you know why?
... It's because every time you lie to me I can always know you will stick to it" (The Mansion 175). Even when the other adults in her life cannot communicate congruently, Linda is able to maintain the open lines of communication. As a result, she appears better able to face life than the adults to whom she looks for guidance.

Linda's short-lived marriage ends with the death of her husband in action in the Spanish Civil War. Linda, deafened by a mine that exploded under the ambulance she was driving, returns to the United States. Back home in Jefferson, she spends her spare time volunteering to set up programs to help black children, an unpopular act in a prejudiced Jefferson, and during World War II continues with the war effort by working in a munitions plant. When she is once again back in Jefferson, Linda reestablishes her close relationship with Gavin Stevens; during this time he becomes aware that she is a member of the Communist Party. Fearing for her safety, Gavin urges her to keep the information secret, only to find that she can no longer find her card. Very quickly Gavin figures out that Flem has taken her card and will threaten, perhaps already has threatened, to expose her if she causes him any trouble: "what other weapon did he have to defend his very existence before she destroyed it--the position he had sacrificed everything for--wife home friends peace--to gain the only prize he knew" (The Mansion 240). Linda seems to have come to some kind of peace with
her mother's death and a new understanding of Flem’s quest for wealth, respectability, and power. She is undisturbed by the thought that her father may hold her communist party card over her in an effort to control her and remains unperturbed by the objections of the town to her charitable activities; she is a strong independent woman able to think for and to be responsible for herself.

The final action of the novel occurs when Linda learns of and begins to take some part in the affairs of Mink Snopes. Considering that Linda probably knows that her intervention is going to end with Mink’s murdering Flem, this act is a first indication that Linda may be giving up the congruent mode of communication, which in the Satir model, is defined as being genuine, honest, and integrated; the person accepts the other as he or she is rather than trying to overcome or destroy the other. Linda tells Gavin Stevens how her uncle Jody Varner had told her the story of Mink’s murder of Jack Houston, the story of his trial, and Flem’s choice to stay in Texas rather than to help his kinsman. Jody had also told her how Flem not only had failed to help Mink, but had even set the poor man up for a second sentence for attempted escape. Perhaps she was moved by pity for the unfortunate man who, by the time she began to intervene, should already have been out on parole for at least three years. Or, perhaps being intelligent and realistic, she simply understands that, feeling betrayed by
Flem, Mink will surely seek revenge when he gets out of prison.

Being fed up with the kind of control Flem has always exercised over her and feeling obliged to vindicate her mother, Linda makes a conscious decision to give up congruent behavior and decides to take action. By acting, Linda also realizes her opportunity to settle her own personal score: "in part out of sympathy for Mink and in part out of a desire to avenge her mother" (Minter 244). By the time she returns to Jefferson, she knows that Flem is not her real father and has met her biological father. She accepts, maybe even approves of, the affair her mother had with Manfred de Spain and knows that, when Flem defeated Eula and Manfred de Spain, he was motivated by the desire for money and power, rather than by moral outrage. She knows it was again money and power that motivated Flem to manipulate her into giving him everything she could ever hope to inherit from her grandfather, a deed that completes Flem's takeover of the Varner family. When Linda makes up her mind to enter into the affairs of Mink Snopes in order to plot her revenge, she becomes calculating, vengeful, and manipulative, a change from her usual congruent communication to a super-reasonable mode. Yet, Flem is as much the cause of his death as is Mink: as time has proved, Flem's downfall is caused by his forgetting or ignoring the Snopes family's code.
Gavin Stevens, in his role as her lawyer, helps Linda process the papers required to get Mink out of prison. Stevens also knows what Mink will do and tries to avert trouble by working out an elaborate agreement for Mink to follow. Simply put, Mink, having had almost forty years to think about what he considers Flem’s betrayal, is not to be denied, and his revenge is accomplished. And no one, not even Gavin Stevens, could have possibly stopped Linda from handling the situation as she did. Certainly Mink deserves sympathy for the treatment he got from Flem, but not for his plot to murder. Neither can Linda’s motives for helping Mink be admired. More than likely Linda is no longer so much motivated to help the downtrodden as it is that, faced with Flem’s avaricious behavior, she has simply had enough—she has to get out of Jefferson.

Gavin, who should have understood what Linda was up to, closes his mind to Linda’s possible motivation and helps her facilitate her plan. After Flem’s funeral Gavin goes to the house to see Linda off to New York. In talking with the man who has delivered her new car, Gavin learns that she had planned this departure some two months earlier. As he puts together the information for himself, he must accept the knowledge to which he has been closing his mind: that she had intended to get Mink released for the express purpose of his getting revenge on Flem and that she has deliberately used him, Gavin, for her purposes because she knows that he
cannot say no to her. In fulfilling her need to avenge her mother, Linda has set herself free from Jefferson. Even if her motives for helping Mink are questionable, her desire to right the injustices inflicted upon the Varners and the de Spains by her father is admirable. Linda restores to the Varners their family property and arranges that the de Spain’s family mansion is restored to them.

Is Linda Snopes as guilty of the murder of her father as Mink? Powers says she is justified: "Flem has simply poisoned her life. Linda shares in whatever misfortune befell Eula in becoming Flem’s wife; he has used both of them as means to his own financial security, his economic and social progress" (239). But, even Flem’s poison cannot negate what Linda has received from Eula: the capacity to love much. She certainly loved Eula enough to care about the reasons for her suicide and to despise Flem’s buying more respectability by erecting an ostentatious monument over her grave. She apparently had sincere love for Barton Kohl, enough love to marry and to go into war with him. But her one truly deep love for a man went to Gavin Stevens, the man who essentially failed her by turning her down both after her mother’s request and after her own offering of herself. Ratliff rightly tells Gavin Stevens: "I dont know if she’s already got a daughter . . . I jest hope . . . she dont never bring it back to Jefferson. You done already
been through two Eula Varners and I don't think you can stand another one" (The Mansion 434).

Except for the fact that both were married to men for whom they had no real affection, Eula Varner Snopes appears at first to be the total opposite of Maud Falkner. Eula has changed from a silent, motionless mass of femininity into a mother concerned with nurturing and protecting her daughter and meeting the girl's needs. The same care that prompts her to offer to serve the needs of Gavin Stevens leads her to beg that same Gavin to marry Linda in order to save her. In spite of the hint of selfishness in this request--it also means that Eula is free to leave Flem and to seek her happiness with her lover--there is in it the mark of a woman trying hard to function as a mother in touch with the feelings of her daughter. It indicates that Eula recognizes that there is a great deal of guidance and help the girl needs that she cannot get in that home situation. Unlike Maud who made her objections to Murry's actions and decisions known, Eula accepts the conditions of her life with Flem without open complaint. Linda learns to love and trust her mother completely, even to the point of seeking revenge for the circumstances that lead to her mother's suicide. Eula has certainly done more for Linda than Mrs. Varner ever did for Eula.

On the other hand, Eula's constant concern for Linda's future compares closely to Maud Falkner's care for her sons.
In the light of Murry's inability to settle into a secure career by which to provide for his family and in the face of the problems brought on by alcoholism, Maud stepped into the breach and provided stability for her family. She had to be the dominant force in the family. Her seemingly didactic insistence that her sons cooperate with her wishes was, at times, a problem for the young William Faulkner who wanted to please his father as much as he wished to please his mother and who often preferred the activities proposed by the former over those of the latter.

Eula's decision to solve the problem of what legacy to leave her daughter by committing suicide reflects yet another Faulkner family member. While William Faulkner and Estelle Oldham were on their honeymoon, Estelle, fresh from a divorce followed by a new marriage, was upset at the emotional stress involved in building a new relationship in circumstances so different from her previous experience. Both Blotner and Minter record how, after a frustrating day and an evening of heavy drinking, Estelle tried to drown herself in the Gulf (Blotner 630; Minter 115). The comparison breaks down in the light of Eula's motivation having a large element of concern for her daughter involved in her decision. By contrast, Estelle's attempted suicide seems not to have involved the good of the two Franklin children at all; she appears rather to have been motivated by her rather selfish concern with her own inner happiness.
Linda Snopes appears to have no problem with her mother such as William Faulkner had with his. She, perhaps more than any other daughter portrayed in Faulkner’s major fictional families, has received the benefit of an active, caring parent who is alert to her needs and provides what is necessary for growth into adulthood and preparation for marriage. Either Linda has decided to build a life exactly the opposite of what she has seen as she grew up or Eula has been an extraordinarily good mother. Gavin Stevens, at Eula’s request, is willing to do whatever he can to help, except to marry her. He acts as Linda’s mentor and guide even when, as an adult, she returns from the war seeming quite sure of herself and able to make her own decisions.

Linda’s decision to aid and abet Flem’s murder remains a puzzle. In planning to get Mink released from prison, Linda deliberately and consciously sets into motion the plot that will end with murder. No longer what Satir would consider a congruent communicator who can understand and accept the limitations of another person without feeling threatened, Linda has become calculating and manipulative and has no qualms about the end result of her actions. By her actions on Mink’s behalf, she has acted out the Snopes’ code of being true to the blood, a daughter worthy to bear the Snopes’ name. Only her motivation—revenge rather than wealth, power, and respectability at any cost—is different.
Where Eula's life as wife to Flem and as mother to Linda is mainly shrouded in silence, Maud Falkner's was not. Maud was active in the upbringing of her children. The problems Maud had with her sons flowed from her inability to communicate her values to them in a congruent manner. Even though it did not prevent their having negative feelings about how they were treated as they grew, Maud's sons apparently knew that, in spite of what they may have felt at times, their mother loved them.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this examination of five of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha families, as earlier stated, has been to focus upon the role of mothers and to suggest the nature and extent of the autobiographical elements found in their portrayals. According to Judith Bryant Wittenberg, Faulkner himself tried to "perpetuate the idea that his life and his art were discontinuous" (4), but he finally admitted in interviews: "that's all anyone ever does, he tells his own biography, talking about himself, in a thousand different terms, but himself" (Gwynn and Blotner 275). Since his fiction has autobiographical elements, Faulkner in writing about mothers in families was surely saying something about his own situation. In each case, the families decline, usually because of deterioration or decay from within. The ordinary expectation is that someone in the family should recognize what is going on and move to stem the decline; for example, a mother who can foster healthful family relationships and encourage functional communications could be the first preserver of the family. But, the problem in Faulkner's fiction has been to find women who serve in well-defined mother roles and to relate them to that biography. Defining mother or, in the absence of a mother, a mother
figure charged with the care of the fictional children often requires that the fathers in the works get almost as much treatment as the mothers.

The difficulty of presenting strong, well-defined mother/mother figures lies in William Faulkner's own culture and upbringing. He was a southern writer and had been raised in the South. The society in which he lived was patriarchal—the male, as long as he was alive, was the undisputed head of the family and often the head of the clan. The assumption is that the father's decision or decree shaped how the family lived, what values family members had, and what children who grew up in the family became as adults. Consequently, mothers and other women in his works are often less well developed.

The men in the works studied are easily compared to Falkner family males. Clearly Colonel John Sartoris of The Unvanquished is an almost exact re-creation of William Clark Falkner, Faulkner's great grandfather: "Planter, lawyer, soldier, writer, politician, and railroad entrepreneur . . . a man of many parts" (Minter 4). Thomas William Zelman says that Colonel John Sartoris, Faulkner's ideal of fatherhood, was "responsible, attentive to his son, and famous" (101). Wittenberg also argues that Thomas Sutpen of Absalom, Absalom!, developed later in the Faulkner canon, is a more realistic, less glorious, portrayal of William Clark Falkner.
Significantly absent from Sartoris is John Sartoris II who should have corresponded to William Faulkner’s father. Faulkner defends his absence by saying in Faulkner in the University that he had no story to tell and that there was nothing going on at the time that required him to be brave in the manner in which Sartoris men had to be brave (Gwynn and Blotner 251). Faulkner may also have been implying that, by that time, he no longer looked to his father for his ideals. Several biographers make the point that all four of the boys remained unsure of their father’s affection. Concentrating on William Faulkner, they analyze the relationship as follows: Faulkner believed that his father looked down upon him because of his small stature and that, in the light of increasing tension between Maud and Murry, his father thought of him more as belonging only to the mother; sometimes in rough teasing, his father degraded him by calling him "Snake-Lips" (Minter 9; Blotner 189; Wittenberg 23).

Clearly, in The Sound and the Fury, Mr. Compson’s drinking and quiet ineffectiveness in his law practice are parallel to Murry’s troubles with alcohol, as well as with his career. Some may argue that there is a correspondence between Murry Falkner and Anse Bundren of As I Lay Dying; not that Murry was shiftless, lazy, and manipulative, but he was pretty much unable to find and settle into a stable career.
The questions that I proposed at the beginning of this study were whether Faulkner was portraying his own mother in his fiction and, if so, what was he saying about their relationship. And I believe the answer to the first question is yes; the answer to the second one is found in Faulkner biographies. Incidents recorded in the biographies indicate that William Faulkner gradually withdrew from his father and moved more toward loyalty to his mother, but Minter points to signs that he resented having to choose between father and mother:

In his fiction, mothers generally fare no better than fathers, and women perhaps less well than men. We encounter many flawed, failed parents in his fiction, but we also sense a deep, varied disease with women, or at least what his step-daughter later termed a "rather strong distrust" of them. (17)

Minter also states that these fictional women cross over from "direct" portrayals into "reversals" (17). In spite of the fact that Faulkner may write only minimal detail about mothers and their interaction with their children, he reveals much about his own feelings and thoughts not only with what he does say, but also with what he does not say. And much of what is in the fiction reveals something about his relationship with his mother.
In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie becomes cold, cruel, and silent when she must raise her family alone because Anse will not help. Her vindictiveness is revealed in her work with the school children and in her elaborate plot for revenge against Anse, a revenge that she makes hollow because she does not explain it to him and that she, illogically, enjoys all the more because of his unawareness.

Maud, like the fictional Addie, had to raise a family almost alone and, at the same time, to deal with Murry's lack of work or his frequent bouts with alcoholism. According to David Minter, Maud, who believed that Murry drank to punish her and who genuinely abhorred Murry's drinking, made a display of "his failure, his weakness, his guilt"; when she took him to the Keeley Institute for treatment, she took the boys along to witness his "punishment and expiation" (15). Maud also echoes Addie's feelings for Anse: Minter, Blotner, and Wittenberg all mention Maud Falkner's comment shortly before she died about going to a heaven where she would not have to see the husband she had never really liked (Minter 7; Blotner 1762; Wittenberg 17). Certainly Faulkner must have had some strong feelings about this admission of a truth he had probably suspected from childhood.

Of high significance is that in both *The Unvanquished* and *Sartoris*, the most highly autobiographical of the five fictional families, no biological mother is physically present until the very end when Narcissa Benbow, who at the
very best could compare only to Faulkner's own wife, gives birth to Bayard Sartoris III's son. That there is no figure for Maud Falkner is an indication of the difficulty Faulkner was having with his mother's appearing to give more attention and love to his younger brothers than to him. Granny Millard, a mother figure in *The Unvanquished*, stays to take care of Bayard, the slaves, and the Sartoris plantation while Colonel John Sartoris goes off to war. The most likely biographical reference for Granny Millard is Lelia Butler, Maud's mother. "Damuddy," as Faulkner called her, was one of the bright spots in the boy's life. At a time when he felt ignored because his mother had to take care of his younger brothers, Damuddy Butler made a carved police doll for him, taught him to draw, and taught him to use his hands to form "sticks, grass, stones, and glass" into "walks, streets, churches, and stores" (Wittenberg 11; Blotner 76). This grandmother, who helped make some of the young William Faulkner's days brighter and who encouraged him to use his imagination and his hands to develop his artistic talent, as Granny Millard is probably the strongest mother figure among any of the five families analyzed here.

In contrast to the strong parenting found in Granny Millard is Mrs. Compson of *The Sound and the Fury* who is the weakest mother in the five families studied. Mrs. Compson is a hypochondriac who spends most of her days in bed with her headaches. She complains about her sufferings, worries
about her position in life, frets that she may have married below her position, defends her background as being equal in social status to Mr. Compson’s, fusses at her children, complains about the hardships she is punished with because of a retarded son, pushes her parenting duties off on Dilsey or on Caddy, and spoils her favorite son Jason. She cannot keep her daughter from marrying to get away from home and to give her baby a name. Quentin, unable to talk to her about his problems and to get real help from his father, resorts to suicide. Caddy’s daughter Quentin repeats her mother’s mistake because she cannot deal with Jason. And Mrs. Compson still indulges in her self-pity and allows Jason to continue to dominate and bully everyone else in the house. In this case Faulkner has created a mother who is the total opposite of Mrs. Falkner, one of the clear reversals Minter posits. The only parallel possible is in Mrs. Compson’s complaining, but Maud Falkner was outspoken rather than complaining, and critical where she felt correction was needed. The Falkner boys would have witnessed such criticism of Murry when he was on a drinking spree and would have felt it themselves when they failed to live up to Maud’s expectations for them.

The Sutpen family of Absalom, Absalom! demonstrates a completely different picture from that found in the Sartoris and Compson families. There are four women in Absalom.

Absalom!: Ellen Coldfield Sutpen, Rosa Coldfield, Judith
Sutpen, and Clytie [Sutpen]. Of all these women, only Ellen bears children—the son and daughter of Thomas Sutpen. Ellen has no sense of reality; she is unhappy in her marriage, but does not know what to do about it. Only once does she face Sutpen when she objects to his behavior: when Judith and Clytie sneak down to the stable to watch their father fight one of the Haitian blacks. When Ellen gets used to a position of wealth and comfort, she conveniently forgets her objections to Sutpen, and when the war begins, she simply gives up and dies. Rosa also has no sense of reality; naively she believes she is helping Judith after Ellen's death. When Sutpen insults her by suggesting that they live together in order to have a child, she leaves his house not knowing how to handle him. Neither Ellen nor Rosa can be a figure of Maud Falkner because each is so far outside of reality. Maud Falkner would never have considered running or hiding from her problems; her solution was to face difficulties directly, to take charge, and to do what she could to change the adverse circumstances causing them.

By contrast are Clytie who, as Sutpen's black daughter, is an unlikely figure for Maud Falkner and Judith Sutpen. Faced with the reality of war, Judith and Clytie keep the plantation going well enough that they can survive. Judith, having turned romantic and dreamy upon her engagement, quickly returns to her former assertive self during the war.
She is able, with Clytie's help, to survive the war, to bury Charles Bon, to finish raising—not successfully, unfortunately—Charles' son, and to nurse him during the epidemic that takes both their lives. Judith's effectiveness as a mother figure provides the only comparison to Maud in this family. Judith, like Maud, is responsible for a child, but she lacks parenting skills and does not know how to communicate with Charles Etienne Bon; by contrast, Maud had the skills necessary for good parenting, but was unable to communicate them. Maud's oldest son felt unloved and left out because she did not communicate well with him, but Faulkner remained an obedient, admiring son for as long as his mother lived (until 1960). When he was away from home, he wrote to her faithfully, often without mentioning his father. When he was in Oxford, he visited her daily . . . [He gave] his mother what she expected, a part of most of his days to herself. Toward her he remained not only dutiful but approving. (Minter 17)

What this statement omits is the question of love; perhaps Faulkner responded to his mother as he did simply out of duty because that was expected of the oldest son who was also head of the clan. Minter and Blotner both point out Phil Stone's assessment that all the Falkner sons resented being dominated by their mother; Blotner says it best: "To
Phil Stone it would be further evidence . . . that all the Falkner boys were tied to their mother and resented it" (Blotner 631).

As a biological parent who is there for her daughter, Eula Varner Snopes resembles Maud Falkner. Eula has survived a strange childhood and a still stranger marriage. She loves her daughter and, apparently, is able to guide and direct the girl. To some extent, Linda learns from her mother to care for Flem, to cooperate with him even when he denies her requests, yet she also learns to make her own decisions and to stand up for them whenever she can. What Linda develops for herself is how to be calculating enough to get revenge on Flem for the way he treated her and Eula, certainly not a trait she would share with Maud Falkner; Maud would never have plotted to kill Murry, no matter how angry or upset she might be.

In all these women who serve as mothers or mother figures, there is no complete figure for Maud. She is both present and absent in them. It seems that in peopling his novels with such women, William Faulkner returns to and experiences again the negative feelings he had in his childhood and finds a way to reconcile himself to the negative feelings he brought from his relationship with his mother. Wittenberg attributes Faulkner’s triumph through his art as coming out of his "magnitude of the spirit" (247). He did transcend his early frustration at being
unable to please either of his parents, at perceiving himself inferior because of his small stature, and at not succeeding in the sports and outdoor activities his father loved. His resistance to education and his indulgence in alcohol seem to have been his rebellions against the aspirations of his mother for him.

Because the biographies of Faulkner parallel closely some of the incidents found in the novels, I have argued that Faulkner was looking at his own mother as he presented his fictional mothers. I have also argued that Maud had the good of her sons uppermost when she took care of them, criticized them, punished them, and the like. In spite of Maud Falkner's good intentions, the absence of a double for or a close portrayal of her in the families studied indicates that Faulkner had some strong negative feelings about his relationship with his mother.

In order to analyze how the mother in each of the five families managed family dynamics and compared to Maud Falkner, I have used family sculpting, the Virginia Satir model of family therapy. Satir offers four dysfunctional modes of communication--placating, blaming, super-reasonable, and irrelevant--and one functional--congruent. Using this frame for analysis helped to identify the mother in the family as contributing to the dysfunction in the family or to find areas where the mother helped the child toward functional realistic behavior. The Satir model
helped me see and communicate both the effect of the fictional mother on the family and the correlations between the fictional mothers and Maud Falkner.

As cited in the first paragraph of this chapter, Faulkner's works— as Faulkner himself finally admitted is true for any author— are essentially about himself: children, such as the Compsons and the Sutpens, who suffer because of their parents' conduct and personalities, as was true for the Falkner sons; adults, such as Eula Varner, Linda Snopes, and the youngest Bayard Sartoris, who cannot grow beyond their life situations or who sometimes destroy themselves or others because of their frustrations and anger, not acted out but perhaps found in the depression that William Faulkner suffered; and men, such as Mr. Compson, who cannot conquer their weakness for alcohol, again as found in William Faulkner.

In spite of frustrations, feelings of inadequacy, and depression, William Faulkner remained a dutiful, respectful, and responsible son all his life. As the oldest living male in the family at his father's death in 1932, he assumed responsibility for the care of his mother and Mammy Callie; later he took upon himself the care of other family members when they needed his help. Even though he may have resented some of his mother's earlier treatment, he showed nothing but the utmost respect for her during her lifetime, ultimately satisfying his need to work out his resentment.
through his writing. Wittenberg sees Faulkner's last novel, *The Reivers: A Reminiscence*, as having "very little darkness and no sense of futility," as "[reconciling] all polarities," and as a "balance of self-directed irony and earnest self-dramatization"; she says, "Strong tensions are absent and the past is seen purged of its injustices" (246). Whatever his feelings, Faulkner had made some form of peace with life as he experienced it.
Notes

"Damuddy" Lelia Butler's importance to William Faulkner is further underlined by her inclusion as Damuddy, the beloved grandmother of the Compson children who dies in The Sound and the Fury.
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