THE BENEFICENT CHARACTERS IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S
YOKNAPATAWPHA NOVELS

THESIS

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In William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha novels, a group of characters exists who possess three common characteristics—closeness to mankind, a realization of the tragedy in life, and a positive response to this tragedy. The term beneficiary is used to describe the twenty individuals who possess these traits. The characters are divided into two broad categories. The first includes the white and black primitives who innately possess beneficial qualities. The term primitive describes the individual who exhibits three additional traits—simplicity, non-intellectualism, and closeness to nature. The second group includes characters who must learn the attributes of beneficence in the course of the novel. All the beneficiary characters serve as embodiments of the optimism found in Faulkner's fiction.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature, William Faulkner stated that man "will not merely endure: he will prevail."\(^1\) Faulkner's characters throughout his fiction exhibit the endurance needed to withstand a basically tragic environment in which death, suffering, and poverty abound. Also existing within Faulkner's world, however, is a special group of characters who do more than endure, who, in spite of the tragedy which surrounds them, find peace and personal fulfillment. These individuals exemplify Faulkner's philosophy that mankind can withstand any sorrow and still face life heroically. Through these characters' actions and speech, Faulkner depicts a system of living which transcends simple endurance. These characters prevail.

This special group of characters are the beneficent ones, who demonstrate an often-ignored facet of Faulkner's philosophy--his optimism. In the midst of the most depressing of Faulkner's books may be found a positive

element. Even in *Sanctuary*, a terrifying story of rape, murder, prostitution, and lunching, a beneficent individual emerges. Ruby, a prostitute, gives this novel its thread of hope. In spite of being poor and unable to help her common-law husband when he is unjustly jailed, she continues to visit him and to take care of their child.\(^2\) In the face of tragedy, Ruby continues to struggle. She and all other beneficent characters remain constant in their positive acceptance of life's sadness. Herein lies Faulkner's optimism. Life may be unjust and cruel, but man will continue to be brave, to face tragedy, and to work through it. James F. Farnham states, "It is only by willingly accepting defeat and still going on that the individual can come to terms with William Faulkner's cosmos."\(^3\) Thus, the beneficent characters embody those qualities Faulkner considers essential to becoming a fulfilled individual.

What qualities, then, are necessary for a character to be labeled beneficent? Three traits are identified with the positive individual. The first is an involvement with mankind. Obviously, Faulkner's novels contain numerous examples of persons estranged from humanity. Joe Christmas in *Light in August* and Popeye in *Sanctuary* epitomize the


\(^3\)James F. Farnham, "Faulkner's Unsung Hero: Gavin Stevens," *Arizona Quarterly*, 21 (Summer 1965), 131.
individual who is so far removed from his fellowman that he loses his compassion. Popeye, a local gangster, ravishes a young woman, kills a slow-witted acquaintance, and watches as the young woman and another man make love. He has no conscience and exists for animal pleasures only. Christmas, too, avoids sincere relationships with others. His affair with Joanna Burden is not based on any real affection but on mental and physical needs. When she discusses their possible double suicide, he kills her.\(^4\) Love and compassion are alien to him.

In contrast to Christmas and Popeye, however, is one of the most admirable of Faulkner's characters, V. K. Ratliff—a sewing machine salesman in *The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*—who constantly remains close to his fellowman. As a part of his job, he travels around the farm communities selling his wares, thus keeping in touch with the common people. Ratliff accepts his link with humanity even when this acceptance shows that he is a part of mankind at its worst. When Ratliff watches, along with the other townsmen, as Ike Snopes commits sodomy with a cow, he breaks out in a fit of cursing. One of the men reminds Ratliff that he too has watched. Ratliff replies, "I aint cussing you folks."

I'm cussing all of us." Ratliff is constantly aware of his common bond with humanity, even when that means recognizing his shortcomings. In William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Cleanth Brooks writes, "Unless the controlling purposes of the individual are related to those that other men share and in which the individual can participate, he is indeed isolated and is forced to fall back upon his personal values, with all the risk of fanaticism and distortion to which such isolation is liable." Thus, the beneficent individual must demonstrate an involvement with mankind, for this attribute deepens one's awareness of human problems, making man more compassionate.

A second major trait necessary for the positive character is an understanding of the tragic nature of life. Faulkner's world is filled with the sorrows of the real world. Death, murder, incest, rape, greed, and corruption are a part of this environment. Man suffers in Faulkner's universe. Often, the sensitive individual cannot stand what the world represents. Darl, in As I Lay Dying, is placed in a mental hospital, for he cannot cope with the reality of his mother's death, his brother's seeming

5William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Vintage Books 1931), p. 196. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as H.

callousness toward it, and his father's determination to take the body to Jefferson. Quentin, in The Sound and the Fury, also finds the world intolerable and commits suicide. He is deluded by life, for he cannot accept his sister's being a woman who is a mixture of good and evil. His father's attempt to demonstrate that good and evil are a part of living in general and his sister in particular fails. Quentin never attains a vision of the world as it is.

However, Faulkner does have characters who face life realistically. In Go Down, Moses, Lucas Beauchamp, a black man who has white blood, farms land for one of his white kin. This relative, Zack Edmonds, after losing his wife in childbirth, takes Lucas' wife Molly to care for his son. After two months, Lucas decides to reclaim Molly. Although this move is successful, Molly still feeds the children at Edmonds' house. Lucas admits to himself that he had rather not know if he is being duped. He laments, "How to God . . . can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?" Lucas


8William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1929), p. 90. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as SF.

understands that for him life will always be unfair. Even though he can fight against it, he will always meet conflict. Thus, Lucas understands life's tragic nature. The world is not just, but Lucas sees that he must survive anyway.

Directly related to the need for understanding life's tragedies is the third characteristic of the beneficent individual, a positive response to this sorrow. The presence of this quality renders Faulkner's universe an optimistic one. In spite of defeat, death, and loneliness, man can still face life with hope, a hope founded on the realization that the individual can withstand anything. As long as one has tried to do the best he can, he can accept what he must with hope. Many of Faulkner's characters do not achieve this third trait, however. Jack Houston, a farmer in The Hamlet, exemplifies angry rejection of life's tragedy. After only six months of marriage, Houston's wife is killed by a horse. Houston becomes an embittered, callous man. He spends his life taking violent rides on a high-spirited stallion, much like the one that killed his wife, and constantly attempting to avoid the moonlight since it is a reminder of his lost love. Instead of accepting his grief and learning to grow through suffering, he attempts to run from it. After his wife's death, he disposes of all reminders of her except a dress.
In desperation, he temporarily moves to another house, but nothing can erase the memory. When Houston abandons his house for a night, "he lost everything, not only peace but even fibred and durable grief for despair to set its teeth into" (H p. 215). Comfort apparently is not found in attempting to escape grief but from direct confrontation and acceptance.

In direct contrast to the pain and bitterness of Houston are the optimism and acceptance of the Negro servant Dilsey in The Sound and the Fury. Dilsey's life is a hard one. She cooks, cleans, and cares for the Compson family and is the constant source of love and warmth in the household. She understands that her philosophy of "I does de bes I kin" (SF p. 247) is all that is expected of her in this world. Man's resilience, his ability to snap back after any trial, is Dilsey's virtue. While Mrs. Compson virtually ignores her retarded son Benjy, Dilsey loves him and is not ashamed to take him to church with her (SF p. 226). Faced with Quentin's suicide, Caddy's illegitimate daughter, Jason's cruelty, and Mrs. Compson's hypochondria, Dilsey still remains constant in her belief. She knows that she has succeeded in life through her acceptance of suffering and her ability to remain optimistic in her outlook. Gabriel Vahanian evaluates Dilsey as Faulkner's best example of positive acceptance.
In and through Dilsey, beyond the sound and the fury, beyond the disfigurement of the human race, beyond the consumption and collapse of the Christian tradition, slowly but firmly rises a presence against which no human vicissitude can prevail and for which no human sorrow is too vile or decadent to bear and transfigure. A transparent rock of faith, Dilsey is the incarnation of human dignity and solicitude, almost tangibly there and yet unobtrusively available to all.¹⁰

Found in the human form is the capacity to prevail. Faulkner's beneficent individuals demonstrate this ability to remain hopeful in spite of life's pain. Vahanian agrees that Faulkner's world "is not a universe of despair. On the contrary, hope springs forth constantly, even if at times the heartbeats of the human reality are not sufficient to sustain it. Hope is affirmed even against hope--which is, for us human beings, the way it usually is."¹¹

This thesis sets forth those individuals in Faulkner's fiction who possess beneficence. Each character will be examined in depth to show that he or she does exhibit the three beneficent traits of an involvement with mankind, a comprehension of life's tragedies, and a positive response to these sorrows. The characters are divided into two basic groups. The first and larger category consists of the positive individuals who seem to understand intuitively how to live in Faulkner's world. These individuals who


¹¹Vahanian, p. 97.

In contrast to the individuals who already possess positive acceptance are those characters who must learn within the course of the novel how to prevail. This second group has to undergo an experience which teaches them how to live beneficently. Examined in this category are: Byron Bunch (*Light in August*), Gail Hightower (*Light in August*), Gavin Stevens (*The Town and The Mansion*), Everbe (*The Reivers*), Charles Mallison (*Intruder in the Dust*), Bayard Sartoris (*The Unvanquished*), Isaac McCaslin (*Go Down, Moses*), and Lucius Priest (*The Reivers*).

In discussing the beneficent individual, only those characters from the Yoknapatawpha novels are treated. I agree with most critics that this cycle represents Faulkner's best work. Also, by my limiting the
investigation to these books, comparisons will be more valid since the characters considered are from the same basic environment. The unity of the paper, thus, will be strengthened by focusing on the Yoknapatawpha novels.
CHAPTER II

THE BENEFICENT PRIMITIVES: THE NEGROES

William Faulkner's beneficent characters fall into two basic categories: the individuals who understand beneficence throughout the novels and the individuals who must learn beneficence in the course of a novel. This chapter will analyze the first group who already possess the positive traits of remaining in the stream of humanity, viewing life as basically tragic in nature, and remaining hopeful in the face of life's tragedy. These characters demonstrate their beneficence from the beginning of the book and are still optimistic in their outlook on life at the book's conclusion.

The first characteristic shared by the individuals who understand beneficence is their primitive nature. Edmond L. Volpe uses this classification of the primitive for characters who are "simple, non-intellectual people who have somehow escaped social conditioning." The use of the word simple in describing the primitives is important. These individuals come from the rural, working segment of society that does not need many material possessions or public

approval. In *Light in August*, Lena Grove exemplifies the contentment of the primitive. She unashamedly searches for her wayfaring lover while she grows larger and larger with his child, walking barefoot from town to town and welcoming help when it is offered.\(^2\)

Volpe also uses the word *non-intellectual* in describing the primitive, adding, "A cerebral approach to life can only lead to a recognition of the ultimate absurdity of existence."\(^3\) Volpe is not equating non-intellectuality with stupidity. The non-intellectual does not solely rely on logic to understand the world; thus, his viewpoint is more balanced than that of the intellectual. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Dilsey can continue to endure the harsh realities of the Compson household through her commitment to caring for her fellowman.\(^4\) Her life is not cluttered with metaphysical problems; it is made strong by simple faith. The primitive, thus, is fortified by his non-intellectualism, the second trait of the primitive.

The primitive's third attribute is his oneness with nature. The beneficent individual has a close tie with the

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\(^2\)William Faulkner, *Light in August* (1932; rpt. New York: Random House, 1959), p. 8. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as LIA.

\(^3\)Volpe, p. 26.

\(^4\)William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (1929; rpt. New York: Random House, 1956), p. 231. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as SF.
earth. He has not learned the rules of social behavior of the educated man. Therefore, his link with living things is stronger. Usually the closer the character is to nature, the more admirable he is as a man. In *The Reivers*, Ned McCaslin is quite at home sleeping in barns and caring for horses. He is close to nature, a relationship which keeps him and all primitives at one with the world. Since man, too, is a part of the natural order, he must remain in contact with it to be a positive force in the world.

Thus, the primitives, because of their simplicity, their non-intellectualism, and their closeness to nature, have always known beneficence. For them, no rite of initiation is needed. These individuals have never varied from their hopeful acceptance. Although few in number, these characters are Faulkner's examples for modern man. Examining these primitives reveals a clearer perception of Faulkner's philosophy of living.

The primitives can be divided into two separate groups: the blacks and the whites. Since the blacks in Faulkner's novels are from the South and are generally servants, they are closer to nature and their fellowman than the white primitives. As Edmond Volpe maintains, they have less

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socialization to separate them.\(^6\) The five blacks to be classified and discussed as primitives are: Dilsey (The Sound and the Fury), Molly Worsham Beauchamp (Go Down, Moses), Lucas Beauchamp (Go Down, Moses and Intruder in the Dust), Nancy Mannigoe (Requiem for a Nun), and Ned McCaslin (The Reivers). The lives of the black primitives reveal a code of living which may serve as a model for mankind.

Dilsey, a servant in The Sound and the Fury, serves as one of Faulkner's most admirable primitives. She rivals any of his other characters in her unselfish love for her fellowman. Dilsey's life is a simple one. She rarely goes outside the Compson house except to church on Sunday. Her faith in God is simple yet strong. She does not fret over things she cannot have or long for understanding that she lacks. She merely remains fast in her simple faith.

Dilsey is totally immersed in the stream of humanity. Although only a servant, she runs the Compson household. Loyally and uncomplainingly, she obeys the absurd commands of Mrs. Compson. When the latter asks her in the same breath to cook breakfast and to get Benjy dressed, Dilsey simply bows her head and listens (SF p. 211). Sensing Dilsey's forbearance, Mrs. Compson states, "You're not the only one who has to bear it . . . . It's not your

\(^6\)Volpe, p. 27.
responsibility. You can go away. You don't have to bear the brunt of it day in and day out. You owe them nothing, to Mr. Compson's memory" (SF p. 211). This quotation is ironic, for Dilsey does bear the responsibility of the family. She is the hub around which the family revolves. Never does she shirk her duties, for she knows that she must remain close to mankind; her "source of strength is her humanity," writes Edmond Volpe.  

In addition to her closeness to the ungrateful Compson family, Dilsey also demonstrates her oneness with humanity by never judging anyone. Mrs. Compson is a hypochondriac, and her demands cause Dilsey much extra work, but the good-hearted servant never complains or discusses Mrs. Compson's behavior with anyone. After Caddy has given birth to her illegitimate daughter, Quentin, the child is brought back to the Compson home. Mrs. Compson laments the baby's illegitimacy; Jason complains that the baby's upkeep will be his responsibility. But Dilsey responds, "And whar else do she belong? . . . Who gwine raise her 'cep me? Aint I raised eve'y one of y'all?" (SF p. 154). Dilsey's concern for the baby is based on the child's humanity, not its kinship to her. She will care for Quentin just as she has all the Compson children, and never will she mention Quentin's lack of a father. When Caddy wants to see

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7Volpe, p. 124.
Quentin, Dilsey allows her to view the child, for Dilsey feels compassion and concern for Caddy as a fellow human being (SF p. 161). Even the spiteful Jason receives Dilsey's love. When he is rushing to find Quentin after she has stolen his money, Dilsey asks him to stop and eat breakfast (SF p. 221). Dilsey's link with humanity covers even the unlovable ones.

The most touching example of Dilsey's concern for her fellowman, however, is her care and love for the idiot, Benjy. Mrs. Compson sees Benjy as a curse and judgment on the Compson family, but Dilsey merely loves the boy-man for what he is. When Benjy has a birthday, it is Dilsey who buys him a cake (SF p. 43). She is not ashamed of him as are most of the Compsons. She takes him to church with her even if some people "thinks he aint good enough fer white church, but nigger church aint good enough fer him" (SF p. 226). Dilsey's love for her fellowman encompasses all creatures. Benjy, too, is a part of humanity, and Dilsey responds to his needs.

Dilsey's experience with other people helps her possess the second trait of the beneficent character--that of seeing life as tragic. Dilsey is a realist. She faces Benjy's handicap. When Mrs. Compson calls Benjy a baby, Dilsey replies, "You calling that thing a baby. . . . A man big as T. P."

(SF p. 6). Too, Dilsey understands death.
Roskus foretells Damuddy's death, Dilsey chides, "Going to be more than one more . . . . Show me the man what aint going to die, bless Jesus" (SF p. 22). Her honesty about death does not lessen its pain when a loved one is taken. Through Benjy's simple vision we see Dilsey suffering. He states, "They moaned at Dilsey's house. Dilsey was moaning" (SF p. 24).

The most moving instance of Dilsey's tragic vision occurs late in the novel. As Dilsey sits in the church listening to the Reverend Shegog preach his Easter sermon, "two tears slid down her fallen cheeks, in and out of the myriad coruscations of immolation and abnegation and time" (SF p. 229). Dilsey understands her life for what it is, one of sacrifice and self-denial. She weeps for all the pain and trouble she has had to bear, and she ultimately understands the pain of this world. After the conclusion of the Easter service, she continues to cry. When Frony asks her to stop, Dilsey replies, "I've seed de first en de last" (SF p. 231). She has watched the beginning of this generation of Compsons, and she now foresees their demise. Their tragic ending is one that Dilsey can understand since she too has been a part of their existence. Dilsey's comprehension of the Compson tragedy proves that she understands the tragic nature of life and accepts it, even if sadly.
Dilsey transcends mere acceptance of tragedy, however. Out of her suffering emerges a code of living based on optimistic acceptance, the third attribute of the beneficent character. Dilsey's virtue lies in her "feeling that whatever happens must be met with courage and dignity in which there is no room for passivity or pessimism." First, she demonstrates her positive acceptance by continuing to work and take care of the Compsons. Despite her mistreatment, Dilsey still willingly manages the household. Olga Vickery describes Dilsey's endurance as "strength to suffer without rancor as well as to resist, to accept as well as to protest." Dilsey's continued care for sickly Mrs. Compson, the idiot Benjy, the selfish Quentin, and the unbearable Jason certainly shows her capacity to endure. Her performing these daily tasks willingly and even at times happily attests to her optimism.

Dilsey's optimistic attitude toward life surfaces in other areas as well. When one of the Compson sons, Quentin, is contemplating suicide, he imagines Dilsey will say, "What a sinful waste" (SF p. 70). His assumption is correct. She would abhor suicide, for that action would not fulfill man's role. In her philosophy, man should

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9Vickery, p. 47.
continue to struggle—to endure. To give up is to admit defeat when man should be strong and work through problems. At the close of the novel, Dilsey asks Luster to take Benjy to the cemetery, for no one else is there to drive the buggy. Although she has misgivings about Luster's ability to drive, she sends them on their way with the statement, "I does de bes I kin. . . . Lawd knows dat" (SF p. 247). This statement effectively sums up her philosophy. Dilsey tries to do the best she knows how, and then she does not worry about it, since worry would be senseless. Cleanth Brooks states, "Dilsey does not have to strain to make meaningful some particular desire or dream or need. Her world is solid and meaningful. It is filled with pain, toil, and difficulty, but it is not wrenched by agonizing doubts and perplexities."\(^{10}\)

Dilsey represents man as he most successfully exists in the world. Everyone, including Dilsey, has to live with "the sound and the fury" of life, yet by living as the beneficent individual does, man will be happier and better fulfilled. Dilsey is the hope of the world and perhaps Faulkner's most perfect example of man living as he should.

The second black primitive to be discussed is Molly Worsham Beauchamp in Go Down, Moses. Molly, like Dilsey, is

a simple woman who rarely leaves her front yard. Moreover, Molly is concerned about matters of the heart, rather than affairs of the mind. When her husband Lucas is caught up in the desire to find a fortune, Molly grieves, for she fears that he will break a law of God. Her simple faith is not concerned with the money he might find, but with her husband's spiritual welfare (GDM p. 114). Molly's closeness to nature is emphasized in the following passage:

His wife [Molly] used to sweep every morning with a broom of bound willow twigs, sweeping the clean dust into curving intricate patterns among the flower-beds outlined with broken . . . glass. She had returned from time to time during the spring to work the flower-beds so that they bloomed as usual--the hardy, blatant blooms loved of her and his race. . . . (GDM p. 49)

Her love for nature is demonstrated by her willingness to work in the soil. This closeness to nature along with her simplicity and concern for the heart qualifies her as one of Faulkner's primitives.

The chapter, "The Fire and the Hearth" in Go Down, Moses, describes Molly as a young, married girl and later as an old, wizened woman. The last section of the book, "Go Down, Moses," shows Molly again as an old woman. Thus, the effects of time and circumstances can be studied as they affect Molly. Early in her marriage, Molly has to prove her love of humanity in a most difficult, awkward

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11 William Faulkner, Go Down, Moses (1940; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 99. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as GDM.
situation. When Zack Edmonds' wife is about to bear their first born, Molly has to deliver the child because a heavy rain has washed out the bridge, thus preventing the doctor's arrival. When Edmonds' wife dies a few days later, Molly is expected to take care of the infant, even though she has one of her own. After six months, Lucas retrieves her, but she still takes care of both children (GDM pp. 46, 49). Never does Molly show any difference in the love she feels for both children. When the boy, Roth Edmonds, becomes a man, he describes Molly as

the woman who had been the only mother he, Edmonds, ever knew, who had raised him, fed him from her own breast as she was actually doing for her own child, who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too, teaching him his manners, behavior--to be gentle with his inferiors, honorable with his equals, generous to the weak and considerate of the aged, courteous, truthful and brave to all--who had given him, the motherless, without stint or expectation of reward that constant and abiding devotion and love which existed nowhere else in this world for him. . . . (GDM p. 117)

Molly so loves her fellowman that she can care for and love a child who is not her own.

Molly's love and compassion for others encompass even the seemingly unlovable. In the chapter entitled "Go Down, Moses," she worries over the whereabouts of her orphaned grandson, Samuel. Although he has been banished from the Edmonds' place for stealing, she still cares for him. In Molly's philosophy, even the outcast should be allowed to remain close to his fellowman. Her grief upon learning of
Samuel's death, an event which she has foreseen, is so poignant that a visitor, Gavin Stevens, has to leave the wake (GDM p. 381). Molly's love for all men demonstrates her closeness to humanity.

The love Molly feels for her fellowman does not conceal life's tragic nature from her. She understands it and faces the tragedy daily. Molly and Lucas were born black. This fact has made their lives difficult and at times nearly unbearable. As a black woman, Molly has no recourse but to obey Zack Edmonds' summons for her to care for his child. Although the novel does not explicitly state that Zack forces Molly to engage in sexual activity, Lucas believes that this injustice has occurred. Lucas forces Zack to return Molly, yet when she is back in their home, he wonders, "Why she aint ev'n knowed unto right now that I ever ev'n suspected" (GDM p. 49). At this moment Molly faces the tragedy. She understands her husband's suspicion and deeply feels her own pain. Later, after years of marriage to Lucas, Molly decides to leave, for she comprehends his compulsion for money and knows that his greed will lead to unhappiness (GDM p. 102). She explains, "When a man that old takes up money-hunting, it's like when he takes up gambling or whiskey or women. He aint going to have time to quit. And then he's gonter be lost, lost" (GDM p. 103). The grief this old woman must feel over leaving her husband
after forty-five years must be great. Another person close to her also causes her much sadness, her grandson Samuel. After raising him, she has to watch as he causes trouble at the Edmonds' store and then moves to town where he is arrested (GDM p. 372). Molly must bear the pain of seeing a loved one degenerate to evil ways. Life's tragedies have always been a part of her existence.

Molly constantly remains positive in her philosophy. She chooses to leave Lucas rather than see him ruin their lives with his lust for money. By telling Lucas that she wants a divorce, Molly demonstrates an underlying hope that he will realize his weakness and give up his compulsion for money. Thus, Molly's bid for a divorce is an act of love which does save Lucas. Her determined effort proves her undying hope in life.

Again at her grandson's death, she demonstrates her affirmation of life. After Samuel's body has arrived in town, Molly wants his death recorded in the newspaper even though he has died a criminal. Gavin Stevens thinks, "It doesn't matter to her now. Since it had to be and she couldn't stop it, and now that it's all over and done and finished, she doesn't care how he died. She just wanted him home, but she wanted him to come home right" (GDM p. 383). At last the prodigal son is home, and Molly wants to bury him with dignity. Her endurance enables her to remain
strong even in the midst of death. Molly's actions recall Dilsey's philosophy of "I does de bes I kin," for she cannot stop Samuel's death, yet she can attempt to return Samuel's body to his home.

Molly adequately fulfills the three traits of the beneficent character, the first being her closeness to mankind demonstrated by her care of a young child and by her love of her grandson Samuel. Molly's realization of life's tragedies is emphasized by the lack of dignity afforded her because of her blackness and the sorrow caused by Lucas' compulsion for money. Finally, Molly proves her positive response to these tragedies by her bid for a divorce to bring Lucas to his senses and her determination to return her wayfaring grandson's body to Jefferson. Molly's courage, her fortitude, make her an admirable example of Faulkner's positive individuals.

Lucas Beauchamp, Molly's husband, also qualifies as a beneficent primitive. Lucas appears in two novels, Go Down, Moses and Intruder in the Dust, and in both he demonstrates that he is one of Faulkner's prevailing characters. Lucas is a farmer. He loves working the soil and derives great satisfaction from seeing his crops flourish (GDM p. 42). He qualifies as a non-intellectual in that he does not contemplate the meanings of existence. He accepts what life has to offer him. Lucas does, however, use some ingenious
tricks to get what he wants. In order to get to use the gold-finding machine, he hides some coins and has the machine salesman find them. For a share of the unfound silver, the salesman gives Lucas the machine. The next night, the salesman even pays Lucas twenty-five dollars for the machine's rental (GDM pp. 94-95). Undeniably, Lucas is intelligent, but he does not allow his intellect to rule him. In the end, it is his heart, his love for Molly, which tells him that he should "get rid of it [the machine]. I don't want to never see it again" (GDM p. 131).

Lucas' blackness causes him more trouble than most of Faulkner's Negroes because he shows his pride. Lucas' attitude is very different from the outward behavior of most blacks at that time, perhaps because he does have white blood. His attitude irritates the white men. In Intruder in the Dust, he is nearly lynched because he is black, yet Lucas never shows any hatred of his fellowmen for their ignorance.\textsuperscript{12} He never forsakes his ties with others. In fact, the reason he is wrongfully accused of murder is his concern for his fellowman. After witnessing a theft, Lucas confronts the thief in an attempt to restore the stolen goods to their rightful owner. The thief then sets up Lucas for murder. When Gavin Stevens learns that

\textsuperscript{12}William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York: Modern Library, 1948), p. 48. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as \textit{ID}. 
Lucas had accused a white man of the robbery, he questions Lucas about what would have happened if the thief refused to return the property. Lucas replies:

"Then I would go and tell Mr Workitt he better--"  
"Tell Mr Workitt he better count his boards."  
"And you, a Negro, were going up to a white man and tell him his niece's sons were stealing from him--and a Beat Four white man on top of that. Don't you know what would have happened to you?" (ID p. 226)

Gavin Stevens is surprised at Lucas' lack of fear in going to a white man to reveal a crime; however, Lucas views himself as a man, and his concern for the injured party is real.

Lucas' concern for his fellowman begins at home. His constant love for his wife Molly is symbolized by the fire that Lucas never allows to die on his hearth (GDM p. 46). When in Intruder in the Dust Lucas loses his wife Molly, he truly suffers. Chick Mallison says of Lucas, "He was grieving. You don't have to not be a nigger in order to grieve" (ID p. 25). When Lucas is in jail for the murder of Vinson Gowrie, he refuses to tell Gavin Stevens, his lawyer, what happened when Vinson was killed. Lucas realizes that Stevens has already decided his guilt, so he does not confide in him. However, Lucas sees hope through Charles Mallison, a teenage boy. When Charles goes back to the jail after Stevens leaves, he is met with the seemingly outrageous demand to dig up the dead man's grave. Charles knows that he will perform the task;
however, he wants to know why he must dig up the grave. He tells Lucas:

"Come here." Lucas did so, approaching, taking hold of two of the bars as a child stands inside a fence. Nor did he remember doing so but looking down he saw his own hands holding to two of the bars, the two pairs of hands, the black ones and the white ones, grasping the bars while they faced one another above them. (ID p. 69)

This passage reveals the tie between Lucas and Charles. Lucas reaches out to another person, and that person responds. For all his pride, Lucas acknowledges his humanity in this gesture. The need for others does not stop because of his skin color.

Skin color, nevertheless, can create some critical problems. Because of his blackness, Lucas has to endure some painful experiences which reveal life's tragic nature. First, in Go Down, Moses, Lucas has to give up his wife to a white man so that she may nurse his orphaned son. Lucas is never asked to allow Molly to stay at Edmonds' house. Edmonds just keeps her. Even when Lucas successfully brings her home again, she insists that she must return at times to help with the child. Lucas admits, "I won't never know. I don't want to. I ruther never to know than to find out later I have been fooled" (GDM p. 59). Lucas understands that in his lifetime, his color will affect the treatment he receives from others. In Intruder in the Dust, his presence beside the body of Vinson Gowrie is enough for
the townspeople to decide his guilt. One of the shopkeepers, Mr. Lilley, tells Gavin Stevens to "tell um to holler if they need help" (ID p. 48) in lynching Lucas for the murder. Stevens explains to Charles Mallison, his nephew:

He [Mr. Lilley] has nothing against what he calls niggers. If you ask him, he will probably tell you he likes them even better than some white folks he knows and he will believe it.... All he requires is that they act like niggers. Which is exactly what Lucas is doing: blew his top and murdered a white man—which Mr. Lilley is probably convinced all Negroes want to do—and now the white people will take him out and burn him.... (ID p. 48)

This attitude prevails during Lucas' lifetime. Even the educated Gavin Stevens is sure of Lucas' guilt before he even talks with Lucas. The tragedy of being a stereotype rather than a man plagues Lucas constantly.

In spite of the tragedy in Lucas' life, he refuses to accept defeat. When he is treated as a "nigger," he continues to act as a man. When Edmonds takes Molly to live with him, Lucas allows this arrangement to continue for six months before demanding her return (GDM p. 47). When Charles Mallison is rescued from an icy creek by Lucas, warmed at his hearth, and given food to eat, Charles acts with the programmed response of white boy to Negro; he attempts to pay him. But Lucas refuses the role; he drops the money (ID p. 16). Although Lucas knows that his behavior as an equal will infuriate the white man, he continues to act in accordance with his belief.
Even while he is being jailed in *Intruder in the Dust*, Lucas retains his composure. He calmly asks Charles to get his uncle as counsel (ID p. 45), and when Charles and Gavin Stevens go to see him in the jail, he is asleep (ID p. 58). Lucas never gives up hope. Seeing that only through Charles' innocence will he find an open mind, he uses the boy to investigate evidence that he did not commit the murder. Lucas' positive response in a desperate situation reveals his will to prevail in spite of the tragedy in life. When Charles agrees to dig up Vinson Gowrie's grave, Lucas replies, "I'll try to wait" (ID p. 73). He understands that death is near, yet he remains calm and patient. Self-control can only come through positive acceptance.

A third example of Lucas' ability to meet life with a positive view is his understanding of his wife Molly in *Go Down, Moses*. As has been mentioned, Molly threatens to divorce Lucas because of his obsession with finding money. Lucas' pride will not allow him to give in to her until they are actually at the courthouse about to be handed their divorce petition. Lucas says, "We dont want no voce" (GDM p. 128). As the clerk stammers in amazement, the couple walks out. Lucas then buys Molly some candy, and she accepts the peace offering (GDM pp. 129-30). Lucas finally realizes that his love for Molly is more important than anything, including becoming a rich man. In spite of
his belief that money is buried on the Edmonds place, he gives up his gold-finding machine (GDM p. 131). This choice reflects his belief in the affirmation of life, for love is a life-sustaining force.

Lucas Beauchamp adequately fulfills the qualities of the beneficent character. He is a brave individual who lives as he believes he should despite his differences of opinion with other men. His stamina and courage, his undying love for Molly, and his pride make him one of Faulkner's most original primitives in the Yoknapatawpha novels.

The fourth beneficent primitive on first glance hardly appears qualified to be an admirable character. Nancy Mannigoe, a black woman, was a one-time "dope-fiend whore" and at the opening of the play, Requiem for a Nun, has murdered a six-month old child (RN p. 44). How can even Faulkner create a positive individual who has been a prostitute, a drug addict, and a murderess? Nancy's virtues lie in her simple understanding and sharing of the three beneficent traits.

First, Nancy observes the necessity of remaining close to mankind. When asked to go to the Gowan Stevens' home to be a maid, she readily accepts, although she has led a

\[13\] William Faulkner, Requiem for a Nun (1950; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 103. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as RN.
very different kind of life in the past. No indication is
given that she ever slips back into her previous vices of
prostitution and drug addiction once she is in the Stevens'
home. She realizes the need in Temple Drake for conversa-
tion and listens to her as no one else can (RN p. 105). Too,
Nancy cares for the Stevens' children. Gavin Stevens, the
lawyer, states that the reason Nancy commits the infant's
murder is to prove "that little children, as long as they
are little children, shall be intact, unanguished, untorn,
unterrified" (RN p. 181). Such a love as Nancy's, that will
allow her to give up her own life to justify the right of
children, is truly selfless.

Nancy Mannigoe's life has been filled with much tragedy.
Before going to the Stevens' household, she lost a baby
because a man kicked her in the stomach (RN p. 240). Gavin
Stevens inquires:

Its father kicked you in the stomach while you were
pregnant?
Nancy: I don't know.
Stevens: You don't know who kicked you?
Nancy: I know that. I thought you meant its pa.
Stevens: You mean, the man who kicked you wasn't even
its father?
Nancy: I don't know. Any of them might have been.
Stevens: Any of them? You don't have any idea who its
father was?
Nancy: (looks at Stevens impatiently) If you backed
your behind into a buzz-saw, could you tell which tooth
hit you first? (RN pp. 240-41)

Nancy has known not only the pain of losing a child but also
the anguish of not knowing who the child's father is. As a
prostitute, Nancy has felt the despair of being an object to men rather than a person. Once in her past, she confronted a banker on the front steps of his bank with the accusation that he had not paid her for her services. The banker then knocked her down and kicked her in the face (RN p. 106). Nancy has known physical pain and fear. She understands that life is not always fair and that suffering is a part of the world.

Nancy transforms the tragedy that surrounds her into a positive, uplifting belief in the goodness of life. Her purpose in killing the infant is to save the other child and Temple. When Temple is about to leave with her blackmailer turned lover, Nancy questions her to make certain that she understands what the result of her leaving will be:

Nancy: Maybe I am ignorant. You got to say it out in words yourself, so I can hear them. Say, I'm going to do it. [to leave with Pete]
Temple: You heard me. I'm going to do it.
Nancy: Money or no money.
Temple: Money or no money.
Nancy: Children or no children. (Temple doesn't answer) To leave one with a man that's willing to believe the child aint got no father, willing to take the other one to a man that dont even want no children--(They stare at one another) If you can do it, you can say it.
Temple: Yes! Children or no children! Now get out of here. (RN p. 164)

After forcing Temple to admit she is forsaking her children, Nancy says, "I tried everything I knowed. You can see that" (RN p. 165). Reminiscent of Dilsey's statement, "I does de bes I kin," Nancy here admits that she has come to her last
method of forcing Temple to reform. She kills the infant for the sake of the other child and for Temple. She kills one to save two.

Faulkner once explained that Nancy "was capable within her poor dim lights and reasons of an act which whether it was right or wrong was of complete almost religious abnegation of the world for the sake of an innocent child." Nancy commits the act of murder without shame. Temple says, "Nancy Mannigoe has no shame; all she has is, to die" (RN p. 109). Temple realizes that Nancy has done the only thing she knows to do to correct the wrong Temple is about to commit. The infant's murder is done out of a deep, abiding love; therefore, no shame is necessary. True, Nancy must pay for the act with her life, but Nancy knows what the price is to be all along.

Nancy Mannigoe's simple faith in God sustains her throughout her ordeal. As Nancy is discussing her philosophy of salvation, Stevens asks:

You have got to sin, too?
Nancy: You aint got to. You cant help it. And He knows that. But you can suffer. And He knows that too. He dont tell you not to sin, He just asks you not to. And He dont tell you to suffer. But he gives you the chance. He gives you the best He can think of, that you are capable of doing. And He will save you.

Stevens: You too? A murdereress? In heaven?
Nancy: I can work. (RN pp. 238-39)

Nancy sees salvation as available even to herself. Knowing that God is omniscient and forgiving, she understands that salvation is hers. Nancy's simple belief and trust in God make her worthy of being the nun in the title, Requiem for a Nun. 15

The tragic yet selfless figure of Nancy Mannigoe seemingly contrasts sharply with the last of the black primitives, Ned McCaslin. Ned's story is hardly tragic, yet he too deserves a position as one of Faulkner's primitives.

The Reivers itself is somewhat different from any other Faulkner novel. Olga Vickery describes it:

In The Reivers, Faulkner has created his enchanted land; it is Prospero's island compounded of the innocence of youth and the wisdom of old age, of dream, imagination, and fantasy, which are, nevertheless, firmly anchored in the reality of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County. It encompasses elemental good and elemental evil, but above all it is a world of infinite freedom and therefore of infinite possibility. 16

This magical story contains several examples of good characters. Uncle Hood Possum, the black patriarch of Parsham, Tennesee; Mr. Poleymus, the constable who rightfully removes Butch, the villain, as deputy sheriff; Minnie, the gold-toothed prostitute; and Mr. Binford, the bouncer who runs

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16Vickery, p. 228.
a clean, quiet brothel for Miss Reba, are all basically admirable characters. However, they are not included in this study, for they are not developed enough in the novel to demonstrate their beneficence. Ned McCaslin is, however, successfully developed in *The Reivers*.

Ned, too, is a primitive. A simple individual, he has a fondness for and a skill with horses which proves his closeness to nature. Ned's reliance on his wits does not disqualify him as a non-intellectual. His ingenious plans show his imagination. When attempting to get the race horse into a boxcar to transport him to Parsham for the race, Ned thinks to use part of a henhouse as a ramp to get the horse in (R p. 150). His elaborate plan to get Bobo Beauchamp out of debt which involves stealing a horse and an automobile also demonstrates his cleverness. However, Ned does not forget his knowledge of human nature as he plans his escapades which succeed precisely because he does know how people will act. By offering Bobo's moneylenders a car in payment, Ned realizes that they will have a difficult time selling it; thus, he wisely mentions the horse race he has planned. At the race itself Bobo can win what he owes them several times over, plus Ned can bet the car for the horse and win both (R pp. 292-93). Ned's understanding of man's behavior saves him from the cerebral anxieties of Quentin Compson or Gavin Stevens. He does not allow himself
to let his intellect rule without input from his feelings. Ned qualifies, then, for the classification of primitive in *The Reivers*.

Ned's beneficence is evident throughout the humorous events which occur in Memphis and Parsham. Ned is at one with mankind. He never alienates himself from other men. His relationship with eleven-year-old Lucius Priest is much like that of grandfather-grandson. When Lucius arrives at Parsham, Ned quickly gets him to bed, for Lucius has had little rest (R p. 168). Ned's closeness with other men even includes the evil Otis, a fifteen-year-old lying thief. When Otis is forced by Everbe to come to Parsham, Ned asks him to ride Lightning, the race horse. Ned even offers him money to ride; however, Otis hedges. Ned inquires, "Whyn't you just come right out like a man and say you aint gonter ride that horse? It dont matter why you aint. . . . Come on. Say it out" (R p. 180). Otis then admits that he will not ride the horse (R p. 180). Olga Vickery notes that "it is . . . in his handling of individuals that Ned proves himself to be without peer."\(^{17}\) Ned's ability is based on his oneness with humanity. In fact, he shows much love and concern even for his errant cousin who has come to the big city of Memphis and got himself in trouble. Ned risks an automobile, a horse, and his honor to get Bobo out of

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\(^{17}\)Vickery, p. 237.
trouble. (R pp. 291-92). His concern for Bobo is sincere and proves Ned's love for his fellowman.

Although The Reivers is one of Faulkner's most humorous works, it hints at the tragedy found in life. Ned as a black perceives life's tragic nature easily. First, he, more than any other character in the novel, exhausts himself over the horse race. Lucius notes:

He [Ned] looked bad. He looked terrible. It wasn't just lack of sleep; we all had that lack. But Boon and I had at least spent the four nights in bed since we left Jefferson, where Ned had spent maybe two, one of the others in a boxcar with a horse and the other in a stable with him, both on hay if on anything. (R p. 253)

Because Ned is so exhausted, he overlooks an important element in the workings of the race—Butch, the deputy who is after Everbe. After Ned, Boon, Everbe, Miss Reba, Minnie, and the horse are taken into custody, Butch takes the opportunity to force Everbe to have a rendezvous with him by threatening to keep Lightning locked up (R pp. 255-56). Ned chides himself for not seeing through Butch earlier.

He laments:

Uncle Possum just told you how he watched it coming Monday, and maybe I ought to seen it too and maybe I would if I hadn't been so busy with Lightning, or maybe if I had been a little better acquainted with that Butch—. . . . . That's what it was. It was just bad luck, the kind of bad luck you can't count against beforehand. (R p. 256)

Ned's plans partially fail because he does not know Butch well enough and because of bad luck. Life is filled with
unexpected problems which make it difficult to live optimistically. He admits that "bad luck" has haunted his horse racing scheme and with this admission, he seems well aware of the unfortunate side of life. Ned shows his awareness of tragedy a third time. After making much money from the race, he takes Lucius' share of their winnings. When Lucius asks if he is going to keep the money, Ned replies, "Yes, . . . It's too late for me" (R p. 282). Ned understands his weakness. His acceptance of the money is a compromise of morals. Man's tragedy includes his awareness of his failing. This Ned does in his confession.

Ned's understanding that life is filled with tragedy does not make him a pessimist. His outlook is always positive. Never during the course of his outlandish plan does he give up. The problem of getting the horse to board the boxcar does not daunt him (R p. 145). Ned is sure that he can make Lightning run. He never seems to doubt himself, and his optimism even affects others. When Mr. Poleymus finds out what Ned is planning, he bets two dollars on the race (R p. 262). Through Lucius, Ned sees an innocence and optimism even greater than his own. When Ned and Lucius are discussing the money won from the race, Ned takes Lucius' share, for both realize "we never done it for money" (R p. 282). Ned got the race together to save Bobo, a positive act which shows Ned's awareness of the
value of life. Ned answers Lucius' question of Ned's keeping the money in utter honesty. "Yes... . . . It's too late for me. But it aint too late for you. I'm gonter give you a chance, even if it aint nothing but taking a chance away from you" (R p. 282). Thus, an act that could be viewed as purely selfish is transformed into a noble gesture. Ned's faith in Lucius is a sign of positive hope which demonstrates Ned's optimism.

Closely akin to Ned's saving Lucius is his risking everything to save Bobo. Although Ned understands the foolhardiness of youth, he decides to help Bobo (R p. 294). He realizes the importance of life. By this choice, Ned shows his optimism in life, for by helping his fellowman, he is demonstrating life's goodness. Ned's sense of humor and zest for living demonstrate his positive nature. At the conclusion of The Reivers, Lucius asks Ned if he is going to pay Grandfather Priest for the horse, Lightning. Ned responds by asking Lucius if he wants to insult his grandfather and Ned himself. Lucius asks, "I still dont see where the insult to you comes in" (R p. 304). Ned simply replies, "He might take it" (R p. 304).

The black primitives sound a note of optimism in Faulkner's universe. They demonstrate that in spite of injustice, poverty, and sorrow, man can live hopefully. Cleanth Brooks evaluates the Negroes' positivism by stating
that they "remain close to a concrete world of values--less perverted by abstraction--more honest in recognizing what is essential and elemental than are most of the white people."¹⁸ These characters' ability to find the essence of life allows them to discover peace and fulfillment. Through them, Faulkner shows mankind at its best, transcending tragedy and forever prevailing.

CHAPTER III

THE BENEFICENT PRIMITIVES: THE WHITES

The white beneficent primitives compose the second sub-category of those individuals in Faulkner's novels who seem to possess innately the qualities of beneficence. These characters, who must exhibit simplicity, non-intellectualism, and a closeness to nature, are V. K. Ratliff (Sartoris, The Town, and The Mansion), Eula Varner Snopes (The Hamlet and The Town), Lena Grove (Light in August), Ruby Lamar (Sanctuary), Jenny Du Pre (Sartoris and The Unvanquished), Rosa Millard (The Unvanquished), and Miss Eunice Habersham (Intruder in the Dust and Go Down, Moses).¹ These seven characters reflect in their daily living the qualities of being a part of humanity, of realizing the tragic in life, and of facing this tragedy with a positive hope for the future—characteristics that are necessary requisites for the beneficent individual.

One of Faulkner's favorite characters qualifies as a beneficent primitive. V. K. Ratliff, according to Faulkner,

¹In Go Down, Moses, Miss Habersham is called Miss Worsham.
"has done more things than any man I know." Ratliff's occupation as a sewing machine agent who even makes his own shirts demonstrates his simplicity. Ratliff is also smart, but his understanding does not come from schooling. He perceives life clearly by innate understanding. When both he and Gavin Stevens, a lawyer with a Ph.D. from Heidelberg, examine some sculpture, Ratliff "knew at once what he [the figure] was doing," while Stevens saw nothing. In addition to his simplistic perception of the world, Ratliff is completely at home in nature. In Sartoris, an early Faulkner work, Ratliff is called V. K. Suratt, but his personality is unchanged. His merging with nature is symbolized by his appearance: "He wore a faded blue shirt, and in contrast to it his hands and face were a rich, even brown, like mahogany." Ratliff's simplicity, non-intellectualism, and closeness to nature serve as proof of his primitive nature.

Ratliff is one of Faulkner's strongest beneficent primitives. He is close to his fellowman. In The Hamlet,

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4William Faulkner, Sartoris (New York: New American Library, 1929), p. 123. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as Sar.
his occupation of sewing machine salesman causes him to travel from house to house, and the close contact with the people in the area keeps him a part of life. He knows everyone's name, for he is interested in people, and his love for his fellowman is demonstrated through his concern for others. Once in The Town, when Gavin Stevens and Ratliff are discussing women, Stevens admits he knows nothing about them and demands to know how Ratliff has learned so much. Ratliff replies:

"Maybe by listening," he said. Which we all knew, since what Yoknapatawphian had not seen at some time during the past ten or fifteen years the tin box shaped and painted to resemble a house containing the demonstrator machine . . . surrounded by a group of four or five or six ladies . . . Ratliff himself . . . sitting in a kitchen chair in the shady yard or on the gallery, listening. (T p. 229)

Ratliff shows his awareness of woman's worth. His compassion for mankind, thus, is not limited to one segment of humanity.

Further proof of Ratliff's love for mankind exists in his relationship with the mentally defective Ike Snopes. When Ratliff sees his fellow townspeople observing Ike's act of sodomy with a cow, he interrupts this scene, cursing

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5William Faulkner, The Hamlet (1931; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 13. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as H.

6William Faulkner, The Town (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 4. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as T.
aloud. Ike is not intellectually equal to Ratliff, but he is part of the family of man, and, thus, to Ratliff, deserves consideration and respect. Ratliff also demonstrates an awareness of his own human limitations. When one of the onlookers reminds Ratliff that he too watched, Ratliff responds, "Sholy . . . I aint cussing you folks. I'm cussing all of us" (H, p. 196). Even when faced with the realization of man's weakness, he does not deny his humanity.

Ratliff's positive acceptance of life makes it difficult to comprehend his understanding of life's negative qualities. But Ratliff does confront life's tragedy, again a necessary act on the part of the beneficent character. In that powerful moment when Ratliff confronts his townspeople's and his own guilt in observing Ike and the cow, he understands one of life's most profound tragedies. In spite of man's attempt to live decently, he often fails.

A Snopes is also involved in a second example of Ratliff's awareness of the world's evil. Flem Snopes, Ratliff knows, is a man of no scruples. Ratliff watches Flem use people to promote his own interests. He observes while Flem takes over Varner's store and cotton gin. The real tragedy occurs, however, when Flem marries Eula Varner, a woman pregnant with another man's child. Flem's purpose is to establish a firmer hold on Varner. When the marriage takes place, Ratliff wonders if Eula will be wasted on Flem.
In the second novel of the Snopes trilogy, *The Town*, the waste is apparent. Eula takes a lover to find the fulfillment she has missed with Flem (p. 15). Although the town knows of the affair, Flem seems unaware of his wife's lover. Gavin Stevens wonders aloud why Flem has not caught on, and Ratliff offers the solution, "He dont want to . . . He dont need to yet" (p. 15). Shortly after this conversation, Eula's lover appoints Flem power-plant superintendent (p. 15). Ratliff understands Flem's basic purpose, that of using his wife's love affair to further his own advancement.

In *The Hamlet*, Ratliff foresees Flem's malignant purpose in arranging a sale of Texas horses. The horses are wild, but Ratliff realizes that the townsmen are willing to buy them anyway. He cautions, "You folks aint going to buy them things sho enough, are you?" (pp. 276-77). Later in the conversation, he admits, "I reckon there aint nothing under the sun or in Frenchman's Bend neither that can keep you folks from giving Flem Snopes and that Texas man your money" (p. 278). Ratliff perceives the gullibility of his friends. He knows the misfortunes that will befall the men in buying the uncontrollable horses, yet he is powerless to convince them of their mistake. His only recourse is to leave (p. 279).
His awareness of Flem's character does not help Ratliff in attempting to outsmart him. Ratliff learns that Flem is digging up ground, then filling the holes back in at the Old Frenchman's place. He is sure that Flem knows of some buried treasure. After digging up some money, Ratliff and two friends buy the Frenchman's place from Flem (H p. 354). After digging unsuccessfully for more treasure, Ratliff is struck with an idea. He goes to the Frenchman's house and examines the money he has found. Although the buried money is supposed to be pre-Civil War coins, their booty is all dated much later (H pp. 360-61), and Ratliff realizes he has been duped. He too can be defeated by life's forces.

Although he is defeated by Flem Snopes, Ratliff does not give up trying to win. Michael Millgate posits that "Faulkner saw Ratliff as occupying a central and representative position in the battle against Snopesism, itself a microcosm of mankind's determined struggle to prevail . . . ." The beneficent character's third trait of meeting life's tragedy with optimism is evident in Ratliff. After his encounter with Flem Snopes over the Frenchman's place, Ratliff does not give up his fight against evil. When Flem prevents the bank from lending money to Wall Snopes to save his grocery business, Ratliff steps in and lends Wall, an honest, hard-working man, the

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7Millgate, p. 196.
money (p. 149). Ratliff's hope in mankind allows him to risk financial loss in order to prevent Flem from ruining a human life.

A second instance when Ratliff exhibits a positive view of life occurs in *The Mansion*. Gavin Stevens and Ratliff are discussing Linda Snopes and her boyfriend, Barton Kohl. Ratliff says, "When you are young enough and brave enough at the same time, you can hate intolerance and believe in hope and, if you are sho enough brave, act on it . . . I wish it was me" (p. 161). Ratliff views the optimism of youth with envy. However, he, too, is an optimist. Ratliff relates, "I'm a--what do you call it? optimist . . . Like any good optimist, I dont expect the worst to happen. Only, like any optimist worth his salt, I like to go and look as soon as possible afterward jest in case it did" (pp. 383-84). Ratliff's modified optimism is what causes him to discover that Mink Snopes has left Parchman Prison without taking the money which was meant to keep Mink away from Flem Snopes (p. 376). Michael Millgate describes Ratliff's philosophy which allows him to endure anything:

> Once again, it is this capacity for combining decency and moral solicitude with clear-eyed intellectual detachment which gives Ratliff the ability to survive defeat and to continue, not merely the struggle against Snopesism, but the perpetual affirmation of life.\(^8\)

\(^8\)Millgate, p. 199,
The second beneficent primitive, Eula Varner Snopes, is nearly mythical in The Hamlet. Her simplicity, the first attribute of the primitive, is evident in her family's expectations of her. Her father and mother do not really see any need for her to go to school (H p. 97). In fact, Will Varner, her father, admits that he would just like her to learn housekeeping (H p. 98). Eula also possesses the second characteristic of the primitive, that of being a non-intellectual. Labove, Eula's schoolteacher, perceives this trait when "he saw that she not only was not going to study, but there was nothing in books here or anywhere else that she would ever need to know, who had been born already completely equipped not only to face and combat but to overcome anything the future could invent to meet her with" (H p. 114). Along with her innate understanding, Eula also possesses a closeness to nature in both The Town and The Mansion. Boys who follow Eula are likened to wasps that "swarmed ... about the ripe peach which her full damp mouth resembled" (H p. 127). Thus, Eula embodies the three traits of the primitive.

Eula's beneficence is shown in her concern for her fellowman. In The Hamlet, when Labove attacks her in the schoolroom, she does not rush home to tell Jody, her brother, who would have fought Labove. In fact, Eula does not reveal the episode to anyone (H pp. 121-26). She fully
realizes what Labove is attempting, for she chides him, "Stop pawing me . . . You old headless horseman Ichabod Crane" (H p. 122), but she will not accuse him. She refrains in part because her brother Jody would possibly kill any man who attacks Eula. But also she understands Labove's passion, although she does not respond to it. However, Eula does react to Labove's humanity, for she remains silent about the attack.

Another subtle example of Eula's closeness to humanity is her presence among other girls and boys. She "would meet again at the homes of the girls. This would be by prearrangement without doubt, and doubtless contrived by the other girls, though if she were aware they invited her so that the boys would come, nobody ever divined this from her behavior either" (H p. 128). Eula obviously does not need these girls to attract boyfriends. However, she chooses to remain in their company. The young men who court Eula do so knowing that she refuses "to be pawed at" (H p. 128), yet they still are attracted to her. Eula apparently feels comfortable with these friends and feels a part of the camaraderie.

In The Town, Eula is a grown woman who still remains at one with her fellowman. Gavin Stevens is in love with Eula and attempts to discredit her lover, Manfred de Spain (T p. 86). When Eula comes to Gavin's law office one night,
Gavin wants to know if her mission is to protect Flem, her husband, or Manfred, her lover. She replies that she has come "because you are unhappy... I don't like unhappy people" (T p. 93). Eula has come to fulfill Stevens' desire, for she tells him, "You just are, and you need, and you must, so you do" (T p. 94). Gavin refuses her offer, although Eula has come out of true concern for him.

A fourth example of Eula's closeness to humanity occurs when she reveals what V. K. Ratliff's initials stand for (T p. 322). Stevens is surprised that she would have this information. Eula, however, is not limited to Stevens' view of her. He sees her as a goddess whose name must be protected. However, apparently Ratliff realizes that Eula is a fellow human being. The relationship Ratliff and Eula have is not precisely known, but its closeness can be verified by the personal nature of Ratliff's confession to her. Thus, Eula is willing to be a part of humanity, as evidenced by her friendship with Ratliff.

Eula's suicide demonstrates her sacrificial love for her daughter, another example of her concern for her fellowman. Although Eula has an opportunity to leave with her lover, de Spain, she refuses out of consideration for her daughter, who then would know her mother is an adulteress and perhaps doubt Flem is her real father (M p. 145).
Eula's suicide, then, is an act of love for Linda, the ultimate example of one's love for mankind.

Eula's life is full of tragedy which she must face alone. She experiences her first disappointment when she is only sixteen. After a sexual encounter with Hoake McCarron, she discovers that she is pregnant. Hoake McCarron leaves for Texas to avoid having to marry her (H p. 139). McCarron is the only individual of all Eula's suitors whom she chooses as a lover, yet this man leaves when Eula truly needs him. Eula's feeling for McCarron is shown when she refuses to tell her brother Jody who the father of her unborn child is (H p. 141).

The second instance of Eula's perception of tragedy is closely tied to Hoake McCarron's leaving. When Will Varner realizes that there is no man to marry Eula, he makes a deal with Flem Snopes to marry her for three hundred dollars (H p. 145). Eula detests Flem. When previously he has come to visit her father, she calls him "'the man,' -- 'papa, here's the man again,' though sometimes she said Mr. Snopes, saying it exactly as she would have said Mr. Dog" (H p. 146). When he comes to live at the Varner home, Eula never sees him even though she eats at the same table with him daily (H p. 146). Yet this is Eula's husband.

Edmond Volpe writes, "The marriage of Flem and Eula unites the epitome of human frigidity with the epitome of human
passion.

The frustration and anguish Eula must feel in this marriage should acquaint her with tragedy firsthand, moreover, for Flem Snopes is impotent (p. 331).

Flem Snopes also figures in the final example of Eula's knowledge of the tragic in life. Eula's daughter Linda is her final refuge against Flem, but he manages to find a way to use even Linda (p. 325). Flem Snopes convinces Linda to sign over her inheritance to him (p. 327), an action that causes Eula much sorrow. As a last resort against Flem, Eula goes to Gavin Stevens to persuade him to marry Linda. Eula sees Stevens as Linda's last hope against Flem (p. 332). Flem Snopes has caused Eula much grief, and thus Eula is well acquainted with the darker side of life.

The third trait of the beneficent character, a positive response to life's tragedy, is evident in Eula's life. When Hoake McCarron leaves her pregnant with his child, Eula does not give up hope in life. She merely admits to feeling fatigued (p. 141). When her father arranges her marriage to Flem Snopes, she does not run away or throw a temper tantrum. She goes along with her father's plan (p. 145). She remains married to a man she does not love because of her love for her daughter (p. 138). Through Linda, she is able to remain hopeful for the future.

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Another example of Eula's ability to maintain hope in spite of tragedy occurs when she has an ongoing love affair with Manfred de Spain. Since her marriage to impotent Flem does not provide her with fulfillment, she naturally seeks happiness elsewhere. Her affair is a bid for the positive in life. When her father discovers her affair, he meets with de Spain, Flem, and Eula to find a solution. As a result, Manfred de Spain and Eula are to leave town. Eula is still looking for a better answer which will least hurt her daughter Linda. In order to allow some hope for Linda, to preserve Linda's belief that Flem is her father, Eula kills herself (M p. 145). One critic claims that "Eula's self-sacrifice releases Linda from Flem's grasp and is, indeed, the first real act of love in the novel." Therefore, Eula's last act is one of courage and hope.

Eula exhibits all the traits necessary to the beneficent primitive. She shows a closeness to her fellowman, an understanding of the tragic nature of life, and a positive faith in the face of tragedy. Eula manages to live through a tragic marriage with an alienated, impotent husband and still remains hopeful in her view of life.

Closely akin to Eula in her supreme naturalness is Lena Grove of Light in August. Lena is a primitive whose

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simplicity is evident in her act of leaving home, for she only takes "a palm leaf fan and a small bundle tied neatly in a bandanna handkerchief. It contained ... thirty-five cents in nickels and dimes" (LIA p. 3). This baggage seems extremely light for a journey of unknown length, but Lena's basic wants are simple. Like her needs, Lena's view of life is also simple. Edmond Volpe describes Lena as "all heart and body--simplicity and trust. She is troubled neither by logic nor worry about the future, abstract ideas nor traditions." She is ruled by her heart which allows her to follow her basic instinct. Thus, when Mrs. Armstid asks Lena how she knows what direction to pursue in her quest for Burch, Lena replies, "I just kept on asking" (LIA p. 14). Lena is also close to nature. One description of her includes a faded blue bonnet and dress, reminders of the color of the sky, and bare feet resting in the dirt (LIA p. 7). Lena's simplicity, her non-intellectualism, and her link with nature afford her the classification of primitive.

Lena Grove's beneficence is first exhibited through her closeness to humanity. While on the road attempting to find Lucas Burch, her wayfaring lover, Lena is always sure of a ride in a wagon. Armstid, a local farmer, provides Lena with transportation on his wagon and muses that "she'll walk the public country herself without shame

11Volpe, p. 152.
because she knows that folks, menfolks, will take care of her" (LIA p. 10). She is never fearful, even though she is totally alone, far from her home. With her simple faith, she trusts these people who transport her from Alabama to Mississippi, wagon by wagon. She never feels shame when she must repeat, time after time, her predicament of looking for the father of her unborn child (LIA p. 17). In a discussion of Lena's character, Edmond Volpe writes, "All the people whom she meets on the road are kind to her. Even a Martha Armstid, who would usually be vigorous in her denunciation of an unwed mother, treats her with kindness and generosity."

Lena's trust in her fellowman continues even after she discovers from Byron Bunch that Lucas Burch is not in Jefferson. When Byron offers to find her lodging for the night, Lena never falters in her trust in him (LIA p. 61). She elicits a response from Bunch which most people in Jefferson have never encountered, for he decides not to go to church on Saturday night. Instead, he remains close to Lena (LIA p. 61)

After Byron situates Lena in the cabin where Lucas Burch is supposed to live, it is not long before her baby is born. The birth of Lena's child marks another example of her merging with humanity. The act of childbirth is

\[\text{Volpe, p. 152.}\]
itself a universal link among all women and, less directly, all men. Thus, when Gail Hightower comes to help deliver the infant, he too is bound to Lena. He relates the experience by "remembering the young strong body from out whose travail even there shone something tranquil and unafraid. More of them. Many more. That will be her life, her destiny. The good stock peopling in tranquil obedience to it the good earth" (LIA p. 302). Hightower sees in Lena a surge of humanity. He notes that she has returned "luck and life . . . to these barren and ruined acres" (LIA p. 303). Lena's bearing a child helps to unite her with Hightower, an individual who needs her humanity.

As well as being close to her fellowman, Lena also possesses the second requirement of beneficence. She experiences the tragic in life. She finds herself pregnant while the baby's father vanishes. When her brother discovers Lena's secret, he calls her a whore (LIA p. 3). Lena understands that she is expected to leave, and no one will try to stop her (LIA p. 3). This young woman has no place to go, no inkling of where the baby's father is, and barely any money on which to live. While on the road, Lena must face questions, such as the one Mrs. Armstid raises, "Is your name Burch yet?" (LIA p. 12). Lena knows what Mrs. Armstid is thinking. The trip to Jefferson, then, holds constant reminders of her plight.
Always on the journey to find Lucas Burch, Lena maintains hope that he really has sent word for her to come. She never allows herself to feel that he has run away. Yet when she meets Burch face to face after the birth of their baby, she must confront the fact that he has forsaken her:

Lena on the cot watched the white scar beside his mouth vanish completely, as if the ebb of blood behind it had snatched the scar in passing like a rag from a clothesline. She did not speak at all. She just lay there, propped on the pillows, watching him with her sober eyes in which there was nothing at all--joy, surprise, reproach, love--while over his face passed shock, astonishment, outrage, and then downright terror . . . . (LIA p. 319)

When she questions him about their marriage, he admits that he is too busy to bother with that. As he is about to tell her another lie, "she neither looked up nor spoke while he stood above her with those eyes harried, desperate, and importunate. It was as if she held him there and that she knew it. And that she released him by her own will, deliberately" (LIA p. 321). Lena sees Burch's true nature and must face the realization that she is alone with a newborn baby.

Another instance of the tragic occurs in Lena's life. As previously mentioned, Byron Bunch treats her with much kindness by finding her lodging and going for help when her baby is born (LIA pp. 237 and 292). It is only natural that Lena may begin to feel a love for Bunch. Gail Hightower, at this point, comes for a visit and advises Lena to
send Bunch away, for she has experienced too much for Bunch to accept (LIA p. 306). Lena then admits that she has refused to marry Byron Bunch. She relates that Byron has come by this morning to ask when she wants to see Lucas Burch. Gail Hightower watches helplessly as Lena begins to cry, "And you worry me about if I said No or not and I already said No and you worry me and worry me and now he is already gone. I will never see him again" (LIA p. 307). Thus, Lena feels deeply about Byron but believes that he has forsaken her. The emotional upheaval this moment brings to Lena is tremendous, for this is the only time she ever sheds tears in the novel.

Lena Grove, however, is not a despondent individual. She may face many unpleasant occurrences, yet she always remains steadfast in her optimism. Although she is burdened with an unborn child, she does search hopefully for her lover (LIA pp. 8-9). When Byron Bunch intervenes to help Lena, she willingly accepts his assistance. Bunch describes her first appearance in Jefferson:

Swole-bellied, getting down slow from that strange wagon, among them strange faces, telling herself with a kind of quiet astonishment, only I dont reckon it was any astonishment in it, because she had come slow and afoot and telling never bothered her: "My, my. Here I have come clean from Alabama, and now I am in Jefferson at last, sure enough." (LIA p. 74)

In spite of being pregnant and unmarried, Lena remains positive in her outlook. She does not complain of discomfort or
suffer embarrassment; she is simply happy to be in Jefferson at last.

Although she has no idea where Lucas Burch has gone, she trustfully begins her journey with the hopeful anticipation that the Lord will guide her to him (LIA p. 14). When she finally does discover Lucas' whereabouts, she finds that he is going by another name, Joe Brown (LIA p. 40). However, this revelation still does not stop her. When Byron Bunch explains to Lena that he knows a minister who may be able to help in locating Lucas, her immediate reply is, "Can he still marry folks?" (LIA p. 64). Lena has not forgotten her main objective.

Another example of Lena's optimism occurs after she realizes that Lucas is not going to marry her. She leaves again with her baby, but this time, Byron Bunch goes, too. They catch a ride with a furniture dealer who has a truck (LIA p. 368). That night, Lena sleeps in the truck, while Byron and he are on the ground. The dealer describes what he observes unnoticed:

I just watched him climb slow and easy into the truck and disappear and then didn't anything happen . . . and then I heard one kind of astonished sound she made when she woke up . . . and she says, not loud neither; "Why, Mr. Bunch. Aint you ashamed. You might have woke the baby, too." (LIA p. 375)

At this point, Byron is probably wondering why Lena even allows him to follow her. But the next morning as she and
the furniture seller are leaving, Byron returns and climbs in the back of the truck with Lena and the baby. Byron tells her, "I done come too far now . . . I be dog if I'm going to quit now" (LIA p. 377). Lena replies, "Aint nobody never said for you to quit" (LIA p. 377). Lena knows that fulfillment will be found in a life with Byron Bunch. Thus, Lena's final act is to demonstrate her hope for the future by giving Byron a positive response.

Lena Grove, in short, embodies all the characteristics necessary for the beneficent individual. Her life exhibits a closeness to nature, a realization of the tragedy of existence, and a positive response to this tragedy. Cleanth Brooks writes, "Lena has a childlike confidence in herself and in mankind. She is a creature of warm natural sympathies and a deep instinctive commitment to her natural function."¹³ The figure of Lena Grove, then, should serve as a positive example of the way man should live.

Another character who seems quite different from the innocence of Lena Grove is Ruby Lamar of Sanctuary. However, Ruby also exhibits the necessary traits of the beneficent primitive. Ruby's simplicity is evident in her background. She has been a prostitute but now is a cook, housekeeper, and common-law wife of Lee Goodwin. Ruby

obviously has had little schooling, yet she is able to evaluate people and interpret events, but this ability does not depend on the intellectual ponderings and projections of the deep thinker. Horace Benbow, Goodwin's lawyer, allows her to stay in a home he owns, but his sister forces him to take Ruby to a hotel. As he attempts to justify the move, Ruby interrupts, "It's all right. I know how it is. You've been kind," a reaction that shows her basic understanding of the situation. Ruby's closeness to nature is shown when she is beaten by Lee Goodwin. After experiencing the pain of physical abuse, she seeks the healing solace of nature. She takes her baby and goes to sit by a stream in solitude (S p. 77). Ruby's primitive nature proves itself through her simplicity, non-intellectualism, and closeness to nature.

Ruby Lamar's closeness to her fellowman, the first attribute of beneficence, is demonstrated several times in Sanctuary. When Temple Drake, a young college girl, and her boyfriend come to Goodwin's place to buy liquor, they have a wreck and must spend the night there. Although she is angry at Temple's presence, Ruby still tries to protect her from the men's harassment by hiding her in the barn (S p. 38). Ruby remains with Temple to insure her safety. The old man who stays at Goodwin's is also

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1 William Faulkner, Sanctuary (1931; rpt. New York: Random House, 1958), p. 97. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as S.
Ruby's responsibility. After preparing supper, she cuts up the blind and deaf man's food and covers it with syrup (p. 8). This added sweetening perhaps provides enjoyment for the old man. When she must leave the house to call the sheriff about Tommy's death, she makes sure that the elderly man will have something for dinner (p. 84).

Ruby's baby also provides a bond of humanity for her. Ruby is very protective of her child. When Horace Benbow first sees the infant, Ruby explains why the baby is in a wooden box—to protect him from rats (p. 12). The love she feels for the child is evident in even such commonplace activities as changing the infant's diaper. She "spread the two remaining cloths and the undergarment on it, and sat again and laid the child across her lap. It wailed. 'Hush,' she said, 'hush, now,' her face in the lamplight taking a serene, brooding quality" (p. 46). Ruby's face expresses the love and care she feels for the child.

Another example of Ruby's love also exemplifies her concern for humanity. Her deep feeling for Lee Goodwin demonstrates her capacity for caring about her fellowman. Lee Goodwin, a man who sells liquor illegally and who has been in prison, does not seem worthy of Ruby's love, yet she puts no qualifications on her caring. Ruby waits patiently for Lee to come back from the army where, unknown to her, Lee has killed a soldier and is being sent to
Leavenworth Prison (S p. 220). Ruby is proud that she has not used prostitution as a means of making money. She says, "I'd been good all that time. I'd had good chances; every day I had them with the men coming in the restaurant" (S p. 220). Lee does not have the scruples of Ruby, for he has killed a man over another woman, while Ruby is waiting for him at home (S p. 45). In order to discover why Lee is not allowed off the ship when it docks, Ruby goes to a nightclub to be picked up by one of the ship's crew. When Ruby finds out the truth from one of the soldiers, she admits:

I sat there with the music playing and all, and that drunk soldier pawing at me, and me wondering why I didn't let go, go on with him, get drunk and never sober up again and me thinking And this is the sort of animal I wasted a year over. I guess that was why I didn't. (S p. 220)

Ruby's all-giving love for Lee exemplifies her compassion and concern for mankind.

Ruby's life is filled with much sadness. To get Lee Goodwin a lawyer when he kills the soldier, Ruby must turn to the only means she knows by which to make money: she returns to prostitution (S p. 4). When Lee discovers how Ruby has gotten the lawyer, he beats her (S p. 47). Lee is a disappointment to Ruby in other ways as well. When Temple Drake arrives unexpectedly at Goodwin's, Ruby knows that Lee wants Temple physically. When she tries to prevent his going to Temple, Lee beats her (S p. 75). The
realization that Lee wants another woman must be painful for Ruby. Thus, her capacity for suffering is evident in her relationship with Lee.

Lee also figures in another instance of the tragedy in Ruby's life. After seeing Lee in jail for a murder he has not committed, Ruby suffers the greatest loss. Lee is burned to death by the townspeople (§ p. 234). Ruby's love for Lee is great, yet she must now face life alone. The seeming unfairness of life is emphasized by Ruby's losing the one man she has truly loved. Thus, Ruby knows tragedy personally. Her life as a prostitute, her realization that Lee desires other women, and her confrontation of losing Lee in death show Ruby's suffering.

In spite of the tragedy that surrounds Ruby, she does not give up hope. Although Ruby understands Lee's weakness for other women, she continues to love him. When talking to Temple Drake, Ruby admits that "I've done everything for him. I've been in the dirt for him. I've put everything behind me and all I asked was to be let alone" (§ p. 129). Ruby's undying concern for Lee is also evidenced in her testifying in court. Even though Lee refuses to tell the truth about Popeye's murdering Tommy, Ruby decides to reveal what has really occurred, for Benbow convinces her that Lee will be convicted if the truth is not made known (§ p. 214).
Ruby's only positive choice, then, is to testify. She tries every means of saving the man she loves.

Her attempt to save Lee by testifying, however, does not make Lee feel more hopeful. He is sure that Popeye will now kill him. Ruby, then, functions in the only way she can. She sits by Lee's side to be with him if he is killed (S p. 216). After Lee survives the night, the hope that Benbow and Ruby have for Lee's acquittal is crushed, for Temple lies on the witness stand (S p. 228). Knowing that Lee will be convicted of the murder and possibly executed, Ruby still does not forsake him. The last picture of Ruby in the novel occurs after Temple's testimony. Ruby is standing so that Lee can see the baby through his cell window (S p. 321). Through this gesture, she demonstrates her view of life. In spite of the sorrow she has experienced, she does not relent. Her presence indicates her ability to withstand all life gives her. Truly Ruby's fortitude is a positive example for all mankind.

In summary, Ruby is a beneficent primitive. Her life reflects the characteristics of a love for her fellowman, a confrontation of the tragic, and a hope for the future. Edmond Volpe explains that Ruby's "history is one of self-sacrifice, and her prostitution is redeemed by her fidelity and love. . . . With her sickly baby in her arms, Ruby is the madonna."15

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15Volpe, p. 47.
Jenny Du Pre, another beneficent primitive, is present in two of Faulkner's novels. In *The Unvanquished*, Jenny is a young woman, recently widowed, while in *Sartoris*, she is elderly. Although she lives with her brother who is well off financially and has servants, Jenny remains a working woman who runs the household firmly. Jenny's trait of non-intellectualism is found in her reaction to Narcissa Ben-bow's receiving obscene letters. Jenny is quite practical. Her advice is to show them immediately to Bayard, her great-nephew, or burn them (Sar pp. 69-70). Jenny does not attempt to discover their source or to lament their depravity. When Simon, a servant, explains to Jenny that she is not planting her flowers where she should, she shouts, "I plant my flowers just exactly where I want 'em to be planted" (Sar p. 56). These flowers respond to Jenny's care by blooming lavishly (Sar p. 60). Jenny's love of work, her practicality, and her link with nature exemplify her primitive qualities.

Jenny's qualification as a beneficent individual originates from her concern for other people. Jenny, although an elderly woman, is "much in demand as a chaperone for picnic parties," for the young people like her (Sar p. 40). Her ability to perceive another individual's needs must come from a closeness to all men. When Narcissa Ben-bow is relaying to Jenny her concern about her brother
Horace, Jenny succinctly sums up Horace's naivety by stating, "An innocent like Horace straying with that trusting air of his among all those man-starved European women? He wouldn't know it himself, until it was too late; especially in a foreign language" (Sar p. 42). Jenny understands Horace's innocence, even when his own sister cannot perceive it, for she is in close touch with her fellowman.

Young Bayard Sartoris is another person Jenny understands. When Bayard injures his head while away from home, Narcissa calls to inquire about his wound. Jenny admits that she has not heard from him since the doctor "'phoned her at four o'clock that Bayard was on his way home with a broken head. The broken head she readily believed, but the other part of the message she had put no credence in whatever . . ." (Sar p. 132). She is right, for Bayard does not return home until the next morning (Sar p. 138). Although Jenny knows that Bayard is playing a game with self-destruction, she is always ready to care for him as he recovers from each of his dangerous antics. When Bayard is in bed with crushed ribs, Jenny is there "mothering him with savage and cherishing affection . . ." (Sar p. 191). Her love for her nephew is deep. It exemplifies her concern for all men.

Another Sartoris who receives Jenny's concern and care is old Bayard Sartoris. In The Unvanquished, however, he
and Jenny are both quite young. Bayard's father is killed by another man, and the townspeople and Drusilla, his father's widow, expect him to have a shoot-out with the killer. Jenny advises him:

You are not going to try to kill him. All right . . . Don't let it be Drusilla, a poor hysterical young woman. And don't let it be him [his father], Bayard, because he's dead now. And don't let it be George Wyatt and those others who will be waiting for you tomorrow morning. I know that you are not afraid.\(^{16}\)

Her assurance that she does not think Bayard is a coward indicates her perception of his needs at this moment. As Cleanth Brooks states, "She is able to give Bayard precisely the sort of understanding which in this crisis he requires."\(^{17}\) Jenny's closeness to her fellowman allows her to respond to the needs of those around her in a positive way.

The second attribute of the beneficent character is also a part of Jenny's personality, for she faces tragedy often in Sartoris. After only two years of marriage, she is left a widow (Sar p. 25). When she comes to live with her brother Bayard, she wears "that expression of indomitable and utter weariness which all Southern women had learned to wear . . . " (Sar p. 25). Although Jenny rarely


\(^{17}\)Brooks, William Faulkner, p. 99.
mentions her personal suffering during the Civil War, she does on one occasion share it with Narcissa:

Men can't stand anything. . . . Do you think a man could sit day after day and month after month in a house miles from nowhere and spend the time between casualty lists tearing up bedclothes and window curtains and table linen to make lint, and watching sugar and flour and meat dwindling away, and using pine knots for light because there aren't any candles . . . and hiding in nigger cabins while drunken Yankee generals set fire to the house your great-great-grandfather built and you and all your folks were born in? Don't talk to me about men suffering in war. (Sar p. 58)

Jenny's Civil War experience is still vivid after fifty years. The loss of her family's home and the grueling wait for news of casualties are still painful memories. The tragedy of the war is seared into Jenny's consciousness.

Jenny also knows firsthand the grief caused by the death of a loved one. Her husband's death has already been mentioned. In addition, she also loses Bayard, her brother, in an automobile crash caused by Bayard, her great-nephew (Sar p. 246). Young Bayard does not return home, perhaps out of guilt for being responsible for his grandfather's death. Less than a year later, Bayard is killed while piloting a test airplane (Sar p. 292). The Sartoris' servant Simon is found dead a week after Bayard's demise (Sar p. 297). The three deaths combine to make Jenny ill for three weeks (Sar p. 295). Her illness demonstrates the depth of her grief, for she has not been ill for thirty years (Sar p. 295). When Narcissa names her son Benbow
instead of the Sartoris family name of John, Jenny understands why. She states, "And do you think that'll do any good? . . . Do you think you can change one of 'em with a name?" (Sar p. 302). Jenny's statement reflects a comprehension of the tragedy found in the world, for she understands that it is man's plight to suffer, and she faces this realization openly and honestly.

In spite of the tragedy in her life, Jenny does not become despondent. Her view of life remains hopeful. Jenny understands that young Bayard is guilt-ridden and self-destructive, yet when he comes home from the war, she sits by his bedside with a glass of milk when he has nightmares (Sar p. 54). Her philosophy, "being a true optimist—that is, expecting the worst at all times and so being daily agreeably surprised . . . ," allows her to meet the future hopefully and courageously (Sar p. 171).

Jenny's positive view is seen in her attitude toward Bayard and Narcissa's newborn son. Instead of anticipating the suffering that he will cause, Jenny states that he is "an improved model. He hasn't got that wild look of 'em" (Sar p. 296). Jenny also never gives up hope completely for young Bayard. When he runs away after accidentally killing his grandfather, she telegraphs several times for him to come on home. She really believes that he will return (Sar p. 287). When Jenny learns of his death, she
remains calm, stating, "Thank God that's the last one" (Sar p. 204). Olga Vickery relates that "coupled with her conviction that a violent death is noblesse oblige for any Sartoris is her woman's practicality and common sense which picks up the pieces and re-establishes order after each new act of folly."\(^\text{18}\)

The most positive statement of Jenny's courage, hope, and endurance originates from Narcissa Benbow Sartoris. She, as a woman, can perceive more clearly the depth of Jenny's compassion and fortitude since she too has shared in some of Jenny's suffering:

And Narcissa would sit, serene again behind her forewarned bastions, listening, admiring more than ever that indomitable spirit that, born with a woman's body into a heritage of rash and heedless men and seemingly for the sole purpose of cherishing those men to their early and violent ends, and this over a period of history which had seen brothers and husband slain in the same useless mischancing of human affairs; had seen, as in a nightmare not to be healed by either waking or sleep, the foundations of her life swept away and had her roots torn bodily from that soil where her forefathers slept trusting in the integrity of mankind. . . . And she thought how much finer that gallantry which never lowered blade to foes no sword could find; that uncomplaining steadfastness of those unsung (ay, unwept too) women than the fustian and useless glamour of the men that obscured it.

(Sar pp. 285-86)

Jenny Du Pre is one of the finest examples of Faulkner's female characters. She is an active participant in life

even though fate often provides much sorrow to bear. Throughout her long life, Jenny exhibits an affirmation for living. The destruction of her family home, the early death of her husband, the deaths of her brother Bayard and her great-nephew young Bayard, and the demise of a trusted servant Simon do not diminish Jenny's positive response to life. Indeed, she demonstrates the hope and fortitude of Faulkner's beneficent primitives.

Rosa Millard, old Bayard Sartoris' grandmother, also qualifies as one of Faulkner's primitives. Because of the destruction of the Civil War, Rosa must live in a one-room cabin with her grandson and a black servant (Un p. 88). The simplicity of her surroundings does not inconvenience Rosa. The Civil War also is the basis of an example of her non-intellectualism. When she, Bayard, and Ringo are traveling to Memphis, a Confederate soldier stops them and attempts to turn them back because of the close proximity of the fighting. Rosa is not afraid because one Union officer has treated her with kindness (Un p. 64). Her heart, not her head, allows her to have faith that the officers will be gentlemen. Rosa's closeness to nature is shown by her insistence on taking rose cuttings to her relatives in Memphis (Un p. 63). The crudeness of her small cabin, her implicit faith in the integrity of Yankee officers, and her naturalness in the outdoors serve as examples of her simplicity,
her non-intellectualism, and her closeness to nature.

Rosa Millard possesses the characteristics of beneficence. First, her closeness to her fellowman is evident in her confrontation with Colonel Dick, a Yankee officer. When Ringo and Bayard shoot a Union horse, Colonel Dick intercedes when a lower ranking officer attempts to locate the boys. When Rosa denies having any boys at her home, the Colonel responds to her desperation and orders his soldiers to leave (Un p. 35). Through her courage, Rosa reaches the humanity of this Yankee officer. When Colonel Dick leaves, he says, "But permit me to say and hope that you will never have anything worse than this to remember us by" (Un p. 38). He sees in Rosa a common link with all mankind and honestly wishes her no harm.

A second example of Rosa's concern for mankind occurs while she, Ringo, and Bayard are traveling to Hawkhurst to see relatives. A large group of blacks pass by their wagon. After the blacks leave, Rosa hears the panting and crying of one person who has been left behind. She makes Ringo drive the wagon to the spot from which the sound originates. There, a black woman and an infant are sitting on the ground. Rosa takes them in the wagon until the girl is ready to leave, and she gives her some food (Un p. 96).
By providing food and transportation for these two individuals, Rosa demonstrates her love for all men. She reacts to their need with concern and kindness.

The best example, however, of Rosa's concern for mankind occurs after she is given the ten chests, one hundred ten mules, and the numerous blacks as restitution for the confiscation of her one chest, two mules, and two blacks taken by the Yankees. By using forged papers, Rosa is able to get more mules which she then sells back to the Union army. The cash she collects goes to her poor neighbors: "Granny drew the tin can out of her dress and spread the money on the book. But nobody moved until she began to call out the names. Then they came up one at a time, while Ringo read the names off the book, and the date, and the amount they had received before" (Un p. 157). Her sharing of money and mules with those around her is solid proof of her love and concern for all men.

The tragic time in which Rosa lives makes its mark on her. The destructive nature of the Civil War strikes her home, leaving it a burned-out shell (Un p. 88). She sees her family's silver taken by Yankee soldiers (Un p. 84), the loss itself not so upsetting as the realization that one of the family's servants has shown the Yankees where the silver is buried (Un p. 84). Bayard has to hold Rosa physically to keep her from running back to the burning
house (Un p. 84). The brutal reality of war faces Rosa in her loss of the homestead and her family's silver.

Although Rosa Millard is a Christian, the war causes her to resort to lying and stealing. Bayard confesses that the only thing for which Rosa whips Ringo and him is lying (Un p. 32), yet she now must learn to lie herself. When she is returning from her meeting with Colonel Dick with one hundred ten mules, Ringo stops twelve Yankee soldiers, and Rosa shows the requisition from Colonel Dick. After they reach home safely with one hundred twenty-two livestock, Rosa makes Ringo and Bayard get out of the wagon and kneel with her, for she states, "We have lied" (Un p. 134). After every trip that results in more mules, Rosa confesses in church, "I have sinned. I want you all to pray for me" (Un p. 156). Rosa learns firsthand that man may truly want to do what is right, but at times doing right is nearly impossible.

The tragedy of the Civil War does not dampen Rosa's positive outlook. She keeps faith in Colonel Dick after he has refused to acknowledge Ringo and Bayard's presence under her skirts. She goes through Yankee lines firmly believing that the officers will allow no harm to come to her (Un p. 64). Her trust in Colonel Dick gives her the hope and courage to go after the replacements for the livestock and silver the soldiers have taken (Un p. 124).
Rosa's bravery reflects her basic optimism, for she attempts to undo some of the injustice caused by the war.

Although Rosa knows that she is sinning when she lies and steals from the Yankees, her attitude toward God demonstrates her firm commitment in what she does. She prays:

I have sinned. . . . But I did not sin for gain or for greed, . . . I did not sin for revenge. I defy You or anyone to say I did. . . . I sinned for the sake of food and clothes for Your own creatures who could not help themselves--for children who had given their fathers, for wives who had given their husbands, for old people who had given their sons to a holy cause, even though You have seen fit to make it a lost cause. (Un p. 167)

The tone of her prayer contains a mild accusation of God. Rosa implies that she is certainly doing her part, but God is making her job difficult. By her scheming to get mules from the Yankees, she makes "independent and secure almost everyone in the county save herself and her own blood" (Un p. 172). Rosa's positive response to the tragedy of war is to do what she can for those she loves.

Rosa, then, possesses all the characteristics of the beneficent individual. Living during wartime and bearing responsibility for her household alone, she withstands the tragedy by working to help her fellowman. When she attempts to make money for her own family, having given away to her neighbors all that she has made, she is killed (Un p. 175). Although her life ends violently, Rosa's death proves her attempt to live with courage and hope.
The last of the beneficent primitives to be discussed, Eunice Habersham, figures in two of Faulkner's novels. In *Go Down, Moses*, her name is shortened to Worsham, while in *Intruder in the Dust* she retains her full name, Eunice Habersham. Miss Habersham is a primitive. With the help of a Negro servant, she grows vegetables to sell to the townspeople, an occupation which demonstrates her simplicity. When she and Charles Mallison decide to dig up a dead body to prove Lucas Beauchamp's innocence, she admits, "Lucas knew it would take a child—or an old woman like me: someone not concerned with probability, with evidence."\(^1\)

Even Lucas perceives that she will rely on her feelings rather than her intellect to guide her. Miss Habersham's link with nature is best demonstrated by her ease in getting on a horse, despite her advanced age. While Aleck Sander prepares to help her mount the horse, "she... took the reins from him and before he could even brace his hand for her foot she put it in the stirrup and went up as light and fast as either he or Aleck Sander could have done..." (ID p. 99). Thus Miss Habersham adequately fulfills all the characteristics of the primitive.

Miss Habersham's beneficence shows in her need to be recognized as a part of humanity. She and the daughter of

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\(^1\)William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (New York: Modern Library, 1948), p. 89. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as ID.
one of her father's slaves, Molly Worsham Beauchamp, have grown up together. Miss Habersham and Molly are "the same age, born in the same week and both suckled at Molly's mother's breast and grown up together almost inextricably like sisters, like twins, sleeping in the same room . . . and Miss Habersham had stood up in the Negro church as godmother to Molly's first child" (ID p. 87). Further evidence of Miss Habersham's closeness to Molly occurs in Go Down, Moses, when Molly's grandson is being executed for murdering a policeman, and Molly wants to give him a decent funeral. Miss Habersham lovingly gives twenty-five dollars to pay for the casket and burial expenses.\(^2\)\(^0\) Gavin Stevens says of her generosity, "She insisted on leaving twenty-five with me, which is just twice what I tried to persuade her it would cost and just exactly four times what she can afford to pay" (GDM pp. 377-38). Miss Habersham's love offering for Molly's grandson reinforces the depth of her concern for others.

Miss Habersham's concern also encompasses Lucas Beauchamp in his time of need. Although the evidence points to Lucas' guilt, Miss Habersham pursues the lead that Lucas' gun is not the murder weapon, even though her investigation is based on sheer faith in Lucas. Miss Habersham's response

\(^2\)\(^0\)William Faulkner, Go Down, Moses (1940; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 377. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as GDM.
indicates a closeness to her fellowman which does not lessen when a person is in trouble.

An awareness of tragedy is also a characteristic of Miss Habersham. Although the Habersham family is one of the oldest in Jefferson, Miss Habersham has to work peddling vegetables for a living (ID p. 75). In addition to the gradual decline of her family, Miss Habersham shares in the grief of Molly Beauchamp, her close friend and daughter of her father's slave. When Molly's grandson is executed for murder, Miss Habersham participates in the wake. Gavin Stevens comes to the wake to express his sympathy but has to leave because the gathering is too emotional (GDM p. 381). Miss Habersham reassures him, "It's all right. . . . It's our grief" (GDM p. 381), a statement showing her awareness of tragedy.

By far the most outstanding of Miss Habersham's attributes is her optimistic view of life. In spite of all the facts pointing to Lucas Beauchamp's guilt for the murder of Vinson Gowrie, Miss Habersham attempts to discover support for Lucas' claim to innocence. Gavin Stevens, in reply to Charles Mallison, admits that Miss Habersham is "tougher than you and me both just as old Habersham was tougher than you and Aleck Sander put together; you might have gone out there without her to drag you by the hand but Aleck Sander wouldn't and I'm still not so sure you would when you came
right down to it" (ID p. 106). Miss Habersham's positive belief in Lucas makes her go through a trip in the dark to dig up a grave (ID p. 90).

Miss Habersham's endurance further impresses Gavin Stevens. He tells Charles Mallison, "Just remember that they [women] can stand anything . . . " (ID p. 107). Thus, it is not surprising when Miss Habersham, who has spent all night at the Gowrie grave, helps to cook breakfast and then goes to sit in front of the jail so Lucas will not be lynched (ID pp. 111, 118). Her fortitude serves to demonstrate an affirmative belief in life. Because of this belief, Miss Habersham is willing to give completely of herself.

Miss Habersham, then, successfully fulfills the qualities of the beneficent primitive. She is a gallant lady and hard worker; she knows the taste of tragedy, yet remains hopeful. Her courage and optimism typify the beneficent primitive.

In conclusion, these seven characters who compose the white beneficent primitives represent an optimism which is sometimes overlooked in William Faulkner's work. Although the individuals themselves are very different in temperament, background, and age, they serve to help form an undercurrent of hope in the novels in which they appear. The
white beneficent primitives, along with their black counterparts, serve as embodiments of Faulkner's hope for mankind.
CHAPTER IV

ADOLESCENT CHARACTERS WHO DEVELOP BENEFICENCE

Chapters Four and Five examine those characters whom Faulkner shows learning the traits of beneficence. The characters treated in Chapter Four are boys who, through some kind of learning experience, gain the necessary beneficent traits of a closeness to mankind, a comprehension of the tragic nature of life, and a positive response to this tragic realization. All of the individuals included in this chapter go through a transition from childhood to adulthood. CLEANTH BROOKS, in a discussion of Intruder in the Dust, notes a similarity among Charles Mallison (Intruder in the Dust), Bayard Sartoris (The Unvanquished), and Ike McCaslin (Go Down, Moses). He states, "The tension in both cases is between a boy's ties with his community . . . and his revulsion from what the community seems committed to do." Lucius Priest, a young boy, also exhibits this same basic conflict in The Reivers. Therefore Charles Mallison, Bayard Sartoris, Ike McCaslin, and Lucius Priest compose the group of young men who, through the process of growing up, learn the attributes necessary to be a beneficent individual.

Charles Mallison, in *Intruder in the Dust*, is just a boy of twelve when he first recognizes that the world is not as he perceives it should be. On a hunting expedition with some friends in the dead of winter, Charles accidentally falls into an icy creek. Lucas Beauchamp, an elderly black man, saves Charles' life;² takes him to his cabin, dries out his clothes, and feeds him (ID p. 13). Charles' understanding of the world tells him that since Lucas is black and he is white, he should pay Lucas, so he

extended the coins... he knew that only by that one irrevocable second was he forever now too late, forever beyond recall, standing with the slow hot blood as slow as minutes themselves up his neck and face, forever with his dumb hand open and on it the four shameful fragments of milled and minted dross, until at last the man had something that at least did the office of pity.

"What's that for?" the man said,... and [Charles] watched his palm turn over not flinging the coins but spurning them downward ringing onto the bare floor... (ID p. 16)

Charles' reliance on the social behavior he has observed previously creates a problem, for Lucas does not respond as Charles expects. This initial incident brings about the maturing and changing of Charles' view of his fellowman.

This incident so disturbs Charles that a year later, he is still attempting to understand Lucas' behavior. He admits, "We got to make him be a nigger first. He's got

²William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (New York: Modern Library, 1948), pp. 5-6. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as ID.
to admit he's a nigger. Then maybe we will accept him as he seems to intend to be accepted" (ID p. 18). Lucas' perception of himself as an equal to the white man perplexes and angers Charles. The problem of racial discrimination is the impetus which leads Charles to a realization of his excluding from the circle of humanity a group of individuals whose skin color is different from his own.

Charles' growth from a naive, bigoted boy to a wise, open-minded man is a gradual process. Charles' immaturity causes him to attempt to repay Lucas for the favor of rescuing him from the creek. After saving his allowance for four months, Charles purchases a dress for Molly, Lucas' wife; but Lucas, in return, sends Charles a gallon jug of molasses (ID p. 22). The next time Charles meets Lucas on the street, Lucas looks straight at him but says nothing. Charles thinks, "He has forgotten me. He doesn't even remember me anymore" (ID p. 24). At last Charles feels that the debt is forgotten. A year later, Gavin Stevens, his uncle, mentions that Lucas' wife Molly has died the year before, and suddenly the realization strikes Charles. He states, "He was grieving. You don't have to not be a nigger to grieve" (ID p. 25). Charles' understanding that Lucas too can feel sorrow as any other man begins his growth toward beneficence.
Charles' view of Lucas continues to expand. When Lucas is jailed for the murder of a white man, he calls on Charles to get Gavin Stevens (ID p. 45). By reaching out to him, Lucas makes Charles begin to view him as an equal. When Lucas reveals that his gun is not the murder weapon, Charles sees the "mute unhoping urgency . . . " of Lucas' eyes (ID p. 69). Charles moves closer to Lucas while Lucas takes "hold of two of the bars as a child stands inside a fence. Nor did he remember doing so but looking down he saw his own hands holding to two of the bars, the two pairs of hands, the black ones and the white ones, grasping the bars while they faced one another above them" (ID p. 69). The close proximity of their hands serves to link these two individuals together. Charles accepts Lucas' plea to look at Gowrie's body to examine the bullet hole (ID p. 69). With this act, Charles begins to acknowledge Lucas' humanity.

In addition to Charles' growing awareness of Lucas as a fellow human being, his acceptance of all men increases as well. When he and his uncle to out with the sheriff to dig up Vinson Gowrie's grave, Gowrie's father arrives and refuses to let them disturb the grave. Charles realizes suddenly,

Why, he's grieving: thinking how he had seen grief twice now in two years where he had not expected it . . . , where in a sense a heart capable of breaking had no business being: once in an old nigger who had just happened to outlive his old nigger wife and now in a violent foulmouthed godless old man who had
happened to lose one of the six . . . lazy idle violent more or less lawless . . . sons. (ID p. 161)

With his perception of Gowrie's grief, Charles' sympathetic understanding of the world is increasing. Even in the most unlikely individuals, Charles sees a common humanity emerging. With this realization, Charles fulfills the first trait of the beneficent character, that of being close to his fellowman.

Charles also exhibits an awareness of the tragedy in life. Although only sixteen, he must bear the responsibility for another human being's life. After Lucas tells him that his gun is not the murder weapon, Charles goes to tell his Uncle Gavin of Lucas' confession. Gavin dismisses the revelation by stating, "That's exactly what I would claim myself if I were Lucas . . . " (ID p. 79). Charles then realizes that he must take responsibility for Lucas, for he has "expected his uncle and the sheriff would take charge and make the expedition, not because he thought they would believe him but simply because he simply could not conceive of himself and Aleck Sander being left with it . . . " (ID p. 81). Charles perceives the unfairness of prejudice, for Lucas' word does not mean anything because he is black. His seeing man's inhumanity to his fellowman causes Charles to experience the darker side of life.

Another realization of the tragic occurs after the townspeople discover Lucas' innocence. Those who are so
anxious to lynch Lucas are nowhere to be found when the real murderer is discovered. Charles admits, "They [the townspeople] ran. . . . They reached the point where there was nothing left for them to do but admit that they were wrong. So they ran home" (ID pp. 196-97). Charles witnesses the injustice Lucas experiences and then must watch as no one attempts to apologize for his or her misjudgment. Charles sees man for what he is, a being who is often wrong and seldom willing to confront this fact. Thus, his realization of man's weakness moves Charles one step closer to his attainment of beneficence.

Charles perceives mankind's weaknesses early in his life, yet he does not become negative in his outlook. When his uncle refuses to believe Lucas' claim of innocence, Charles does not give up. He is willing to try to dig up Gowrie's grave himself. When Miss Habersham happens to find out Lucas' claim, she wants to help. After Charles explains that the Gowrie boy must be exhumed and examined, he realizes "the enormity of his intention but the simple inert unwieldy impossible physical vastness of what he faced; he said quietly, with hopeless indomitable amazement: 'We cant possibly do it'" (ID p. 90). However, he, Aleck Sander, and Miss Habersham do the seemingly impossible. They unearth the body and discover that it is not Vinson Gowrie (ID p. 104). Charles ability to endure in spite
of overwhelming odds proves his positive response to life.

Another example of Charles' optimism occurs after he becomes disenchanted with the townspeople. Charles senses that his own despair is caused by his link with these people:

He realized that that was a part of it too—that fierce desire that they should be perfect because they were his and he was theirs, that furious intolerance of any one single jot or tittle less than absolute perfection.... one shame if shame must be, one expiation since expiation must surely be but above all one unalterable durable impregnable one: one people one heart one land. ... (ID pp. 209-210)

He understands at last that in spite of the townsmen's weaknesses, they are still a part of humanity, just as he is, and thus they will still possess positive qualities. After accepting this fact, Charles feels ashamed and confesses, "I was righteous" (ID p. 210). Gavin tells Charles, "Maybe you were right and they were wrong. Just dont stop" (ID p. 210). Gavin's advice is sound. Charles must continue to remain hopeful even when tragedy abounds.

Thus, Charles attains beneficence. He learns through a grueling experience that all men are his brothers, that man must suffer tragedy, and that he must face life hopefully. In the short interval of a few days, Charles grows from an immature boy to an understanding young man. Edmond Volpe relates that Charles' experience is one "in which the
boy meets a test of courage and experiences a deepening of his moral sensitivity . . . . " This change in Charles Mallison indicates his growth to beneficence.

The next character who grows to beneficence is Bayard Sartoris in The Unvanquished. At the beginning of the novel, Bayard is an innocent young boy who has not been exposed to life's tragedy. However, during the course of the novel, Bayard does acquire the traits of beneficence, and at the book's conclusion, is an excellent example of man living as he should.

Bayard demonstrates a closeness to humanity early in his life. His black servant Ringo is much like a brother to Bayard. His close ties to Ringo are described by Bayard:

Ringo and I had been born in the same month and had both been fed at the same breast and had slept together and eaten together for so long that Ringo called Granny "Granny" just like I did, until maybe he wasn't a nigger anymore or maybe I wasn't a white boy anymore, the two of us neither, not even people any longer: the two supreme undefeated like two moths, two feathers riding above a hurricane. 4

The bond between Bayard and Ringo transcends the racial barrier so often imposed in the South during the Civil War. Their closeness continues even after Bayard goes away to school. When Bayard's father is killed, Ringo rides forty


miles on horseback to bring Bayard the news (Un p. 248). After Bayard meets his father's murderer without either of them being killed, Bayard is exhausted and lies down in a pasture to rest. When he awakens himself crying, Ringo is there to comfort him. Says Bayard, "I slept for almost five hours and I didn't dream anything at all yet I waked myself up crying, crying too hard to stop it. Ringo was squatting beside me. . . . After a while I began to stop and Ringo brought his hat full of water from the creek . . . . " (Un p. 290). Ringo's caring for Bayard is a touching example of the love these young men share.

Bayard's closeness to Ringo emphasizes his love for all men.

Bayard's love for his grandmother, Rosa Millard, also demonstrates his closeness to humanity. When Bayard is a young boy, he and Ringo attempt to shoot a Union soldier, but instead kill a horse. After they fire the gun, both run to the house screaming for Granny, a name used for Rosa. The soldiers come to the front door looking for the snipers, yet Bayard is so frightened he cannot move:

But it seemed like none of us could move at all; we just had to stand there looking at Granny with her hand at her breast and her face looking like she had died. . . . Then she said, "Quick! Here!" and then Ringo and I were squatting with our knees under our chins, on either side of her against her legs . . . and her skirts spread over us like a tent . . . . (Un p. 31)
When in trouble, Bayard turns to his grandmother to protect him. His love and trust in her are shown by his seeking her protection.

Another example of Bayard's closeness to Rosa occurs when they are caught near a bridge about to be blown up by the Yankees. After the bridge is destroyed, Rosa fights off the soldiers with her umbrella until she faints. When the Yankees take Rosa, Bayard, and Ringo to their camp, Bayard notices for the first time his grandmother's age: "Then we began to pass between rows of tents, with Granny lying against me, and I could see her face then; it was white and still, and her eyes were shut. She looked old and tired; I hadn't realised how old and little she was" (Un p. 123). Until this moment, Rosa has seemed invincible. Now, however, Bayard sees her weak physical state and responds with compassion and concern, his link with humanity strengthened.

Although Bayard possesses a closeness to his fellowman from an early age, he must learn about tragedy as he gets older. At the beginning of The Unvanquished, the Civil War to him is much like a game. The war takes on a new meaning for Bayard, however, when the Yankees burn his home. As he watches the smoke billow from the burning house, he shouts, "The bastuds, Granny... The bastuds" (Un p. 86). The destruction which war brings is thus experienced firsthand
by Bayard, and with his own home ruined, his insight into the tragedy of life is deepened.

Another example of war's destruction also causes a growth in Bayard's perception of the tragic. While visiting his cousin Drusilla, Bayard sees the twisted wreckage of what was a railroad. As he listens to Drusilla relate how the Yankees twisted the track around tree trunks, he realizes the tragedy of war. At home, he sees his father and other neighbors come home occasionally to slaughter some beef or work the fields, and those men do not appear to be a part of the war:

Father's whole presence seemed . . . to emanate a kind of humility and apology, as if he were saying, "Believe me, boys; take my word for it: there's more to it than this, no matter what it looks like. I can't prove it, so you'll just have to believe me." And then to have it happen, where we could have been there to see it, and were not . . . Because this was it: an interval, a space, in which the toad-squatting guns, the panting men and the trembling horses paused, amphitheatric about the embattled land, beneath the fading fury of the smoke and puny yelling, and permitted the sorry business which had dragged on for three years now to be congealed into an irrevocable instant and put to an irrevocable gambit, not by two regiments or two batteries or even two generals, but by two locomotives. (Un pp. 108-09)

Finally, the full impact of the war's destruction hits Bayard. He perceives the tragic waste of the war and at last understands the suffering that war causes.

In addition to the tragedy of war, Bayard must face a more personal sorrow. Rosa is killed (Un p. 175). Bayard's grief is so bitter that he and Ringo track down Rosa's
killer, Grumby, with the intention of murdering him. After Bayard kills Grumby, he and Ringo return to Rosa's grave and they "began to cry. We stood there in the slow rain, crying. We had ridden a lot, and during the last week we hadn't slept much and we hadn't always had anything to eat" (Un p. 211). His experience with tragedy allows Bayard to display the second trait of beneficence, that of a knowledge of the tragic.

Bayard's killing Grumby in retribution for his grandmother's death does not cause Bayard to be a violent man. In fact, he achieves the third characteristic of a positive acceptance of life as a result of an anticipated duel with his father's killer. Bayard's father, John Sartoris, is a man who settles disagreements with a gun. When he decides not to draw his gun again, Colonel Sartoris is killed by Redmond (Un p. 260). Bayard comes home to a town which thinks he will avenge his father's death. He sees in this incident an opportunity to test his beliefs: "At least this will be my chance to find out if I am what I think I am or if I just hope; if I am going to do what I have taught myself is right or if I am just going to wish I were" (Un p. 248). Bayard is going to test his optimistic, humane view of life by attempting to settle the dispute without killing Redmond.
When Bayard arrives home, he is met by Drusilla, Colonel Sartoris' widow, who hands him two dueling pistols (Un p. 273). Even his father's friends ask Bayard if he needs help in taking care of Redmond (Un p. 268). The pressure on Bayard to kill Redmond is great. His Aunt Jenny is the only one who attempts to persuade Bayard to stay home (Un p. 280). But Bayard goes to town anyway. Several of his father's friends meet him to see if he has a gun. One of the men, George Wyatt, tries to push a gun in Bayard's pocket when,

Something communicated by touch straight to the simple code by which he lived, without going through the brain at all: so that he too stood suddenly back, the pistol in his hand, staring at me with his pale outraged eyes and speaking in a whisper thin with fury: "Who are you? Is your name Sartoris? By God, if you don't kill him, I'm going to." (Un p. 284)

Bayard, however, refuses Wyatt's help and goes to meet Redmond alone and unarmed (Un p. 285). After Redmond intentionally misses Bayard, George Wyatt admits, "You ain't done nothing to be ashamed of. I wouldn't have done it that way myself, I'd a shot at him once, anyway. But that's your way or you wouldn't have done it" (Un p. 289). Bayard replies, "Yes. . . . I would do it again" (Un p. 289).

Bayard passes the test. He can live as he believes he should, with hope and acceptance of life.

Thus, Bayard, by the conclusion of The Unvanquished, demonstrates that he possesses the three characteristics of
beneficence. His closeness to humanity, his realization of the tragic, and his positive acceptance of life qualify him as one of Faulkner's admirable characters. Indeed, he epitomizes the virtue suggested by the title of the novel itself, the unvanquished.

Isaac McCaslin of *Go Down, Moses* is a third individual who attains beneficence as he matures. Isaac is a twelve-year-old boy when he begins his growth toward possessing the beneficent characteristics. While on a hunting expedition, he gains insight into his link with his fellowman and, ultimately, all living things. An old Indian who has Negro blood, Sam Fathers, serves as Ike's teacher. Sam Fathers knows nature and shows Ike the ways of a good hunter. When at last Ike kills a buck, Sam marks his face with the dead animal's blood, an act which signals Ike's skill as a hunter and also serves as a symbol of the bond established between Sam and Ike:

> The hands, the touch, the first worthy blood which he had been found at last worthy to draw, joining him and the man forever, so that the man would continue to live past the boy's seventy years and then eighty years, long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it. (GDM p. 165)

Ike's closeness to Sam Fathers continues until Sam's death. When Sam collapses during a bear hunt, Ike knows

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that Sam will die. He refuses to leave the camp even though school is about to begin. His cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, finally agrees to allow Ike to remain with Sam. When Cass returns to the camp, he discovers Boon Hogganbeck, a friend of his, and Ike with the dead body of Sam Fathers which is placed on a "platform of freshly cut saplings" (GDM p. 252). When Cass attempts to remove Sam's body from the burial place, Boon refuses to let Cass touch the body. As Cass and Boon argue, Ike moves closer: "He [Ike] was between them, facing McCaslin; the water felt as if it had burst and sprung not from his eyes alone but from his whole face, like sweat. 'Leave him alone!' he cried. 'Goddamn it! Leave him alone!'" (GDM p. 254). Ike's grief over Sam Fathers' death demonstrates his love for the old man. Their link with each other emphasizes Ike's closeness to all men.

Ike also exhibits a compassion for all men in his act of giving up the land he is to inherit. He explains to Cass the reason for the renunciation. While going through some family papers, he discovers that his grandfather fathered a daughter by one of his own slaves, and when the daughter matured, he committed incest with her. The gross inhumanity of this act so disturbs Ike that he renounces his claim to the family land. Ike defends the Negro eloquently in an argument with McCaslin over his decision:

"And their virtues"--and he [Isaac] "Yes. Their own. Endurance--" and McCaslin
"So have mules;" and he
"--and pity and tolerance and forbearance and
fidelity and love of children--" and McCaslin
"So have dogs:" and he
"--whether their own or not or black or not. And
more: what they got not only from white people but
not even despite white people because they had it
already from the old free fathers a longer time free
than us because we have never been free . . . . "
(GDM p. 295)

Ike's view of blacks includes them as members of the human
race. His closeness to all men, no matter what the color
of their skins, is evident in his discussion with Cass. Ike
is a part of mankind in his actions as well as his beliefs.

As he matures, Ike must face life's reality. He has
to experience the tragic himself and work his way through it. While stalking a bear, Ike learns a valuable lesson
from Sam Fathers. Ike sees the bear, yet he does not fire
his gun. Sam understands Ike's hesitancy but tells him that
someone will kill the bear someday. At this point, Ike
grows in his tragic insight. He replies, "I know it. . . .
That's why it must be one of us. So it won't be until the
last day. When even he dont want it to last any longer"
(GDM p. 212). With this statement, Isaac shows an under-
standing of life's tragedy. All living things must die,
including the bear, which has become for Ike a symbol of
the awesomeness of nature.

Ike's awareness of the temporary nature of life is
expanded further when Sam Fathers faints during a bear hunt.
Sam is carried to the camp, and a doctor is summoned.
Although the doctor states that Sam will be well in a few days, Ike "knew that Sam too was going to die" (GDM p. 246). After Sam's death, Ike stays close to his burial platform, along with Boon, to protect the body from wild animals (GDM p. 252). When his cousin McCaslin comes for him, Ike openly weeps over the loss of his friend (GDM p. 254).

The death of a loved one is not to be Ike's sole brush with tragedy. His own family provides another source of disappointment. As previously mentioned, Ike discovers that his grandfather committed incest with an illegitimate black daughter (GDM p. 270). The realization of his grandfather's crime is painful to Ike. He tries to imagine that perhaps his grandfather had felt some love for the slave, but he realistically dismisses the idea (GDM p. 270). Man's inhumanity to his fellowman is a tragic fact in the world, and Ike's discovery of such inhumanity in his own family creates a burden of guilt which he attempts to absolve by relinquishing his inheritance of the land.

Ike also experiences another personal tragedy. When he marries, Ike does not tell his wife of his plans to reject the land that is rightfully his. When she finally demands that they move to his farm, he tells her the truth. She then makes love to him, telling him afterward, "And that's all. That's all from me. If this don't get you that son you talk about, it wont be mine:" lying on her side,
her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing" (GDM p. 315). Thus, Isaac McCaslin knows the sorrow that life brings. His experiences with hunting, death, and his wife are all painful occurrences through which he must live.

Ike McCaslin successfully exhibits the third attribute of the beneficent individual, a positive response in spite of life's tragedy. A friend of the McCaslin family and an old hunting companion, General Compson, notes this quality in Ike. When Isaac wants to remain with Sam Fathers and Cass balks, General Compson shouts:

"And you shut up, Cass," he said, though McCaslin had not spoken. "You've got one foot straddled into a farm and the other foot straddled into a bank; you aint even got a good hand-hold where this boy was already an old man long before you damned Sartorises and Edmondses invented farms and banks to keep yourselves from having to find out what this boy was born knowing and fearing too maybe but without being afraid, that could go ten miles on a compass because he wanted to look at a bear none of us had ever got near enough to put a bullet in and looked at the bear and came the ten miles back on the compass in the dark." (GDM pp. 250-51)

General Compson sees in Ike a willingness to attempt the impossible, for when Ike wants to view Old Ben, the bear, he does so. His faith and willingness to act demonstrate Ike's optimism.

His cousin, Cass Edmonds, also sees this positive endurance in Ike. As Ike is attempting to explain to Cass why he is forsaking his inheritance, Cass reminds him:

Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him [God] as you say Buck and Buddy
Ike's initiation into manhood as a result of Sam Fathers' advice and the bear hunt develops in him the qualities of beneficence. He accepts life as it appears through nature in its tragedy and in its glory. Even as an old man, Ike continues to remain strong in his faith in the positive forces in life and ultimately in mankind. On a hunting expedition when he is past seventy, Ike tells his companions: "There are good men everywhere, at all times. Most men are. Some are just unlucky, because most men are a little better than their circumstances give them a chance to be. And I've known some that even circumstances couldn't stop" (GDM p. 345). Such an affirmation of positive faith in mankind is seldom matched in Faulkner. Isaac McCaslin's statement reveals his acceptance of life's tragedy, yet this tragedy does not defeat man, for man can turn his trials into positive action.

Although Ike's marriage ends in his wife's rejection of him, he finds an optimism even in this sorrow. When their union takes place, Faulkner gives his own view of marriage:

They were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth's long chronicle,
his too because each must share with another in order to come into it and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: . . . indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable. (GDM p. 311)

Ike's union, although short in duration, is worthwhile. He experiences a closeness with another being that can seldom be matched. The important factor, though, is whether Ike sees this marriage in such a positive light. On the same hunting trip as mentioned previously, Ike even in his later years realizes what he has possessed in his brief union: "I think that every man and woman, at the instant when it don't matter whether they marry or not, I think that whether they marry then or afterward or don't never, at that instant the two of them together were God" (GDM p. 348).

This view of sexual union and marriage reveals an optimistic hope for man. Even if only experienced once or twice, a man and woman's physical union serves as a shared communion. Thus, Ike's marriage too possesses goodness.

In Ike's repudiation of his inherited land also lies positivism. Ike sees guilt and shame tied up in the land of his father's, the guilt and shame of slavery and incest. Too, through Sam Fathers Ike learns that no man can possess the land. To Ike, then, his forsaking the inheritance is the only affirmative choice he sees available. He evaluates his situation in a discussion of the wilderness:

That day and himself and McCaslin juxtaposed not against the wilderness but against the tamed
land, the old wrong and shame itself, in repudiation and denial at least of the land and the wrong and shame even if he couldn't cure the wrong and eradicate the shame. (GDM p. 351)

Ike's giving up the land of his ancestors is an attempt to stop the injustice that his forefathers have perpetrated. He wants to rectify the past, but realizing he cannot, Ike relinquishes his claim to that reminder of the wrong.

In his growth from childhood to manhood, thus, Isaac McCaslin develops a beneficent maturity. His bond to Sam Fathers and his concern for the blacks show evidence of his closeness to humanity. Ike demonstrates his ability to suffer in the death of Sam Fathers and the loss of his love, while his ability to remain hopeful is shown through Ike's bravery in stalking Old Ben, his belief in the union of man and woman, and his repudiation of his inheritance. Ike's change from innocence to beneficence occurs gradually, yet this metamorphosis is a profound one, for his discovers those values by which good men should live.

The fourth character who undergoes initiation into beneficence is Lucius Priest in *The Reivers*. Michael Millgate notes the irony in a comparison of Lucius with Isaac McCaslin, stating: "Lucius's initiation suggests in certain respects an ironic reversal of Ike McCaslin's in *Go Down, Moses*, in that Ike's introduction was to positive values,
Lucius's to what the world calls sin." 6 Although Lucius must learn the traits of beneficence in a brothel and a horse race, rather than in the wilderness, he too succeeds in grasping those traits by which Faulkner's admirable characters live.

From the beginning of The Reivers, Lucius exhibits a closeness to his fellowman. The prime reason that Lucius at age eleven ends up visiting a brothel and riding in a horse race is his friendship with Boon Hogganbeck and Ned McCaslin. Although Boon is a huge man physically, he has the mentality of a child. 7 He dreams up a journey to Memphis when Lucius' parents go to a relative's funeral. Lucius goes with Boon because he trusts him. Boon explains their closeness: "Me and you have been good friends as long as we have known each other. . . . And then he will thank his stars for the good friend that has been his friend since he had to be toted around the livery stable on his back like a baby and held him on the first horse he ever rode . . . ." (R pp. 104-05). Lucius is completely at ease with Boon, for he knows him. When staying at the hotel in Parsham awaiting the horse race, Lucius has to share a room with Boon, which

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7William Faulkner, The Reivers (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 19. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as R.
reminds Lucius of other times when he and Boon have slept under one roof in Lucius' own home (R p. 212). The closeness of these two is emphasized in the simple act of sharing a bed.

In addition to his closeness to Boon Hogganbeck is Lucius' personal relationship with Ned McCaslin, a black servant of his family's. Ned also goes along on the trip to Memphis and is the instigator of the horse race scheme. Lucius accepts his role of jockey in Ned's plan and follows Ned's every instruction. Ned explains how to run each heat, with Lucius carefully complying. When Lucius becomes concerned about his grandfather's car which had been traded for the race horse, Ned consoles him, "Didn't I tell you I was tending to that? . . . Now you quit worrying" (R p. 222). Ned's reassurance helps Lucius to accept his circumstance. After the race is over, Lucius realizes the mutual bond shared by Ned and him. When he and Ned are discussing the money made off the race, Ned tells Lucius:

"It's gambling money. . . . You're too young to have anything to do with gambling money. . . . " And I couldn't tell him either. Then I realised that I had expected him, Ned anyway, to already know without having to be told. And in the very next breath he did know. "Because we never done it for money," he said. (R pp. 281-82)

Their shared experience links these two individuals. Ned and Lucius come through their escapade with a closer relationship, which shows Lucius' closeness to all humanity.
A final example of Lucius' ability to merge with all mankind occurs in his friendship with Uncle Parsham Hood, an elderly black man living in Parsham, Tennessee. When Ned and Boon are jailed, Lucius goes to stay with Uncle Parsham. He feels immediately at ease with this old black man. When Uncle Parsham tells Lucius that he can go home if he wishes, Lucius refuses. Uncle Parsham responds, "I said if you want to" (R p. 245). This old man treats Lucius as an equal, and Lucius responds by telling him about his dream of buying some hunting dogs (R p. 246). Lucius then breaks down:

Then, all of a sudden too, I was crying, bawling: I was tired, not from riding a mile race because I had ridden more than that at one time before, even though it wasn't real racing. . . . But anyway, there I sat, bawling like a baby, worse than Alexander and even Maury, against Uncle Parsham's shirt while he held me with one arm and took the lines from me with his other hand, not saying anything at all . . . (R p. 246)

Lucius' showing his grief to Uncle Parsham demonstrates his closeness to this old man. In the brief space of one day, Lucius exhibits trust and compassion for this man, positive proof of Lucius' ability to relate to all men.

Although Lucius demonstrates a closeness to humanity throughout the novel, he must learn that life contains tragedy. When he begins the journey to Memphis, Lucius is an innocent, idealistic eleven-year-old boy. Arriving at Memphis, Lucius stays in a brothel, although he is
unaware of the purpose of the establishment. However, also
staying at the brothel is a fifteen-year-old cruel, worldly-
wise boy named Otis who attempts to explain what a prostitute
does. Lucius, as an older man, reflects on this early
experience:

There are things, circumstances, conditions in the
world which should not be there but are, and you
cant escape them and indeed, you would not escape
them even if you had the choice, since they too are
a part of Motion, of participating in life, being
alive. But they should arrive with grace, decency.
I was having to learn too much too fast, unassisted.
(R p. 155)

Lucius' confrontation with evil is doubly painful, for Otis
tells him what Everbe, a woman at the brothel, does for
money. Lucius is infatuated by Everbe, and his first
response is not to accept the truth. He strikes out at
Otis, but Otis retaliates by cutting Lucius with a knife
(R p. 157). His loss of innocence is bewildering to Lucius,
yet he must still undergo more suffering.

Lucius meets another individual who is as evil as Otis.
This man is a law officer, Butch Lovemaiden, and he wants
Everbe to sleep with him. Lucius understands Butch's desire,
but more important, he comprehends the power that Butch
holds. He admits his fear not only for Everbe but also
for Uncle Parsham since Uncle Parsham is a black. Lucius
describes his fear:

I was ashamed that such a reason for fearing for
Uncle Parsham, who had to live here, existed; hating
... it all, hating all of us for being the poor
frail victims of being alive, having to be alive—hating Everbe for being the vulnerable helpless lodestar victim; and Boon for being the vulnerable and helpless victimised; and Uncle Parsham and Lycurgus for being where they had to, couldn't help but watch white people behaving exactly as white people bragged that only Negroes behaved... hating that such not only was, but must be, had to be if living was to continue and mankind be a part of it. (R p. 174)

Lucius' growth in his acceptance of tragedy is continuing. At first, the realization that Everbe is a prostitute is difficult for Lucius to accept. Now he comprehends that unfairness and evil are everywhere. He, Boon, and Uncle Parsham are all a part of the tragedy, yet they are helpless to fight the wrong. Lucius' understanding of the sorrow of existence, then, is still expanding.

When Lucius fights for Everbe's virtue after Otis reveals her profession, Everbe forsakes prostitution. However, after Butch locks up Boon and Ned, Everbe has to agree to sleep with Butch so that Ned and the horse can go to the race. When Lucius discovers what Everbe has done, he is horrified. His first response is not to believe it. "No... No! It wasn't her! She's not even here! She went back to Memphis with Sam yesterday evening! They just didn't tell you! It was somebody else! It was another one!" (R p. 256). Yet this denial does not keep Lucius from accepting the truth. He admits, "You see, just to keep on saying I don't believe it served only for the moment; as soon as the words, the noise, died, there it still was--anguish,
rage, outrage, grief, whatever it was--unchanged" (R p. 258). His disappointment over Everbe's continued prostitution results in Lucius' ultimate acceptance of tragedy as a part of existence. His dream of saving a good woman who has made a bad mistake finally dies. He at last realizes that man is shackled by circumstances.

Lucius' confrontation of the tragic, however, does not leave him a despondent pessimist. His growth continues and creates in him a positive outlook. When the horse race is over, Lucius reflects on his actions. He admits that the race is carried to completion because "I had to go on, finish it, Ned and me both even if everybody else had quit . . . . Not to hope to make the beginning of it any less wrong . . . but at least not to shirk, dodge--at least to finish--what we ourselves started" (R p. 279). His ability to continue in spite of several setbacks shows a remarkable optimism. Lucius learns that man must try to succeed no matter what the odds are against him, for occasionally he may prove victorious.

Another example of Lucius' positivism is his response to Everbe's sleeping with Butch to allow the horse race to go on as planned. At first, Lucius is outraged by her actions, for Everbe breaks a solemn promise to Lucius. However, after some coaxing from Miss Reba, a madame of the Memphis brothel, Lucius forgives Everbe. He tells her,
"It's all right. . . . You did have to. . . . We got Lightning back in time to run the race. It don't matter now anymore" (R p. 280). Everbe's last act of prostitution is the lesser of two evils, the other being the loss of Lightning. Lucius comprehends Everbe's choices and admits that she is right. His revelation allows Everbe to continue attempting to live a life without prostitution. By this act, Lucius demonstrates a remarkable ability for an eleven-year-old boy; he accepts the evil of the world but he is not intimidated by it. His positive acceptance of Everbe is proof of his hopeful view of mankind.

When Lucius returns home, he has to face punishment for his actions. His father gets a belt, but his grandfather stops the proceedings. His father quits the room, leaving Grandfather and Lucius alone. Lucius wants to be punished, but Grandfather tells him that all Lucius can do is accept his guilt. When Lucius admits that he cannot accept it, Grandfather explains further: "Yes you can. . . . You will. A gentleman always does. A gentleman can live through anything. He faces anything. A gentleman accepts the responsibility of his actions and bears the burden of their consequences . . . ." (R p. 302). Lucius breaks down crying, for he understands his grandfather's meaning. He sees that a good man must accept his actions and attempt to do better next time. At last Lucius succeeds in
comprehending man's role in the world. He must live as man should, accepting those wrongs he commits, but attempting always to make better choices.

Lucius Priest qualifies as a beneficent character. He at first is an innocent young boy, but he meets situations which cause him to change rapidly. Edmond Volpe analyzes Lucius' growth by maintaining, "In *The Reivers* . . . a sensitive and intelligent young man learns to accept the polarities of life--the good and the bad, the brutal and the gentle--as the unchanging condition of existence." His relationships with Boon, Ned, and Uncle Parsham indicate a closeness to humanity. His willingness to continue the horse race in spite of many problems, his acceptance of Everbe's need to prostitute herself one last time, and his understanding of Grandfather's advice on how man should live prove his optimistic acceptance of reality. Lucius then possesses all the beneficent traits and qualifies as one of Faulkner's admirable characters.

The growth from childhood to manhood creates in four of Faulkner's characters a realization of beneficence. Charles Mallison, Bayard Sartoris, Isaac McCaslin, and Lucius Priest learn through varied experiences the qualities necessary to live hopefully. In these individuals, the despair of death and loss of innocence are transformed

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8 Volpe, pp. 343-44.
into a positive hope for the future. Thus, these youthful protagonists serve as excellent representatives of the beneficent characters in Faulkner.
CHAPTER V

ADULT CHARACTERS WHO DEVELOP BENEFICENCE

There are several characters in Faulkner's fiction who learn only as adults the qualities necessary to live beneficently. These individuals differ from the youths discussed in Chapter Four in that they have attained maturity without possessing the beneficent traits. Of all of Faulkner's positive characters, this group provides the greatest hope for man, for these persons, after being alienated for most of their lives, change dramatically and develop their full human potential.

The individuals in this group include such divergent personalities as a lawyer, a mill worker, a prostitute, and a minister. However, their common denominator is their growth to beneficence. The characters to be examined and evaluated in Chapter Five are Byron Bunch and Gail Hightower (Light in August), Gavin Stevens (The Town and The Mansion), and Everbe (The Reivers). Through these individuals, Faulkner demonstrates man's ability to be transformed at any point in his life into a beneficent force.

Byron Bunch, a mill worker in Light in August, is one of Faulkner's characters who attains beneficence after reaching adulthood. Before Byron meets Lena Grove, one
of the beneficent primitives, he avoids involvement with his fellowman. His closest friend is Gail Hightower, a minister who has completely withdrawn from the stream of humanity. Michael Millgate evaluates Byron at the beginning of the novel as "Hightower's disciple, his imitator in silence, withdrawal, isolation from life. . . . ."

Although Byron works with a number of men at the planing mill, he eats alone. The alienation this example implies is further revealed in a statement by one of Byron's fellow workers when discussing Byron's ignorance about other people's lives. He states, "I reckon Byron stays out of meanness too much himself to keep up with other folks" (LIA p. 31). This acquaintance of Byron's knows him well, for Byron does indeed fill his life so that he will not have to confront temptation. He works six days a week at the mill, although his Saturday work is completely voluntary. When finished at the mill on Saturday, he saddles a mule and rides to a church thirty miles away to lead the choir in a worship service that lasts all day (LIA p. 34).

His non-involvement with the common man is complete until he meets Lena Grove, who comes to the mill in search

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2William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 24. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as LIA.
of her lover, Lucas Burch. Byron falls in love with Lena, and this love transforms him into a beneficent individual completely involved in life. Byron inadvertently reveals to Lena that Burch, perhaps under the assumed name of Brown, is indeed near Jefferson. Immediately he feels pity for her, for Burch is involved with a murderer, Joe Christmas. He reaches out to help Lena by finding a place for her to spend the night (LIA p. 60). This initial concern for Lena is the first step in Byron's reemergence with humanity.

His growth to encompass the first trait of beneficence, that of being close to other men, continues in his relationship with Lena. Byron's transformation is even evident to Gail Hightower who states, "Tonight Byron is completely changed. It shows in his walk, his carriage . . . . He has done something. He has taken a step" (LIA p. 231). Byron then reveals that he has taken Lena to Brown's cabin to stay and has set up a tent close by (LIA pp. 233-34). His link with Lena now is firmly established. When she begins having labor pains, Byron rides into town for a doctor (LIA p. 296), a willing act that shows his love for Lena and his new involvement with mankind.

Michael Millgate states that "Byron is converted by his love for Lena to a new concern for humanity which soon extends beyond his relationship with Lena herself and overflows into a compassionate if hopeless attempt to aid Joe
Byron hears Mrs. Hines, Joe Christmas' grandmother, explain how her husband Doc Hines has placed Joe in a home for orphans years before without her knowledge. She now wants an opportunity to give Joe the love he has never received. Byron is touched by sincere concern. He asks Hightower to tell the authorities that Christmas has been at his home rather than at Joanna Burden's the night she was killed (LIA p. 290). Although Hightower refuses, Byron becomes involved for the good of another human being. He successfully demonstrates his closeness with humanity, for he can feel sympathy even for the most evil of men. More important, however, Byron Bunch is able to make a positive step in helping his fellowman.

Although Byron's life at the novel's beginning has been uneventful, with his meeting Lena he develops an awareness of the negative element in life. Until Lena begins labor, Byron avoids facing the realization that Lena is pregnant with a child fathered by another man. He does not attend to getting a doctor in advance, although even Hightower reminds him to perform this task (LIA p. 235). When he does return with a doctor, Byron stops outside the cabin; "he heard the child cry once and something terrible happened to him" (LIA p. 296). The reality of Lucas Burch, Lena's former lover and father of her child, descends on Byron:

\[^3\text{Millgate, p. 132.}\]
Why I didn't even believe until now that he was so. It was like me, and her, and all the other folks that I had to get mixed up in it, were just a lot of words that never even stood for anything, were not even us, while all the time what was us was going on and going on without even missing the lack of words. Yes. It ain't until now that I ever believed that he is Lucas Burch. That there ever was a Lucas Burch. (LIA p. 299)

Byron now understands that he must find Burch, for Burch must know that he has a child. The pain and suffering of this realization is Byron's first confrontation of the tragic.

Byron's brush with sorrow is not complete yet. With the realization that Lucas Burch is the father of Lena's baby, he goes to the sheriff and explains the truth about Burch and Lena. He hides out by Lena's cabin until Burch arrives. He then gets on his mule and leaves. As he is riding, he contemplates his dilemma:

It seems like a man can just about bear anything. He can even bear what he never done. He can even bear the thinking how some things is just more than he can bear. He can even bear it that if he could just give down and cry, he wouldn't do it. He can even bear it not to look back, even when he knows that looking back or not looking back wont do him any good. (LIA p. 315)

In this statement, Byron reveals his capacity to suffer. He has found love through Lena, yet now he must relinquish it. His despair at this loss is profound, and through this experience, he demonstrates the second beneficent trait, the ability to face tragedy.

Byron also exhibits the third attribute of the beneficent characters in that he reacts to life positively. When
Byron falls in love with Lena, Gail Hightower warns him, "You will tell me that you have just learned love; I will tell you that you have just learned hope. That's all; hope" (LIA p. 234). Hightower's statement contains an element of truth. Byron, by falling in love with Lena, does learn to hope, but the word is much more significant than the negative meaning Hightower awards it. To Hightower, the alienated, hope is an absurd feeling, for it brings forth disappointment. But Byron learns that hope is a positive reaction to life. When Byron confronts the realization that Lucas Burch must be told about Lena and his child, he sees his own essential goodness:

*Byron Bunch, that weeded another man's laidby crop, without any halvers. The fellow that took care of another man's whore while the other fellow was busy making a thousand dollars. And got nothing for it. Byron Bunch that protected her good name when the woman that owned the good name and the man she had given it to had both thrown it away, that got the other fellow's bastard born in peace and quiet and at Byron Bunch's expense, and heard a baby cry once for his pay. (LIA p. 310)*

Although Byron realizes that his helping Lena and Lucas Burch may not bring him any reward, he still does not deny that what he does is right.

After Lucas Burch escapes Lena again by catching a train, Byron retains his optimism. When she and the baby leave Jefferson, Byron goes too. While spending the night on the road, Byron attempts to sleep with Lena. Although she rejects him mildly by admonishing, "You might have woke
the baby, too," he leaves (LIA p. 375). However, Byron's rejection does not lessen his hope. The next morning, as Lena and the baby continue on their journey, he again joins them, stating, "I done come too far now... I be dog if I'm going to quit now" (LIA p. 377). Byron's optimism is not in vain, for Lena replies, "Aint nobody never said for you to quit" (LIA p. 377).

Byron Bunch because of the love he shares with Lena Grove becomes integrated into life. Although at first he is separated from mankind, Lena shows him how to regain touch with his fellowman. The suffering that his love for Lena causes is a pain worth bearing, for Byron never gives up his positive hope that she will return his love. Byron's growth is a good example that a man may change while even an adult. Byron, too, then can qualify as one of Faulkner's beneficent characters.

Gail Hightower, the retired Presbyterian minister in Light in August, also gains beneficent understanding. Like Byron Bunch, he also is alienated from mankind. When his wife commits suicide, the townspeople refuse to allow him to continue as a minister. He retreats to a small home and lives on a pension provided by his father. Hightower is an intellectual who attempts through thought alone to gain understanding of life. Since man must be an active participant in life in order to comprehend its meaning, Hightower
fails miserably. His view of mankind is so distorted that he warns Byron to leave Lena alone for she will do nothing but hurt him (LIA p. 235). Byron, however, because he learns the meaning of love through Lena serves as Hightower's guide to an involvement with mankind. Michael Millgate states that Byron "teaches Hightower about love . . . showing him the way to that recognition of value in life, in human involvement, which Hightower finally achieves."^4

How is Byron able to draw out Hightower from his shell? Byron keeps giving him the opportunity to become involved. First, when Byron is attempting to find a place for Lena to stay, he asks Hightower to allow her to come to his home (LIA p. 223). This attempt fails, for Hightower is not yet ready to accept involvement. "'I am not in life anymore,' he thinks. 'That's why there is no use in even trying to meddle, interfere'" (LIA p. 223). But Byron's own involvement keeps him coming back to Hightower. When on a visit he relates that Brown, alias Burch, has been found, Hightower responds by lashing out verbally at Byron, calling him "the guardian of public weal and morality" (LIA p. 271). He immediately apologizes:

Then he begins to cry, sitting huge and lax in the sagging chair. "I don't mean that. You know I don't. But it is not right to bother me, to worry

^4Millgate, p. 132.
me, when I have--when I have taught myself to stay--. . . That this should come to me, taking me after I am old, and reconciled to what they deemed--." (LIA p. 271)

Hightower's wall is breaking down. He still refuses involvement with Lena, but his admitting his own alienation aids in letting down the barriers between himself and mankind.

Byron finally succeeds in involving Hightower with life. As mentioned earlier, Byron fails to make arrangements for a doctor prior to Lena's beginning of labor. When the baby's birth is imminent, Byron realizes that the search for a doctor may take some time. To insure that someone will be there if the child does come before he returns, Byron stops at Hightower's house. Byron instructs him to go to Lena and leaves the mule for Hightower to get there promptly. In spite of shouts to stop him, Byron continues his search for a doctor. Hightower, then, is at last forced to confront Lena, and he successfully delivers her baby (LIA p. 295). This link with another human being and to the life processes itself dramatically changes Hightower. He feels "a glow, a wave, a surge of something almost hot, almost triumphant. 'I showed them!' he thinks. 'Life comes to the old man yet, while they get there too late. They get there for his leavings, as Byron would say'" (LIA p. 301). His assistance
in the birth of a baby serves as a bridge in Hightower's return to an involvement with his fellowman.

Hightower's transformation is so profound that he decides to return to see Lena and the child. As he walks through the woods, he entertains the thought that the baby may even be named after him (LIA p. 302). His closeness to Lena allows him to view her positive qualities. He sees that she is from "the good stock peopling in tranquil obedience to it the good earth" (LIA p. 302). Hightower too recognizes the basic goodness in Byron. When he believes that Byron has left town, he states, "So he departed without coming to tell me goodbye. After all he has done for me. Fetched to me. Ay; given, restored, to me" (LIA p. 308). Gail Hightower realizes that at last he is in the midst of life again, a fulfillment of the first requirement of beneficence.

Since Hightower's life is filled with sadness and disappointments, his possession of the second characteristic, confrontation with the tragic, is obvious throughout the novel. His marriage is not fulfilling. His wife leaves for days at a time without telling him where she is going (LIA p. 46). When she commits suicide on a Saturday night, he goes to church the next day to preach. He seems unable to face his wife's unhappiness or her death. Not until
years later, after he is redeemed by Byron and Lena, is he fully able to admit his tragic mistake. He confesses:

Perhaps in the moment when I revealed to her not only the depth of my hunger but the fact that never and never would she have any part in the assuaging of it; perhaps at that moment I became her seducer and her murderer, author and instrument of her shame and death. After all, there must be some things for which God cannot be accused by man and held responsible. There must be. (LIA p. 363)

Hightower's admission that he has caused his wife's unhappiness and death reveals a deep, personal tragedy. He alone is responsible, and he alone must suffer.

Hightower's dream when he is young is to become a minister in Jefferson. When he gets appointed to the town he wants, his happiness should be sealed. However, much despair comes to him at the church. He does not respond to the needs of the people, but only to his private dreams, and the townspeople do not like this approach (LIA p. 44). When his wife commits suicide and Hightower goes on to preach anyway, the church people become angry. They issue him a letter of resignation, but he refuses it. Finally, they lock the church doors. (LIA pp. 44-50). Hightower must at last accept the shame and humiliation of being without his church. The loss of his wife and his church are two very bitter sorrows to live through.

In spite of all the suffering Hightower must bear, when he at last becomes reunited with his fellowman, he demonstrates a positive response to life. When Byron Bunch
comes to ask Hightower to lie for Joe Christmas so that his grandmother can be with him, Hightower flatly refuses. However, after his confrontation with Byron over Christmas, he delivers Lena's child and is returned to the stream of humanity. Now he is able to attempt a hopeful outlook.

When Joe Christmas escapes from the jail, he runs to Hightower's house. He is tracked down by a group of men led by a cruel, merciless individual, Percy Grimm. Even though Christmas strikes Hightower on the head, leaving him lying on the floor, Hightower fulfills his closeness to fellowman by seeking to protect Christmas. Grimm and his men arrive and help Hightower to his feet. Hightower then attempts to save Christmas, the first positive act he has undertaken alone in the novel. He cries out, "Listen to me. He was here that night. He was with me the night of the murder" (LIA p. 345). Hightower's lie does not save Christmas, but it does prove that he is capable of positive action.

At last, then, Gail Hightower achieves beneficence. He learns late in his life the traits necessary to live optimistically. Edmond Volpe sees in Hightower the profound change which helps him attain those admirable qualities. He states:

When Hightower is drawn back into the world by Byron and within a few days experiences the extremes of joy and pain that living can provide--the joy of presiding over the birth of Lena's child and the horror of witnessing the death of Joe Christmas--he acknowledges human responsibility,
in part at least, for the catastrophes which afflict man.\(^5\)

This realization that man is responsible for his actions allows Hightower to react to life positively. If it is his choice, then man must accept the results. Thus, his act of attempting to save Christmas demonstrates Hightower's choosing to live hopefully.

Hightower, then, does possess the beneficent characteristics at the conclusion of *Light in August*. Although he has lived most of his life alienated from the community of man, he merges with humanity in the delivery of Lena's baby. Too, the suffering Hightower undergoes as a result of his wife's suicide and the loss of his pastorate is great. Finally, as one of his last acts in the novel, Hightower proves his affirmation for living in his attempt to save a fellow human being. Hightower is redeemed from a negative, non-productive life. He too can claim the title of a beneficent one.

The next individual who learns beneficence later in his life is Gavin Stevens, a lawyer in *The Town* and *The Mansion*.\(^6\) Although Gavin has an extensive education, he lacks the understanding necessary to be an active

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\(^6\)Although Stevens also appears in other works, such as *Intruder in the Dust* and *Requiem for a Nun*, he does not demonstrate the change evident in *The Town* and *The Mansion*. 
participant in life. Edmond Volpe calls Gavin a "moral idealist," and his idealism causes him to be unable to accept the tragedy of the world. However, by the novel's conclusion, Gavin is able to face life realistically and gain the insight of Faulkner's admirable characters.

Throughout both novels, Gavin does show a closeness to mankind. His friendship with Ratliff and his closeness to his nephew, Charles Mallison, demonstrate his link with other men. When his nephew Charles is old enough to respond to Eula Varner Snopes' potent sexuality, Gavin helps him to understand that he is not alone in his response. Gavin admits, "Even at twelve don't think you are the first man ever chewed his bitter thumbs for a reason such as her." Gavin again demonstrates his close tie with Charles when in *The Mansion*, Charles displays jealousy over Gavin's relationship with Linda Snopes Kohl. Charles quickly apologizes:

"All right," Chick says. "I'm sorry."
But Lawyer just sat there easy in the chair, looking at him. "Damn it," Chick says, "I said I'm sorry."
"Only you're not sorry yet," Lawyer says. "You're just ashamed."
"... You can't be ashamed of me for what I didn't know in time, can you?"

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7 Volpe, p. 321.

8 William Faulkner, *The Town* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 6. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as T.
"I'm not ashamed of you about anything," Lawyer says.
"All right," Chick says. "Sorry, then."
"I'm not sorry over you about anything either," Lawyer says.9

Gavin's reassurance to Charles proves the close relationship these two share. Gavin shows his love for Charles in another way as well. He sends Charles to see Europe the summer before war is to break out. When Charles wonders about the timing of the gift, Gavin explains, "Because it [Europe] may not be there next summer" (p. 208). Gavin's gift of a European trip is his way of helping Charles to grow in his understanding of the world. His concern, advice, and gift to Charles show a deep and abiding love, a characteristic evident when man is close to humanity. 

Gavin's relationship with V. K. Ratliff also demonstrates an abiding love. Charles reveals their closeness by stating, "they [Gavin and Ratliff] talked together a lot. Because although Ratliff had never been to school anywhere much . . . , he and Uncle Gavin were both interested in people— or so Uncle Gavin said" (p. 4). Gavin's close friendship with Ratliff allows him to share his fear of the Snopes family with him. When he leaves Jefferson to go to Germany to study, Gavin reaches out to Ratliff, explaining that he now must watch out for the Snopes alone.

9William Faulkner, The Mansion (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), pp. 110-11. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as M.
When Ratliff inquires as to why Gavin has chosen him, Gavin admits, "Because you're the only one in Jefferson I can trust" (T p. 102). When Gavin undergoes the shattering experience of Eula's suicide, he turns again to Ratliff for comfort. Gavin asks why Eula takes her life. When Ratliff answers that maybe she was bored, Gavin responds, "Bored. Yes, bored" (M p. 150). He then breaks down in tears. His ability to seek solace from Ratliff is evidence of Gavin's concern and respect for this man. Thus, his link with Ratliff strengthens his own bond with humanity.

Finally, Gavin's relationship with Eula and her daughter Linda also proves his closeness to mankind. Gavin's love for Eula, even though she is a married woman, is strong. When she and her husband, Flem Snopes, arrive at a dance, Eula is met by both Manfred de Spain, her lover, and Gavin. Although Flem completely ignores Eula and Manfred's sensual dancing, Gavin cannot accept it. He rushes over and jerks de Spain away from Eula (T p. 75). Gavin's bond with Eula is melded then. When Gavin files a lawsuit against de Spain to gain retribution from him for being Eula's lover, Eula makes an appointment with him late one night. When she arrives, Gavin is still jealous and angry. She explains that she has come to offer Gavin her body, for she realizes his love for her (T p. 91). Even though Gavin does not sleep with Eula, their
link is strengthened. When Eula fears that Linda will be hurt by Flem, she goes to Gavin, explaining that Flem knows the truth about her and de Spain. Eula lies to Gavin, telling him she is leaving with de Spain when she is really about to commit suicide. She elicits a promise from Gavin that he will marry Linda if it becomes necessary (T pp. 332-33). Gavin's oath to Eula demonstrates their closeness. He too can reach out when another person is in need.

Gavin's relationship with Linda begins before his promise to Eula. He encounters Linda when she is only sixteen, bringing her books of poetry in order to broaden her mind (T p. 180). Their friendship deepens. Gavin's meetings with her irritate her boyfriend, who goes to Gavin's office and bloodies the lawyer's nose. When Linda sees his injury, she rushes to Gavin and cries, "You're all I have, all I can trust. I love you! I love you!" (T p. 193). After her mother's death, Gavin arranges for her to go to Greenwich Village, for he feels that she needs some protection against her father (M p. 151). When she returns to Jefferson, several years later, she is a widow and has lost her hearing (M p. 198). Gavin responds to her needs by helping her learn to speak again (M p. 200). Gavin's love for Linda shows his ability to remain at one with mankind, for he never forsakes her.
Gavin's idealism does not protect him from experiencing the tragic. When Gavin attempts to embarrass de Spain by a lawsuit, Eula visits him, and the next day, he withdraws his grievance. This encounter hurts him, and in desperation he cries out to his father, "What must I do now, Papa? Papa, what can I do now?" (T p. 102). Apparently, his father's answer is to leave Jefferson for a while, which Gavin does. The fact that Gavin actually stays in Germany two years reinforces the depth of his sorrow.

Eula also is the cause of Gavin's suffering a second time. When she commits suicide, Gavin is caught completely by surprise. After making sure of the funeral arrangements and seeing Linda off to Greenwich Village, he then succumbs to his grief. He asks Ratliff why Eula has shot herself: "Why? Why did she have to? Why did she? The waste. The terrible waste. To waste all that, when it was not hers to waste, not hers to destroy because it was too valuable, belonged to too many, too little of it to waste, destroy, throw away and be no more" (T p. 358). When Ratliff replies that perhaps she was bored, Gavin again plunges into the darkness of grief:

"Bored." And that was when he began to cry, sitting there straight in the chair behind the desk with his hands folded together on the desk, not even hiding his face. "Yes," he said. "She was bored. She loved, had a capacity to love, for love, to give and accept love. Only she tried twice and failed twice to find somebody not just strong enough to deserve, earn it, match it, but even brave enough
to accept it. Yes," he said, sitting there crying, not even trying to hide his face from us, "of course she was bored." (T p. 359)

Gavin's loss of Eula creates in him a profound grief. Perhaps he is feeling guilt because he has been unable to love Eula as she needs to be loved. Whatever the reason, Gavin's sorrow is deep and certainly demonstrates his ability to suffer.

The one trait that Gavin lacks at the beginning of The Town is an ability to respond positively to life. Gavin's idealism renders him unable to act. When Eula offers to make love with him, Gavin cannot accept (T p. 94). Edmond Volpe explains, "But naked sex is not for idealists. And for idealists, woman cannot simply be woman. Sex must be elevated to glorious, external love, and woman must be the shining citadel of chastity and purity, beauty and honor." 10

Another instance of Gavin's inaction occurs when Eula again visits him. She wants him to marry Linda, but again he cannot act (T p. 226). Even though he cares for Linda, he is unable to accept her sexuality.

Although Gavin does not successfully demonstrate an ability to act in his friendship with Eula, he does change after her death. The first decision Gavin makes in a hopeful manner is that of helping Linda leave Jefferson after her mother's suicide (T p. 349). When Linda invites

10 Volpe, p. 324.
Ratliff and Gavin to come to New York to attend her wedding, Gavin also extends the invitation to Hoake McCarron, Linda's real father. This second example of Gavin's change to a more active involvement with life leads to Linda's asking if Hoake is her real father. Gavin lies, but Linda sees the truth. She states, "It's because every time you lie to me I can always know you will stick to it" (N p. 175). Gavin accomplishes his purpose, for Linda at last meets her father. This very brave deed proves that Gavin is learning how to act positively.

The final and most profound example of Gavin's positive acceptance occurs at the end of The Mansion. After Linda successfully plans the murder of her father by arranging the release of a man desperate to kill Flem, Gavin discovers Linda's involvement. He even admits his part in Linda's scheme when he tells Ratliff, "Can't you understand I've just committed murder?" (M p. 427). He at last recognizes that "people just do the best they can" (M p. 429). Gavin demonstrates his growth to acceptance of man's plight. Volpe explains that this statement shows Gavin's change from an idealist to an individual "ready to share Faulkner's vision of moral complexity."11 Gavin Stevens, then, completely understands the need to live in an affirmative way.

11Volpe, p. 326.
Thus, Gavin qualifies as an adult who learns to possess the three beneficent characteristics. His closeness to Charles Mallison, V. K. Ratliff, Eula Snopes, and Linda Kohl shows his emergence with humanity. Gavin's grief over the aborted attempt to hurt Eula's lover and his sorrow at her death are evidence of his comprehension of the tragic in life. Finally, the help that Gavin gives Linda shows a realization of the necessity of positive acceptance. James Farnham evaluates Gavin's change at the conclusion of The Mansion by stating that his acceptance of man's weakness is "the fortitude through which mankind prevails."12 Thus, Gavin Stevens at age sixty learns the optimistic acceptance of Faulkner's hopeful characters.

The last of the adults to learn beneficence is Everbe Corinthia, a prostitute in The Reivers. Although Everbe is basically a good person as the novel begins, she lacks an awareness of the tragic. She merely drifts along, unaffected by her work's degradation until she has a moving experience which teaches her beneficence.

Everbe's closeness to her fellowman is obvious from her first appearance in The Reivers. Out of love and concern, Everbe brings a relative, a terrible boy named Otis, to Memphis to the brothel in which she works in an

attempt to reform him. When she meets Lucius Priest whom Boon Hogganbeck brings to the brothel also, Everbe is excited, for she sees a positive model for Otis to emulate.\textsuperscript{13} Otis, however, has no interest in reformation, but Everbe still tries to protect him. When Miss Reba, the woman who runs the house of prostitution, curses aloud, Everbe insists on her stopping, for she does not want the boys to hear such language (R p. 136). Later the same night, as Ned, Boon, Miss Reba, Otis, Everbe, and Lucius are leading the horse through town, Everbe thinks, "They [Otis and Lucius] should be in bed" (R p. 139). Everbe's concern for even the seemingly unlovable Otis reinforces her closeness to humanity.

Everbe's motherly protection for Lucius and Otis shows only one aspect of her humanity. The doctor who examines Lucius' hand after Otis cuts it with a knife responds to Everbe's sexuality. Although he is an older man, he remembers visiting a brothel. Even at Everbe's insistence, he refuses to accept payment for Lucius' examination. He then admits, "Maybe if you had an extra handkerchief or something . . . Yes, thirty five years. I had one once, when I was a young man, thirty, thirty-five years ago. Then I got married . . ." (R p. 191). Everbe's response to the doctor

\textsuperscript{13}William Faulkner, The Reivers (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 102. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as R.
offers proof of her concern for all men, for she is not offended by his request. She turns around, removes a garter, and gives it to the doctor. This simple act belies Everbe's ability to realize the humanity in each individual, thus allowing her to fulfill the first trait of the beneficent character.

Everbe's profession as a prostitute leads her to a recognition of the tragic. When Lucius defends Everbe by fighting Otis, Everbe is touched. She comes to Lucius, sobbing, ashamed of her past. "Back there in Arkansas it was my fault. But it won't be my fault any more. You see? You have to learn too fast; you have to leap in the dark and hope that Something--It--They--will place your foot right" (R p. 160). She confronts her own weakness in remaining a prostitute, and the recognition of her fallibility saddens her.

After she promises Lucius and herself that she will quit prostitution, Everbe must resort to her profession once again to allow Ned and the horse freedom to run in the race. Butch Lovemaiden, a mean law officer, desires Everbe. However, she avoids his advances. Butch then puts Ned and Boon in jail to force Everbe to sleep with him. His plan works, and Everbe has to break her promise to Lucius. As she sits in the car while Lucius looks at her, he notices her shamed look. She tells him, "I thought
I had to" (R p. 280). The disappointment and hurt are evident in her statement. Everbe learns a sad but valuable lesson. Even when man attempts to be good and do what is right, circumstances do not always allow him success. Everbe now experiences the tragic realization of man's weakness.

However, Everbe's confrontation with the tragic does not make her a pessimist. When she promises to give up prostitution, she demonstrates her faith in the positive. By leaving the brothel, she can still free herself of the degradation of providing sex for money. Everbe puts her promise into action, for when Boon attempts to become intimate, she fights off his advances (R p. 196). Butch, the corrupt law officer, also tries to compromise Everbe. She, however, manages to keep Lucius between Butch and her until Butch thinks of the horse scheme (R p. 174). Even after Butch does succeed in blackmailing Everbe into having sex with him, she still does not become negative.

Miss Reba explains that Everbe has a legitimate job:

She aint going back to Memphis. She aint just reformed from the temptation business: she's reformed from temptation too, providing what they claim, is right: that there ain't no temptation in a place like Parsham except a man's own natural hopes and appetites. She's got a job in Parsham washing and cooking and lifting his wife in and out of bed and washing her off, for that constable. (R pp. 280-81)
Everbe's securing a regular job proves her genuine attempt to change. Her courageous and hopeful act shows most convincingly that Everbe indeed encompasses a positive response to the tragic.

During Everbe's reformation, another example of her affirmative change becomes evident. As Everbe fights off Boon's advances, she explains her reasons to him. "I do love you. That's why. Let me alone! Turn me loose!" (R p. 196). Everbe's profession of love for Boon signals a hope for her life. Man's most affirmative act is to love another person. Everbe's growth to love demonstrates the complete reversal she makes in giving up prostitution. The positive action of love continues until the novel's conclusion when Everbe is pictured with her baby. Boon, her husband now, is even buying a small house for his new family. The affirmation of living in spite of sorrow is best symbolized for Everbe by her tiny baby. The hope of all mankind rests there. Everbe's reformation is complete. Her hopeful attitude is a fitting conclusion for *The Reivers*.

Everbe, the last of Faulkner's beneficent characters, is an excellent example of man undefeated by life. In spite of the hardships she must face in transforming from a prostitute into a mother and housewife, Everbe's hopeful outlook always dominates. Her total reformation provides proof to all mankind that change is always a possibility.
In conclusion, the characters who demonstrate change after reaching adulthood provide a hopeful strain in Faulkner's fiction. Man does not have to be given some magical power to begin living positively; he must merely be able to see in himself what elements he lacks and then begin to incorporate those missing attributes in his life. Byron Bunch, Gail Hightower, Gavin Stevens, and Everbe all are happier, more satisfied individuals when they learn the affirmative qualities of beneficence.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In William Faulkner's fiction there is an undercurrent of optimism that surfaces through the beneficent characters who inhabit Yoknapatawpha County. These individuals exhibit three common traits which enable them to find fulfillment and peace. The first trait, a closeness to humanity, keeps the characters in touch with others. A realization of the tragedy in life is the second characteristic necessary for beneficence. In order to find happiness, these individuals must fully comprehend the sorrows of life. Their positive response to the tragic nature of existence, the third attribute, demonstrates the individuals' hopeful outlook. With these three traits, the beneficent characters display a code of living which allows them, despite poverty, suffering, and hardship, to discover happiness.

Some of Faulkner's characters innately possess beneficence. These individuals can also be called primitives, for they share the three additional traits of simplicity, non-intellectualism, and closeness to nature. The primitives are both Negroes and whites. Dilsey, the black servant in The Sound and the Fury, is one of the best
examples of the black beneficent primitive. She takes care of the Compson family, including the idiot Benjy. When Benjy has a birthday, Dilsey shows her self-giving love by baking him a cake.¹ Dilsey lives by the philosophy of "I does de bes I kin" (SF p. 247). In spite of her suffering and poverty, she maintains a hopeful outlook on life.

V. K. Ratliff, the sewing machine salesman in The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion, serves as an excellent representative of the white beneficent primitive. His attempt to stop the townspeople from observing Ike Snopes, the idiot, committing sodomy with a cow shows his concern for mankind.² Ratliff describes himself as an "optimist . . . . Like any good optimist, I dont expect the worst to happen. Only, like any optimist, worth his salt, I like to go and look as soon as possible afterward jest in case it did."³ Ratliff's modified optimism demonstrates his positive attitude toward life.

The second major category consists of those individuals who must learn the beneficent traits during the course of a novel. Some are young boys who attain beneficence during

¹William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (New York: Random House, 1929), p. 43. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as SF.


the process of maturing. Charles Mallison, a twelve-year-old youth in *Intruder in the Dust*, grows to beneficence through an experience with an elderly black man, Lucas Beauchamp. Charles' view of Lucas is limited by his concept of the Negro as a stereotype. When Lucas refuses to act as a "nigger," Charles is at first angered and finally baffled. When he sees Lucas shortly after his wife has died, Charles realizes, "You dont have to not be a nigger in order to grieve" (ID p. 25). With this metamorphosis, Charles attains the insight of Faulkner's positive characters.

In addition to the young boys who learn the beneficent qualities are adults who achieve this knowledge after reaching maturity. Byron Bunch, a mill worker in *Light in August*, is withdrawn and afraid to face the world's evil. To avoid temptation, he works six days a week and spends all day Sundays at a church service. However, when Byron meets Lena Grove, he falls deeply in love with her and is transformed into a positive individual, filled with courage and hope. His futile attempt to save Joe Christmas,

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4William Faulkner, *Intruder in the Dust* (New York: Modern Library, 1948), p. 18. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as ID.

5William Faulkner, *Light in August* (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 34. All further references are to this edition and are cited in the text as LIA.
a love-starved murderer, from execution demonstrates an un-failing hope in mankind (LIA p. 290).

A study of Faulkner's beneficent characters unveils a philosophy of life that looks beyond suffering to hope. Richard J. O'Dea evaluates Faulkner's world:

In the dark woods of the modern novel, Faulkner is one of the few novelists who writes from a perspective of hope. He writes of violence, of human stupidity, of cruelty, of greed, of a brooding sense of evil in the universe, but in the midst of all this dark turmoil gleams a light, a hope that although most men fail, yet they are not doomed to failure and that in spite of all their petty vices and stupidities they will prevail.  

Thus, man's prevailing, his ability to endure in spite of the world's tragedies, is a significant theme in Faulkner's work. The beneficent characters who exemplify this theme provide the positive force in Faulkner's works.

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