

SURROGATE FATHERS IN SELECTED WORKS OF WILLIAM FAULKNER

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To Grandma Howard:

Your love of knowledge, your faith, and your
unselfish devotion to family and friends have
always been an inspiration to me.

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ABSTRACT

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As an artist, William Faulkner explored surrogate father relationships in several of his works. This study examines three of those relationships and their main characters.

While many critics through the years have written about William Faulkner, and some have even explored Faulkner as a father, none have closely examined his surrogate fathers, or the fact that Faulkner himself was a surrogate father. An invaluable aid to research were the articles in William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1973), plus numerous other scholarly articles written about Faulkner. These articles explored various aspects of Faulkner's life and his writing and helped give insight into the complex man, artist, father, and surrogate father who was William Faulkner. Although Faulkner's works are not exactly parallel with his life, Faulkner's own experiences and observations may have given him the insight to portray relationships in a way that is lifelike and very plausible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"A book is the writer's secret life, the dark twin of a man: you can't reconcile them" (Mosquitoes qtd. in Blotner 186). William Faulkner's work and his life cannot be completely reconciled because one is his fiction and one his real life. Nevertheless, many people have said that Faulkner recorded exact events from his life into his works. What Faulkner did was fictionalize the people and events he was familiar with from daily living. Indeed, the resemblances between Faulkner's life and his work have often been explored; but they are resemblances, not exact renderings. In Faulkner: A Biography Joseph Blotner relates many episodes from Faulkner's works that are similar to events in Faulkner's life or events that happened to people Faulkner knew. A longtime friend of Faulkner, John Cullen, comments, "Except for names, Faulkner has used local events and people with such careful detail in his stories that things I had long forgotten return to my memory as I read his fiction" (115). As an example, Cullen tells a local story:

Many people tell a story about a young woman who would have given birth to a bastard if her father had not hired a prideless no-account to marry her.

That young man, however, never became president of a bank as Flem Snopes did. Faulkner probably heard the same story, and it may be the basis of his story about Eula Varner, but probably he had no particular person actually in mind as he wrote. I went to school with a girl who resembled Eula, but I considered her a good girl. No exact model for Eula lived in Lafayette County or anywhere else, but affairs like Eula's happen everywhere.

(117)

So, even though some of Faulkner's works seem like exact renderings of real life events, Faulkner fictionalized people and events that could have appeared almost anywhere; but he depicted them as Southern. In that manner, he pictorialized and recorded what life was like in his South.

Faulkner wrote about what he knew and visualized from life as is illustrated in his creation of a fictional Mississippi county. Along with writing about the South, he wrote almost exclusively about Mississippi, and himself, including writing about surrogate father relationships in some of his works. He was able to write realistically about these things because of his familiarity with them. As a Southerner who had grown up in Mississippi, who had two children of his wife's from a previous marriage to rear, he

was able to write plausible, fictionalized stories about his life and the experiences of people he saw around him. In his introduction to Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays, Robert Penn Warren relates his feelings after his first encounters with Faulkner's fiction:

What happened to me was what happened to almost all the book-reading Southerners I knew. They found dramatized in Faulkner's work some truth about the South and their own Southernness that had been lying speechless in their experience. Even landscapes and objects took on a new depth of meaning, and the human face, stance, and gesture took on a new dignity. . . . There was the thrill of seeing how a life that you yourself observed and were part of might move into the dimension of art. (1)

Since Faulkner used his own experiences for much of his work, he was very adept at taking his life experiences and events he had heard about and turning them into great fiction. Judith Bryant Wittenberg in her book Faulkner: The Transfiguration of Biography writes:

Faulkner knew that his fiction was all about Faulkner. Like so many other writers he "was," in one way or another, many of his characters. . . .

Their narratives told the continuing story of his life, providing, as it were, a sounding board for his official biography, and even a kind of supplement to it. (5)

Faulkner seemed to agree with this sentiment that he put himself in his writing. In his introduction to The Sound and the Fury, he discussed his feelings about being a Southerner and a writer:

Because it is himself that the Southerner is writing about, not about his environment: who has, figuratively speaking, taken the artist in him in one hand and his milieu in the other and thrust the one into the other like a clawing and spitting cat into a croker sack. And he writes. We have never got and probably will never get, anywhere with music or the plastic forms. We need to talk, to tell, since oratory is our heritage. . . . Anyway, each course is a matter of violent partizanship [sic], in which the writer unconsciously writes into every line and phrase his violent despairs and rages and frustrations or his violent prophecies of still more violent hopes. . . . Whereupon I [talking about The Sound and the Fury], who had three brothers and no sisters and

was destined to lose my first daughter in infancy,
began to write about a little girl. (158-59)

He felt a terrible loss when his daughter Baby Alabama died, especially since she was his first child. She was born prematurely; there was no incubator at the hospital, and she only lived a few days. Judith Bryant Wittenberg relates:

Faulkner's grief was terrible, but he refused to assuage it with his usual anodyne, alcohol. Though he suffered, it was a new kind of pain, grief as much for Alabama's loss of life as for his own deprivation. Faulkner's tragedy increased his awareness of others, seeming to lessen his concentration on the purely self-centered anguish which had previously preoccupied him and to involve him instead in the universal cycle of procreation and death. (Transfiguration 120)

This universal cycle helped him continue his development of his mythical community that he began to create in 1929. Faulkner invented a county, Yoknapatawpha, where most of his fiction takes place. It is very similar to Lafayette County, Mississippi, where he spent much of his youth. Dorothy Tuck writes:

Yoknapatawpha County is closely modeled on Lafayette County, Mississippi. Both the real and fictional counties are roughly bounded on the northeast by the Tallahatchie River; in the fictional county the Yocana River to the south is named the Yoknapatawpha. (1)

The knowledge Faulkner gained through living in the South and Lafayette County gave him the clay to mold his own fictional county of Yoknapatawpha and to create realistic characters who lived and loved there.

Although Faulkner's fiction appears based on himself and the people and places he knew about and seems quite real, the reader has to remember that his writing is fiction and not exact renderings of facts as some readers and critics have tried to make them. In William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country, Cleanth Brooks writes:

Faulkner critics are prone to confuse matters by saying that since the fiction is good, the "facts" must be correct, or that since the facts are incorrect, the fiction is bound to be poor. Faulkner's novels and stories, properly read, can doubtless tell us a great deal about the South, but Faulkner is primarily an artist. His reader . . . must be able to sense what is typical and

what is exceptional, what is normal and what is an aberration. (6)

The reader has to realize that Faulkner did what many other great writers do; he preserved an age and a place. Through his art, Faulkner captured the spirit of the South to allow the reader insight. Cleanth Brooks writes:

Faulkner, to be sure, has much to tell us about life in Mississippi and in the South generally. He is indeed concerned with human beings and human values. But his novels are neither case studies nor moral treatises. They are works of art and have to be read as such. (9)

William Faulkner, the artist, has preserved a quality of life that would not be so richly preserved if he had not written his works. Daniel Aaron in "The South in American History" writes about what Faulkner has given to the world:

He created through memory and evocation of place a personal literature, yet one which never escaped from society and which incorporated an internal history of a people that was at once sectional, national, and universal. (21)

Although sometimes seen as universal, Faulkner's fiction is very specific and personal. As an artist who wrote fiction about the South and himself, Faulkner included

surrogate father relationships in his works because he knew personally the responsibilities of surrogate fathers and their place in the lives of children whose parents were dead, gone, or just too busy to give the children the love and support they needed. In fact, he was directly involved with several children who looked up to him as a father. Faulkner also had seen many surrogate father relationships because during his life many men lost their lives in the two world wars and the Korean conflict; and he saw many families struggling for various reasons to survive without the natural fathers of the children. As a result, Faulkner possessed strong feelings for the fatherless children of his family and loved ones. He welcomed them to his home, supported and housed them when necessary. Faulkner and his wife Estelle cared for their daughter Jill; and Faulkner also served as a surrogate father to Estelle's two children of a previous marriage as well as the children of his brother Dean, who died in an airplane accident. Because of these relationships, Faulkner was familiar with surrogate fathers and the duties and responsibilities involved in raising a family. Before he married Estelle, for example, he showed feelings for her daughter by sending a copy of The Marionettes to Victoria (Cho-Cho) with the inscription, "TO 'CHO-CHO' / A TINY FLOWER OF THE FLAME, THE / ETERNAL

GESTURE CHRYSTALLIZED; / THIS, A SHADOWY FUMBLING IN / WINDY DARKNESS, IS MOST RE- / SPECTFULLY TENDERED" (qtd. Blotner 98). He wrote this inscription before he married Estelle. Although possibly he wrote this inscription for Estelle's benefit, the way he worded it makes the inscription sound as if he already had paternal feelings for Estelle's child, especially as "a tiny flower of the flame" of Estelle. Judith Sensibar, in The Origins of Faulkner's Art, also observes that the "flame" is Estelle; but she states, "Faulkner celebrates not so much the child as the sex act itself, the 'eternal gesture,' of which Cho-Cho is the 'flower'" (25). Faulkner loved children, and he cared deeply for all the children of his wife Estelle. Faulkner wanted to be able to house these children properly; and since Estelle had always been told that she should not marry him because he would never amount to anything, Faulkner knew well the feeling of desire for wealth and respectability. "Count No 'Count" (as Faulkner was often called by local folk) wanted to show the people of Jefferson, Mississippi that he had become successful. Joseph Blotner writes that after marrying Estelle,

he wanted to take himself and Estelle and Cho-Cho and Malcolm out from under Miss Elma Meek's roof to a home of their own. It would take mortgage

payments to do it, but he was going to buy the old Shegog place out on the Taylor Road, where he and Estelle had played as children. (Biography 257)

Faulkner and Estelle were childhood sweethearts, and yet he saw her marry Cornell Franklin first and bear him two children. Faulkner still loved her, and he married her after she and Cornell Franklin divorced. Faulkner purchased the old Shegog place and turned it into Rowan Oak, his family place, so that way he could care for Estelle and her children.

Faulkner also took care of his niece. He felt responsible for the death of his brother Dean, who perished when Faulkner's airplane crashed before the birth of Dean's daughter. Throughout her life, Dean's daughter called Faulkner "Pappy," as did Victoria and Jill, Faulkner's own daughter (Blotner, Biography 353, 454).

Another close relationship developed between Faulkner and his nephew Jimmy, son of John "Johncy," Faulkner's older brother. This relationship lasted until Faulkner's death. Jimmy, who called Faulkner "Brother Will," was with Faulkner right before Faulkner's death (Blotner, Biography 713); and affectionately remembers his uncle to this day, even making public appearances to describe their relationship.

Thus, as a surrogate father, these relationships gave Faulkner the background to explore, in his works, surrogate fathers and their relationships with children who were not sons and daughters by blood. Andre Bleikasten offers:

Far from being confined to the performance of a parental role, fatherhood appears throughout Faulkner's work as a complex function, both private and public, a symbolic agency operating on various scales and levels and within various patterns, and to discuss it only in terms of blood kinship and family structure would be to miss much of its deeper significance. (115)

Although Faulkner only had one surviving child of his own, he served as a surrogate father to other children and gave himself to those who needed him for various reasons.

Out of his personal experience as well as from observation, Faulkner fashioned concepts regarding surrogate fathers. He included surrogate father relationships in his fiction. This study will focus on three of the surrogate father relationships that Faulkner portrayed in his works. First, the study will discuss the relationship among Flem Snopes, Eula Varner (Snopes), and Linda Snopes (Eula's daughter), a relationship Faulkner introduced in The Hamlet and continued in The Town and The Mansion. Second, the

study will illustrate the devotion Jackson Fentry shows to his "son" Jackson and Longstreet Fentry, a relationship Faulkner depicted in "Tomorrow," a short story from Knight's Gambit. Third, this study will examine the bond that develops among Byron Bunch, Lena Grove, and her baby, a relationship which Faulkner portrayed in Light in August.

CHAPTER II

FLEM SNOPE: FAULKNER'S WRETCHED FATHER

The Flem Snopes story spans three novels, The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion. Flem Snopes is a rapacious, grasping, greedy man who becomes a surrogate father to gain property and power. Flem Snopes is one of William Faulkner's most notorious characters. He marries Eula Varner and rears her daughter Linda only to become part of the Varner dynasty. In his article "Faulkner's Snopes Saga," Gordon Bigelow writes that the Snopes trilogy ". . . is a story of the rise of Flem Snopes from poor-white tenant farmer to clerk in a country store to president of the Sartoris bank" (595). The names of the three novels are synonymous with Flem Snopes' journey. He starts in the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend, moves up to the town of Jefferson, and then moves on to the De Spain mansion. His journey is one of conquests. Unfortunately, during these conquests Flem Snopes uses and exploits almost everyone he comes in contact with, including his wife Eula and her daughter Linda. He is one of Faulkner's most reprehensible surrogate fathers: "He is pure, graceless acquisitiveness, untrammelled by honor and unredeemed by love" (Brooks 181). Cleanth Brooks also writes:

The Hamlet is ostensibly the story of the rise of Flem Snopes--from a shiftless sharecropper's

indigent son to the financial power of the community--who, at the end of the novel, has carried all before him . . . a tale of commercial success in which the poor but diligent young man marries the boss's daughter and becomes a financial power. (174)

Flem Snopes has no scruples. "Flem is undoubtedly one of the most villainous characters in literature . . . because his inhumanity is not a perversion of human traits so much as a lack of them. He is that ultimate horror, a man without a soul" (Bigelow 599). After marrying the pregnant Eula Varner, he raises her daughter as his own and keeps the secret of the baby's (Linda's) paternity for as long as it benefits him. Later, he even exploits these two relationships to gain the presidency of the local bank and appears to be a huge financial success. However, the story does not stop there. Faulkner does not let Flem Snopes remain unscathed. In the end Flem meets his doom, and appropriately it comes from his "daughter." Lawrence Bowling writes, "With Faulkner, the opposite of love is not hate: it is 'doom'. . . . For doom, Faulkner implies, is the certain fate of any man who, ignoring love, pursues selfish ends" (116-17). After pursuing and obtaining all of his selfish goals in life, Flem placidly accepts his doom.

Flem Snopes first appears at the beginning of The Hamlet. From the first mention of Flem's name, Faulkner gives the reader clues about Flem's character. His name alone sounds slimy. Flem sounds like phlegm, and Snopes gives connotations of snakes and snails. Gordon Bigelow writes his opinion of the Snopes clan:

As individuals they are like hawks or wolves or wildcats; as a family they are like an infestation of snakes or rats, of termites, army ants, or weevils. Always they are ruthless, predatory, amoral, devouring. (597)

Flem is the son of a sharecropper, and he definitely fits the Bigelow description. In the beginning of The Hamlet, Flem's family has moved into a shack on Will Varner's property; and without knowing their background, Jody Varner has hired them as sharecroppers. Will Varner is the "chief man of the country" (Faulkner, Hamlet 5) and owns much of the land around Frenchman's Bend, including the Old Frenchman's place, which he refers to as his only mistake since he believes it has little value. The Snopes family seem to go where there is work to be done; however, they generally go to work late in the season, and so do not have to do a full season's work. Sometimes they cut the season short because of barn burning incidents (of course, there is

no actual proof that they had anything to do with the barn burnings). The first time we see Flem, Jody negotiates with him, away from Flem's family because after hiring Ab Snopes as a sharecropper, Jody hears about the barn burning incidents and has come out to talk to the Snopes family to try to save his barn. Jody offers to help Flem's family by giving them store credit and other things of benefit to sharecroppers. Flem replies, "Ain't no benefit in farming. I figure on getting out of it soon as I can" (Faulkner, Hamlet 23). Jody takes this statement of Flem's as an implied threat to the Varner barn unless he offers Flem a job to get him out of farming. Accordingly, Jody gives Flem a job in the Varner store to protect his barn. This statement of Flem's is one of the only times that he speaks at all. Through the rest of the trilogy, most of what we know of him we hear from others' observations. Noel Polk says in "Idealism in The Mansion":

Part of why we respond so negatively to Flem, part of Faulkner's portrayal of him as a completely unsympathetic character is the fact that nowhere in the trilogy is he allowed to speak for himself. We always see him from somebody else's point of view. What little we know about his internal life we extrapolate from what others say about him.

(118-19)

The reader does not hear Flem's version of the story. The only knowledge gained about him comes from the biased opinions of V. K. Ratliff and Gavin Stevens and from Charles (Chick) Mallison, who has grown up listening to the other two. All three of these characters, along with an omniscient voice, are narrators in the trilogy. Joseph Arpad in "William Faulkner's Legendary Novels: The Snopes Trilogy" says much the same thing about Flem:

For example, seldom is the reader given any factual information upon which to form an individual judgment of Flem's character; instead, he is given what Ratliff, Stevens, or Mallison suspect Flem's character or behavior to be. These interpretive viewpoints are necessary, so the reader is told, because Flem is naturally evasive and taciturn in speech, exhibiting manners and morals unfamiliar to Yoknapatawpha County. Thus, he exists as an unknown, a mystery, which must be explained away. (216)

Flem is inscrutable. The reader does not know how he thinks and feels. He says little, but he quickly becomes "friends" with Will Varner after going to work in Varner's store. Flem would not have gotten this foothold if Jody had

not been greedy and planned on exploiting Flem's father, Ab Snopes. In fact, Jody had planned on having Ab make the crop and then ousting them without any profit for the Snopes. After hearing about the barn burnings, this plan is negated; and Jody shifts his priorities to protect his barn. Flem goes to work at the Varner store, and at first Will Varner and Ratliff seem to think that Flem is not so bad as his father Ab. Ratliff says, "Besides, it's just Flem that Jody's mixed up with. Long as Jody keeps him, maybe old Ab will--[keep from burning down Varner's barn]" (Faulkner, Hamlet 27). Flem comes to work on the first day wearing a hand-stitched shirt that looks like Jody's. As James Watson writes, "Flem is something of a grotesque copy of Jody Varner. New to life in even so small a town as Frenchman's Bend, Flem slavishly imitates the former storekeeper" (24). Flem does not know how he is supposed to dress, so he copies the person he is going to work for. An ironic observation is that while Flem is copying Jody's dress, he is at the same time usurping Jody's position as Will Varner's right-hand man and son. This usurpation will be further accomplished when Flem becomes surrogate father to Will Varner's granddaughter. Will Varner seems at first to admire and to appreciate Flem because he does not make any mistakes where money is concerned. Flem seems only to love

money; and he weasels his way into Will Varner's good graces and moves up in the business, eventually "passing" Jody as the heir to Will Varner's attention and the Varner business. Flem is given a job in the gin that even Jody is not trusted with. Later when Eula, Will Varner's daughter, becomes pregnant; she is given (sold) to Flem, who is not the baby's father. Faulkner tells the reader:

And so one day they clapped her into her Sunday clothes and put the rest of her things--the tawdry mail-order negligees and nightgowns, the big cheap flimsy shoes and what toilet things she had--into the tremendous bag and took her to town in the surrey and married her to him. (Hamlet 146-47)

Flem Snopes is given Eula Varner because Eula has gotten pregnant by Hoake McCarron, who has disappeared along with all of Eula's other suitors. According to the values of society Eula needs a husband, and Flem Snopes is available. James Watson writes:

The entire affair is no more than a business transaction in which Flem trades his availability for a large check and the deed to the Old Frenchman Place. He exploits Will Varner's need for a son-in-law in much the same way that he

exploited Jody's fear of fire to gain a place as clerk in the store. (40)

Flem never shows any love for anything except money and power and, later, respectability. He does not marry Eula or raise Linda out of love for them; he extracts his price. He marries Eula to get the deed to the Old Frenchman's place and some money, somewhere between one hundred-fifty and three hundred dollars (Faulkner, Hamlet 145). "Telling of what he saw in Jefferson, Vernon Tull is embarrassed to admit that Will Varner had to pay for the marriage license as well as for Eula's husband" (Watson 40). Since Will Varner even pays for the marriage license, it seems that Flem is out nothing by marrying Eula. In fact, he benefits greatly from this business transaction. Flem "salts" the Old Frenchman's place by burying some gold on it and then begins digging around as if he is looking for something. Flem is spotted, and the trap is sprung. Ratliff and two others believe that the legend of gold on the Old Frenchman's place is finally coming true, and they buy the land; Ratliff trades Flem his half-ownership in a restaurant in Jefferson for his portion of the money. Joseph Gold offers:

Flem is able to sell it [the Old Frenchman's place] because he is more capable than Will, not

because Will does not want to resort to trickery.
The salted mine is surely a piece of well-known
chicanery, but it takes Flem to use it. (320)

Therefore, when Flem and Eula come back from spending a year in Texas while Eula had the baby, they move from Frenchman's Bend to a tent behind the restaurant.

Although Flem had many reasons to marry Eula, Faulkner does not give the reader any reason why Eula marries Flem. She seems to have little to say for herself. However, Eula probably could have had anyone she wanted:

. . . her entire appearance suggested some
symbology out of the old Dionysic times--honey in
sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding
of the crushed fecundated vine beneath the hard
rapacious trampling goat hoof. (Faulkner, Hamlet
95)

Before the marriage Eula seems to have no feelings for Flem Snopes. She mostly ignores him, although eventually, after he becomes a frequent visitor to the Varner home, she begins to recognize Flem's footsteps. Then, she tells her father he is at the house by saying:

"Papa, here's that man," or, presently, "the
man,"--"papa, here's the man again," though
sometimes she said Mr Snopes, saying it exactly as

she would have said Mr Dog. (Faulkner, Hamlet
146)

These remarks do not seem to be the discourse of someone who has feelings for Flem Snopes. Eula does not seem to care one way or the other whom she marries. The fact that she marries at all is in deference to society; and Eula's marriage to Flem shocks the people of Frenchman's Bend, especially since the entire union between Flem and Eula is one of opposites. She is "bursting grapes," and he is impotent. She is reared by wealthy parents; his are dirt poor. Before she got pregnant, Eula could have had any man she wanted for a husband and would not have even given Flem a second thought. Flem is just there at the right time to further his claim on the Varners. His marriage to Eula cements the relationship he has been carefully building with Will Varner. Since Eula has gotten pregnant by Hoake McCarron and he has fled without marrying her, Flem may have been the only person who would marry her. Before Eula got pregnant, all men wanted her; but Flem was the only one who agreed to raise another man's child. Cleanth Brooks writes:

Thus the impotent Flem, who is pure single minded acquisitiveness, and Eula, who is the unself-conscious and almost mindless personification of the fecundity of nature, are almost like

goddess and ogre, a positive and a negative power, and the yoking of them together takes on the quality of an allegorical event. (172)

There is an incongruity in the marriage. Eula is bursting with life, and Flem is only interested in money. "So love itself comes down to a matter of bargaining" (Brooks 190). Eula has "foxed herself," (Faulkner, Hamlet 143) so society demands that she have a husband, apparently any husband. Eula's honor and her family's honor are at stake. "The Varner name, with all its faults, must ironically be kept 'good.' Flem is the only person who will marry the sullied Eula" (Gold 323). Something must be done quickly to preserve the appearance of decency; therefore, "Eula's honor is saved because of a commercial transaction in which Flem has obviously driven a good bargain and presumably is concerned only that the bargain be good enough" (Brooks 185). Now that Eula is pregnant, her value in society has dropped dramatically. She is no longer viewed as Will Varner's daughter; she is an unwed mother until someone marries her. As Thomas Greet says in "The Theme and Structure of Faulkner's The Hamlet":

The goddess is betrayed because she exists in a world predominantly self-conscious. Flem, whose utter lack of passion makes him irresistible on

the rational level, can neither conceive of nor respect the values which Eula embodies. The Varners, though capable of pity and reverence, abet Flem in his corruption by sacrificing love on the sterile altar of conventional morality. (316)

This marriage is an example of Flem's rapaciousness. He takes advantage of a difficult situation. After the marriage, Flem takes Eula to Texas for a year to forestall some of the gossip of the premature birth of Eula's baby since society looks with more favor on a quick marriage and early baby than on an unwed mother. Also, this trip presents Flem with the image of being the biological father of the baby. This trip benefits Flem in another way, since the reader is led to believe that Flem brings a herd of wild ponies back with him to sell to the people of Frenchman's Bend. Although no one ever proves that Flem owns the horses, there is a strong coincidence in timing because the ponies come from Texas at the same time that Flem comes back from Texas.

In The Town, Flem's greed becomes greater and more obvious. He has moved his family from the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend, where he worked for Will Varner, to the town of Jefferson, where he and Eula run the restaurant he

has acquired there. At some point he also begins to become desirous of respectability. This desire for respectability makes Flem harder for some people, especially Gavin Stevens, to understand. According to Noel Polk:

It should not be difficult to understand why Flem would want to be like those smart, up-to-date Jeffersonians, why middle-class emotional and financial security should be so attractive to him. ("Idealism" 115)

Flem wants to fit in with the people of Jefferson and tries to fit in the only way he knows how, by modeling himself after them. Just as he copied Jody's dress when he went to work in the Varner store, Flem copies the mode of the citizens of Jefferson. Then Flem has a disaster with the brass incident, where he finds out that being dishonest can get him in trouble. After this fiasco, he starts to channel his acquisitiveness to legal (if unsavory) methods. Noel Polk further illustrates:

In The Town and The Mansion there is only one documentable instance in which Flem cheats. This is when he steals the brass from the city and hides it in the water tower, and one of the purposes of the entire episode is to educate Flem: he learns about sophisticated bookkeeping, and

finds out how easy it is to get caught and disgraced, and therefore foiled in his purpose.

("Idealism" 115)

Flem not only loses the brass, he comes close to losing everything he has gained thus far. Flem has worked so hard to get the members of the community to accept him as one of them that he does not want to do anything to jeopardize the town's acceptance of him. Since he has no background to draw upon, he must also copy the town people's manner of dress. He does the same type of thing when he furnishes his house. He orders his furniture from a catalogue, exactly as it is in the picture. Having come from sharecropper stock, Flem has no sense of taste and must rely on copying what others do because he wants the people of the town to respect him. Gavin Stevens does not see that Flem Snopes has changed his focus to a desire for respectability. James Watson offers:

What Gavin has missed is the overall image that Flem Snopes now projects and that his machinations in the community progressively produce.

Fascinated by the immediate manifestations of Flem's machinations, Gavin constructs complex theories to explain them in terms of his perception of Flem as a force threatening moral

order. . . . By so doing he loses the perspective to see that Flem is steadily creating the illusion of belonging to the very moral order that Gavin perceives him to imperil. From the time when Flem first affected homemade bolt-cloth shirts and a black bow tie, he has studiously copied the outward appearance of the members of the community. . . . Because this movement into the ordered sphere of the community is unaccompanied by any corresponding moral development . . . the illusion of belonging is fragile. Once created, it must of necessity be continually nourished and protected. (114)

To protect his reputation, at one point Flem even has his cousin Montgomery Ward Snopes thrown in jail for showing pornographic picture postcards. However, before Montgomery's arrest, Flem replaces the postcards with moonshine whiskey, so that Flem will be related to a convicted moonshiner rather than a pornographer. Flem is now vice-president of the Sartoris bank, and he knows that he has a position that requires the appearance of a respectable person. In addition to getting a pornographer relative out of town, Flem has an ulterior motive for having Montgomery Ward put in prison. Flem has a relative, Mink

Snopes, who is already in prison and will try to kill Flem when he gets out. If Flem can get Mink Snopes to attempt to escape from prison, Mink's sentence will be extended another twenty years. Therefore, Flem needs Montgomery Ward to coerce Mink into trying to escape so that as a result of the escape attempt, Mink will double his original sentence.

After using Montgomery Ward to ensure that Mink will spend another twenty years in prison, Flem goes on to use his family to further his position in town. Since Flem is known to be one who cannot be beaten in a business deal, everyone who deals with Flem gets taken in one way or another. Although the exploitation of Eula and Linda is not readily apparent in the beginning of the trilogy, Flem eventually coerces Linda to sign over her birthright to him and capitalizes on an affair of Eula's to gain the presidency of the local bank. The use of Linda's love for him to gain her inheritance from her is the most reprehensible thing that Flem has ever done. Linda has always thought that Flem is her real father, and she thinks that the reason that Flem will not let her go away to school is that he loves her. Flem refuses for several months to let Linda go to school up North. In the meantime, he tries to buy her affection by buying clothes and giving her a generous allowance to make up for not letting her go away to

school. The reader is led to believe that Flem will not let Linda go away to school because she might find out that Flem is not her real father since there will be people there who do not owe Flem Snopes anything. When he finally relents and lets her go to college in Oxford, Mississippi, she is so grateful that she goes to a lawyer in Oxford and deeds her inheritance over to him. Linda told the lawyer her reason for giving Flem her birthright was, "Because my father has been good to me and I love and admire and respect him" (Faulkner, Town 328). This comment is probably the nicest remark ever said about Flem Snopes, and it is not true. Flem has been manipulating Linda all of her life; she just does not yet realize that she has been manipulated. Once he has gained Linda's inheritance, he is free to advance his career through further exploitation of Eula.

Flem manipulates Eula through Manfred de Spain. Eula and Manfred have had a long-standing affair, which Flem chooses to ignore for eighteen years. However, Flem always keeps his knowledge of the affair as his ace in the hole to control Eula. As Ratliff observes, "Not catching his wife with Manfred de Spain yet is like that twenty-dollar gold piece pinned to your undershirt on your first maiden trip to what you hope is going to be a Memphis whorehouse. He dont [sic] need to unpin it yet" (Faulkner, Town 29). Since Flem

is impotent and Eula is "bursting grapes," Eula obtains warmth from Manfred de Spain. Only after Flem gets Linda to sign over her birthright and elects to be president of the bank, does Flem contrive to be outraged by the affair. He goes to Mrs. Varner, Eula's mother, with Linda's will leaving everything to Flem and the news about Eula and Manfred de Spain's affair. Eula finds out about this development; and as a result, after having her hair coiffed for the only time in her life, she goes to Gavin Stevens and asks him to marry Linda to give Linda his name and protect her from scandal. After Gavin refuses, Eula chooses "death in order to leave her child a mere suicide for a mother instead of a whore" (Faulkner, Town 340). Eula would rather die than have Linda suffer the public scandal of her mother's eighteen-year affair with De Spain or have her discover that she (Linda) is a bastard. Cleanth Brooks feels that Faulkner intends Eula's death as a heroic gesture, that Eula is protecting the good name of her daughter:

She [Eula] doubtless is aware that most of the town knows about her relationship with Manfred de Spain. She may even suspect that a great many people think that Flem Snopes is not actually the father of her child. Even so, Linda still has a

name and social position which are not jeopardized by people's knowing these things. On the other hand, Linda will clearly suffer if the fact of her mother's adultery is proclaimed and the public forced to take cognizance of it. (209-10)

Eula does the only thing she can see to protect her daughter. "Like all true women, Eula is a realist. Her death is not a quixotic gesture: it rather resembles the female panther's protecting her young" (Brooks 210). By her unselfish gesture, Eula shows her capacity for love. After Eula's funeral, Linda leaves for New York. James Gray Watson points out: "The death of the love goddess and the departure of her daughter coincide directly with Flem's achievement of his ultimate goal: the economic domination of his environment" (174). Flem has used his role as surrogate father to glean all he can from Eula and Linda. As Watson also points out, after the funeral Flem dismisses Linda with an abrupt, "All right. You can go now" (Faulkner, Mansion 149). This statement shows that Flem has all he has ever wanted from Linda. He does not need her around any more, so she is finally free to leave and start a new life. After Linda leaves, Flem purchases the De Spain mansion since Manfred de Spain left Jefferson right after Eula's funeral and left Flem the presidency of the bank and his home.

Linda winds up in Greenwich Village and meets and lives with Barton Kohl, who is communist and Jewish. When they finally decide to get married, Gavin Stevens and V.K. Ratliff come to the wedding. Linda's real father, Hoake McCarron, is also there. Flem does not attend. Linda asks Gavin if Hoake McCarron is her father, and Gavin denies McCarron's paternity. Linda tells Gavin that she loves him "because every time you lie to me I can always know you will stick to it" (Faulkner, Mansion 175). After the marriage, the couple go to Spain; Barton Kohl is killed, and Linda is deafened in the Spanish Civil War. Linda comes back to Jefferson and lives with Flem in the De Spain mansion. She begins to understand Flem for the dastard that he is; and she decides to free Mink Snopes, a relative who is in Parchman Prison for killing a man named Jack Houston. All during his trial, Mink feels that Flem will intercede and save him from prison. Also, much later, Mink figures out that Flem has sent Montgomery Ward Snopes to Parchman to talk him into trying to escape, a fiasco which results in twenty more years being added to Mink's sentence. Flem is protecting himself from Mink's anger: "Because Mink Snopes was mean. He was the only out-and-out mean Snopes we ever experienced" (Faulkner, Town 79) according to V.K. Ratliff. And Flem not only lets Mink go to prison, he also causes

Mink to disregard the advice he received about prison conduct that would have gotten him out of jail eighteen years sooner if he had not been coerced by Montgomery Ward Snopes into trying to escape. Consequently, Mink is dead set on killing Flem Snopes. Linda knows this information; and she negotiates, in her desire to free Mink, a deal with the warden of the prison. The deal, ostensibly to protect Flem, is that if Mink will swear to leave Mississippi and never come back, Linda will pay him a lump sum and a set monthly amount. Mink pretends to accept the money and the deal, but he tricks the warden and sends the money back. He then goes to Memphis and buys a gun and heads to Jefferson after Flem. Mink kills Flem, who does not seek to avoid death, even after the first shot that Mink takes misfires. After Mink kills Flem, he escapes with the help of Gavin Stevens and V.K. Ratliff. Thus, the only person who ever gets the best of Flem is his "daughter." After Flem's funeral, Linda drives off in a brand new Jaguar; and Gavin Stevens is left with the feeling that Linda used him to have her revenge for her mother's death.

Flem Snopes is a greedy surrogate father who deserves what he gets from his "daughter," Linda, whom he has used all of her life. James Watson writes:

Flem's opponents without exception become his victims, only to rise again or be replaced by others as the struggle continues. While Flem's successes are inevitable, they are self-annihilating, and the rejuvenatory nature of the moral world is revealed in the temporariness of its defeats. (18)

CHAPTER III

JACKSON FENTRY: FAULKNER'S ENDURING FATHER

"And that wasn't the first time it ever occurred to me that this world ain't run like it ought to be run a heap more times than what it is. . . ." (Faulkner, Gambit 101). William Faulkner's short story "Tomorrow" from Knight's Gambit aptly portrays this observation. Totally unlike Flem Snopes, Stonewall Jackson Fentry's motivation for becoming a surrogate father is love for the child he takes as his own; and Fentry accepts this responsibility gladly, even though he knows that he might lose the child at any time. Jackson Fentry at first appears as:

a farmer . . . a thin man, small, with thin gray hair and that appearance of hill farmers--at once frail and work-worn, yet curiously imperishable--who seem to become old men at fifty and then become invincible with time. (86-87)

He also is reported to be a "little, worn, dried-out hill man" (89); and Faulkner does not reveal additional aspects of Fentry's character right away. However, little by little, Jackson Fentry is uncovered as a good and decent man, one who becomes an exceptional surrogate father and shows a huge capacity for love. This poignant tale contains one of Faulkner's most touching relationships and reveals the lifelong bond between Stonewall Jackson Fentry and his

"son" Jackson and Longstreet Fentry. "Tomorrow" slowly reveals their story.

"Tomorrow" begins with a trial--the trial of Mr. Bookwright, a man accused of killing another man, Buck Thorpe. Mr. Bookwright kills Thorpe because Thorpe is an unseemly man courting Mr. Bookwright's seventeen year-old daughter; and Thorpe is killed in the act of running away with the daughter. Furthermore, after the killing, Buck Thorpe's wife comes forward to claim his effects; so he has been courting Bookwright's daughter while he was already married. Mr. Bookwright's lawyer is Gavin Stevens, and "Years afterward he still said it was the only case, either as a private defender or a public prosecutor, in which he was convinced that right and justice were on his side, that he ever lost" (85). Stevens does not actually lose the case because it is declared a mistrial, and in a later trial Mr. Bookwright is acquitted. Since "everyone believed the trial would be a mere formality," Gavin Stevens, fresh out of law school, persuades his grandfather to let him handle the case alone. However, since Jackson Fentry is a member of the jury and is the only juror who will not "vote Mr. Bookwright free" (89) Stevens' jury is hung. This hung jury happens because, despite the facts, Jackson Fentry remains adamant about his decision concerning Bookwright. He refuses to

compromise his decision even with the other eleven jurors trying to persuade him to change his mind. After the trial Gavin Stevens, wanting to know why he has lost the case, sets out to find the reason behind Fentry's decision. Faulkner reveals this answer to the reader in the form of a mystery. As a result, Gavin Stevens is referred to as an amateur detective in this story (Gwynn and Blotner 140). Stevens and his nephew, "Chick" (Charles Mallison), the narrator, went to Fentry's home to try to find out what had happened to Fentry to make him so set against Bookwright. When they arrived at the Fentry farm, they incidentally noticed that the Fentry land lacks a woman's hand. At that time Fentry's father, "holding a shotgun across his middle and shaking with fury or perhaps with the palsy of age" (Faulkner, Gambit 90), fiercely ordered them off his property, so Gavin and Chick went on down the road to the neighbors, the Pruitts. Pruitt and his mother willingly revealed the part of Jackson Fentry's life that they knew about.

The Pruitts explained how Jackson Fentry was reared and had lived on the farm for about twenty-five years. They told how his mother and grandmother each had died on the farm before they were even forty years old, thus explaining the lack of a woman's touch on the farm. And they went on

to say that at age twenty-five Jackson Fentry took a job in Frenchman's Bend at Ben Quick's sawmill:

"A day-wage job," Pruitt said. "Not to get rich; just to earn a little extra money maybe, risking a year or two to earn a little extra money, against the life his grandpa led until he died between the plow handles one day, and that his pa would lead until he died in a corn furrow, and then it would be his turn, and not even no son to come and pick him up out of the dirt. . . ." (Faulkner, Gambit 92)

Jackson Fentry had asked Pruitt to look in on his father while Fentry worked at the sawmill, so they were aware of and were able to tell about the time when Fentry lived away from the farm. The Pruitts went on to say that Jackson Fentry walked the thirty miles home from the sawmill the first Christmas and then walked back. But Fentry did not come home the second Christmas, they pointed out. Then in about March, they continued, Fentry came home with a small baby and a goat. Taken aback by this statement, Gavin Stevens asked the Pruitts to wait while he digested this information. Then he asked them to tell him the rest of their story. Pruitt explained the significance of the goat, how a goat must be milked every two hours, and how Fentry

readily took that responsibility on himself to be able to feed the baby. Mrs. Pruitt told how she offered to take the baby and care for him until he could be weaned:

"So I made some cloths [for diapers] and I would go up there; . . . and he was doing the cooking and washing and nursing that baby, milking the goat to feed it; and I would say, 'Let me take it. At least until he can be weaned. You come stay at my house, too, if you want,' and him just looking at me--little, thin already wore-out something that never in his whole life had ever set down to a table and et [sic] all he could hold--saying, 'I thank you ma'am. I can make out.'" (Faulkner, Gambit 94)

Jackson Fentry wanted to care for every single need of that baby's all by himself. He did not want anyone else to help him with the baby's care; consequently, he was mother and father to the baby. He politely refused the help that most people would gladly have accepted--free babysitting. Mrs. Pruitt also said that she offered clothes, but:

"Jackson made his clothes. . . . Stitched them himself, by hand. I made a few garments and took them up there. I never done it but once though. He took them and he thanked me. But you could see

it. It was like he even begrudged the earth itself for what that child had to eat to keep alive." (95)

Mrs. Pruitt was not saying that Jackson Fentry begrudged food for the child; she was saying that Fentry was jealous about everything that he could not give the child himself. He could not produce food for the baby, so he had to harvest it out of the fields. Accordingly, Fentry refused Mrs. Pruitt's offer of help with the baby by saying, "Thank you ma'am. I can make out" (94). The Pruitts asserted that Fentry took good care of the baby. Pruitt pointed out twice, "But he raised that boy" (94, 95). They were telling Gavin Stevens and Chick that Fentry had taken the baby and was raising him as if he were Fentry's own son, and gave him love and attention and affection. They described how Fentry took the baby everywhere and even wrapped him up like a papoose and carried the baby to the fields with him. After the baby could walk, he toddled after Fentry in the field as long as he could, then Fentry picked him up and allowed him to ride on his shoulders until he finished plowing. The Pruitts told Stevens and Chick that Fentry and the baby were always together until one day, when the baby was about two and one-half to three years old, they both disappeared. Fentry remained absent for about

five years, then he came back just like he had never been gone. When Pruitt came over and asked Jackson Fentry what happened to the boy, Fentry said, "What boy?" (97)

Having gleaned everything the Pruitts knew about Fentry, Stevens and Chick went on to Frenchman's Bend where Fentry's old boss' son, Isham Quick, waited for them. He had also been the person who was first on the scene of the death of Buck Thorpe, so he knew what Bookwright had done. Isham Quick seemed to know more of the story than just about anyone else and eagerly told what he knew. As Fentry's boss' son, he occasionally went out to the sawmill to check on Fentry. One day he arrived to find Fentry living with a pregnant woman. Fentry said she was his wife; and Quick said, "You never had no wife last fall. And that child ain't a month off" (99). Quick went on to speculate about Fentry's relationship with the woman and discussed how she must have finally allowed Fentry to marry her, even though she was legally married to the baby's father, who apparently ran off after finding out about her pregnancy. Quick continued to tell them how Fentry married her and about how after her death Fentry resigned at the sawmill and took the baby back home to the farm to rear him. Then Quick spoke of the Thorpes, how they were the baby's uncles, and how they showed up three summers later at the sawmill with a paper

that said they had a legal right to the baby. Gavin once again stopped the story to absorb this information, then told Quick to continue. Quick said that as they headed to the Fentry place, he tried to get away and warn Fentry; but that the Thorpes were very careful not to let him out of their sight. When they arrived at the farm unexpectedly, Fentry was caught off guard; but he tried to fight the Thorpes. Fentry told the the baby to run to his grandfather; instead, the baby tried to fight also. The law was on the side of the Thorpes, and they took the baby. Quick remembered:

“Then he [Fentry] collapsed. It was like all his bones had turned to water, so that me and the oldest brother lowered him down to the chopping block like he never had no bones a-tall, laying back against the wood he had cut, panting, with a little froth of spit at each corner of his mouth. ‘It’s the law, Jackson,’ I says. ‘Her husband is still alive.’

‘I know it,’ he says. It wasn’t much more than whispering. ‘I been expecting it. I reckon that’s why it taken me so by surprise. I’m all right now.’” (102)

Quick continued to tell how the Thorpes took the child and

left some money and their thanks to Jackson Fentry.

Jackson Fentry did not take the money: "he just tossed it like you would a handful of dirt you had been examining to see what it would make" (103), and then he just walked away and stayed gone for the five years that the Pruitts had mentioned. After that day, according to Quick, Jackson Fentry never saw the boy again until the he was grown and had come back to Frenchman's Bend to live. Then one day Fentry rode up on his mule and just looked at the now Buck "Bucksnoort" Thorpe, who had become a drinker and a fighter and worse:

then he turned the mule and rid [sic] back up the road toward them hills he hadn't ought to never have left. Except maybe it's like the fellow says, and there ain't nowhere you can hide from either lightning or love. (104)

Quick said that he had forgotten at the time of the trial about the baby; and he told Gavin and Chick that until he heard the names and about the hung jury, he did not know what had happened. Quick concluded, "Of course he wasn't going to vote Bookwright free" (105).

Throughout this story William Faulkner arouses the curiosity of the reader by revealing the relationship between Jackson Fentry and Buck Thorpe (Jackson and

Longstreet Fentry) slowly, carefully, and painstakingly. Faulkner shows the reader that a surrogate father/son relationship can be a life-long loving one, even if it is one sided. Faulkner allows Isham Quick to reveal the depth of the relationship while talking to Gavin Stevens and Chick. Quick stated:

"What I seem to have underestimated was his capacity for love. I reckon I figured that, coming from where he come from, he never had none a-tall, and for that same previous reason [Fentry had never had time to learn anything other than being honest and hard working]--that even the comprehension of love had done been lost out of him back down the generations where the first one of them had to take his final choice between the pursuit of love and the pursuit of keeping on breathing." (98)

Through the Pruitts' and Quick's perception of the situation, Faulkner reveals that Jackson Fentry, a man who had never known anything except hard work, was endowed with an enormous capacity for love. Although the hardships of the farm killed Jackson Fentry's mother and grandmother at an early age, Fentry was able to foster a child with the love and tenderness of both a mother and a father. Fentry

had to give up the child because the law decreed that the baby had to go back to blood relatives, but the child had been his son for more than two years. Stonewall Jackson Fentry had loved more gently and thoroughly than anyone thought possible for someone of his background. M. E. Bradford in "Faulkner's 'Tomorrow' and the Plain People" writes:

Faulkner understands well what sons mean to a man, to his struggles with the intractable body of the world. And, as he knew, sons are especially important to the land-loving traditional Southerner. Gavin Stevens discovers that Stonewall Jackson Fentry had once had a tomorrow. And his refusal to acquit Bookwright is directly related to its loss. (236)

For a few years, little Jackson and Longstreet Fentry had been Jackson Fentry's "tomorrow."

Because of his capacity for love, Jackson Fentry must have been an atavism--a throwback to a time when his family was not too busy scratching out a living from the land to have time to love one another. Or, as Quick told Stevens: "It was like the fellow says--nobody knows where or when love or lightning either is going to strike, except that it ain't going to strike there twice, because it don't have to"

(Faulkner, Gambit 99). Jackson Fentry was struck by love; he could not hide from it. So, throughout this story, Faulkner shows that a surrogate father can have such strong feelings for a child that he can feel a bond as strong as a biological father would feel. The stories the Pruitts and Isham Quick told revealed the unconditional love that Fentry had for little Jackson and Longstreet Fentry, his "son." Fentry was devastated at his loss, and M. E. Bradford also says, "What happened to Jackson Fentry was unbearably cruel. It struck him where he was most vulnerable, gave to him and his father a 'deep, dynastic wound' of the heart" (239). Although in the end Jackson and Longstreet Fentry had become "Bucksnoort" Thorpe who presumably did not even know who Jackson Fentry was, Fentry still loved the child inside of Buck Thorpe; and could not let his killer go free. Gavin Stevens explained the relationship best to Chick after they have the whole story pieced together:

"It wasn't Buck Thorpe, the adult, the man. He would have shot that man as quick as Bookwright did, if he had been in Bookwright's place. It was because somewhere in that debased and brutalized flesh which Bookwright slew there still remained, not the spirit maybe, but at least the memory of that little boy, that Jackson and Longstreet

Fentry, even though the man the boy had become didn't know it, and only Fentry did. And you wouldn't have freed him either. Don't ever forget that. Never." (Faulkner, Gambit 105)

CHAPTER IV

BYRON BUNCH: FAULKNER'S HOPEFUL FATHER

In Light in August Faulkner creates a good surrogate father, Byron Bunch. In the manner of Jackson Fentry, Byron Bunch is struck by love. Byron Bunch is a good man who falls in love with an unwed pregnant woman, Lena Grove, and hopes to marry her and raise her child. Throughout the novel Byron Bunch cares for Lena, finds a place for her to stay, and even tries to help her find Lucas Burch, the biological father of the baby. In this novel Lucas Burch (alias Joe Brown), a scoundrel, plays a significant role in the budding relationship between Byron Bunch and Lena Grove because Lena feels that Lucas Burch will marry her when she finds him. In addition to the problem of having the father of the child in the picture, the Reverend Gail Hightower, a friend of Byron Bunch's, tries to persuade Bunch to stay away from Lena Grove and wait for a more appropriate mate. Byron Bunch knows that the baby has a father and that society (as is evidenced by Hightower) disapproves of his relationship with a pregnant woman; but when Bunch meets the pregnant Lena Grove in her search for the baby's father, he almost immediately falls in love with her. He chooses to try to marry her against all of the customary traditions of society, one of which requires that a man marry a virgin. Bunch has no ulterior motives for caring for Lena Grove; he

just loves her. Because of his love for her, he loves her child. To explain the attraction of Lena Grove, William Faulkner tells how his title for the novel had something to do with Lena Grove's search for a father for her baby. In Faulkner and the University, he states:

In August in Mississippi there's a few days somewhere about the middle of the month when suddenly there's a foretaste of fall, it's cool, there's a lambence, a luminous quality to the light, as though it came not from just today but from back in the old classic times. It might have fauns and satyrs and the gods and--from Greece, from Olympus in it somewhere. It lasts just a day or two, then it's gone, but every year in August that occurs in my country, and that's all that title meant, it was just to me a pleasant evocative title because it reminded me of that time, of a luminosity older than our Christian civilization. Maybe the connection was with Lena Grove, who had something of that pagan quality of being able to assume everything, that's--the desire for the child, she was never ashamed of that child whether it had any father or not, she was simply going to follow the conventional laws

of the time in which she was and find its father. But as far as she was concerned, she didn't especially need any father for it, any more than the woman that--on whom Jupiter begot children were anxious for a home and a father. It was enough to have had the child. (Gywnn and Blotner 199)

Although Lena may not necessarily need a father for the child, there is someone who wants to be the child's father and make a home for her and the baby. Not Lucas Burch, the child's biological father, but Byron Bunch, a man who is drawn to Lena and is hoping to take on the responsibility for her and her child, despite the disapproval of society.

However, Faulkner begins Lena's story before she meets Byron Bunch. The novel opens with Lena's sitting on the road thinking to herself that even though she has only been on the road from Alabama for a month, she is already in Mississippi. The narrator then explains her background before this day. When she was twelve years old, Lena Grove's parents died; and she went to live with "the brother" and took care of the brother's wife and their children. One child was born to the family nearly every year. The narrator tells the reader, "During this time Lena did all the housework and took care of the other children"

(Faulkner, August 3). Eventually, when she was about eighteen, Lena started sneaking out of the window in the evenings; and she soon got "in trouble." When the pregnancy became obvious, her brother chastised her strongly for her indiscretion and demanded that she tell him who the father of the baby is. Lena refused to acknowledge the father and left one night through the same window she had been sneaking out of. She is in search of Lucas Burch, the man who has impregnated her, whom she says had promised to send for her. Since she feels that he must have had some kind of problem or he would be there with her, she sets off on foot to find him. On the way, she is helped by a variety of people. Lena Grove accepts all help, oblivious to the fact that many of the people who help her feel that she should be ashamed of herself for being pregnant without a marriage license. Lena is searching for the baby's father because as she says, "I reckon a family ought to all be together when a chap comes. Specially the first one. I reckon the Lord will see to that" (Faulkner, August 18). Lena Grove must have absolute faith in Providence because she left Alabama with only thirty-five cents. This faith carried her all the way to Mississippi because "Folks have been kind. They have been right kind" (10), Lena says. When asked how she was

able to find the whereabouts of the baby's father Lucas Burch, she replies:

"I just kept asking. With Lucas a lively young fellow that got to know folks easy and quick, I knew that wherever he had been, folks would remember him. So I kept asking. And folks was right kind. And sure enough, I heard two days back on the road that he is in Jefferson, working for the planing mill." (17-18)

Lena does not find Lucas Burch right away in Jefferson, Mississippi, but she does find Byron Bunch at the planing mill. She has been sent there in error because of the similarities in the names Burch and Bunch. However, Lucas Burch is in Jefferson, but he has changed his name to Joe Brown and has quit the planing mill and has become a bootlegger.

Lucas Burch, the baby's biological father, is a fun-loving scoundrel who is not averse to taking advantage of any situation. When he found out that Lena Grove was pregnant, he told her that he has known for a while that he had to leave town; but he said he had not told her before because he did not want to worry her. Then, Lucas Burch outfoxed her by persuading her that he wants to stay, but he is misunderstood by his boss and would have better luck

getting a place ready for her and the child somewhere else. When she heard this plan, she believed him and sent him away. Lena Grove relates this conversation to Mrs. Armstid, a woman who takes her in and feeds her and gives her a place to stay one night of her pilgrimage:

"He said he would stay if I said so, whether the foreman treated him right or not. But I said for him to go. He never wanted to go, even then. But I said for him to. To just send me word when he was ready for me to come. And then his plans just never worked out for him to send for me in time, like he aimed. . . . He didn't know it would take longer than he planned, being young, and folks always after him because he is a hand for laughing and joking, interfering with his work unbeknownst to him because he never wanted to hurt folks' feelings. And I wanted him to have his last enjoyment, because marriage is different with a young fellow, a lively young fellow, and a woman. It lasts so long with a lively young fellow. Dont you think so? (Faulkner, August 16-17)

Mrs. Armstid suspects that Lucas Burch has just fled from taking responsibility for his actions; nevertheless, Lena Grove acts as if she is sure that Lucas Burch will send for

her or that he already has and his message is lost. Lena has absolute faith, or at least appears to, in the false promises of Lucas Burch. However, much later in the novel, when Byron Bunch has Lucas Burch brought to Lena Grove after the birth of the baby, Burch does not stay and offer to marry her. He flees once again, leaving her with more empty promises. If Lucas Burch had been able to tell Lena the truth, she would have been free to marry someone else or at least to start a new life, instead of relying on his broken promises.

Quite in contrast to the untrustworthy Lucas Burch, Byron Bunch, the man Lena finds at the planing mill in Jefferson, is a very honorable and virtuous man. When Lena Grove shows up at the planing mill looking for Lucas Burch and meets Byron for the first time, he has just finished taking a lunch break and has taken exactly one hour for lunch, even though there is no one to notice if he takes more time. After Lena Grove shows up, he takes a break to talk to her and notices by his watch exactly how much time he takes. Lena Grove observes this gesture and asks, "And every time you stop for a minute, you keep a count of it? How will they know you stopped? A few minutes wouldn't make no difference, would it?" To which Byron replies, "I reckon I aint paid for setting down" (47). Cleanth Brooks says

about Bunch, "in the person of Bunch, her quixotic errand actually raises up for her an authentic though clumsy knight-errant, who becomes her protector and fights her battles" (55). Byron Bunch, almost immediately in love with Lena Grove, swiftly begins to try to help her and to protect her from society's disapproval. Byron Bunch is concerned with propriety, but his infatuation with Lena Grove carries him past the conventions of the town and society. David Williams writes:

From the instant Lena comes to him in Jefferson, he moves in orbit about her, successively giving up his room, his country choir, his job, his friend, his peace of mind, only to be balked at last by Lena from the sharing of her bed. Yet by every social (if not legal) standard, that bed should be his right. His devotion, his love, his attentiveness have made him effectually her husband, much more so than Lucas Burch, her other running mate. . . . (183)

Before the baby is born, Byron Bunch offers to marry Lena to make the baby legitimate and keep her from being an unwed mother; but she refuses him. He loves her and wants to do what he can to make things right for her. Even so, after the birth of the baby, Byron does have second thoughts about

Lena Grove and her baby and wonders to himself what people might say about him:

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. Got nothing for it except permission to fetch the other fellow back to her soon as he got done collecting the thousand dollars and Byron wasn't needed any more. Byron Bunch [italics Faulkner's]. "And now I can go away," he thought. (Faulkner, August 394)

In addition to his second thoughts about Lena, Byron tries to leave Lena to Lucas Burch because he feels, as Lena does, that Lucas Burch will want to marry her when he sees her and the baby. Byron hides in the bushes and watches when Burch is brought to Lena; and when Burch flees, Byron chases him and tries to catch him for Lena. Actually Byron does catch Burch and fights him:

It [the fight] does not last long. Byron knew that it was not going to. But he did not hesitate. He just crept up until he could see the other, where he stopped, looking at the crouching and unwarned figure. "You're bigger than me," Byron thought. "But I dont care. You've had every other advantage of me. And I dont care about that neither. You've done throwed away twice inside of nine months what I aint had in thirtyfive [sic] years. And now I'm going to get the hell beat out of me and I dont care about that, neither." (415)

Lucas Burch fights savagely, breaks free, hops a train, and is gone. After Burch escapes, Byron goes back to Lena and sets out with her and the baby, apparently still in search of Burch. Even though Lucas Burch has fled from Lena once again, outwardly she still wants to pursue him because Burch is lively; and, as Byron Bunch says, "I reckon the mares like him" (33). Although a good man, Byron Bunch is apparently not a striking man like Burch is. Byron's nondescript bearing may be why people are surprised to see him with the fecund Lena Grove. Faulkner tells the reader through the omniscient narrator that Byron Bunch is "a small man you would not look at twice" (395). And the narrator in

the last chapter in the book says, "Then I saw that he was the kind of fellow you wouldn't see the first glance if he was alone by himself in the bottom of an empty concrete swimming pool" (469). He continues:

I thought they was husband and wife at first. I just never thought anything about it, except to wonder how a young, strapping gal like her ever come to take up with him. It wasn't anything wrong with him. He looked like a good fellow, the kind that would hold a job steady and work at the same job a long time, without bothering anybody about a raise neither, long as they let him keep on working. That was what he looked like. He looked like except when he was at work, he would just be something around. I just couldn't imagine anybody, any woman, knowing that they had ever slept with him, let alone having anything to show folks to prove it. (469-70)

Although outwardly plain, Byron Bunch is an admirable person who fights for what he wants and will not be thwarted in his mission.

In addition to fighting Lucas Burch, Byron Bunch is opposing the conventions of society by wanting to marry a pregnant woman. As a result, The Reverend Gail Hightower, a

friend of Byron's, tries to persuade him not to involve himself with Lena Grove. He tells Byron, as society would:

"The thing, the only thing, for her to do is to go back to Alabama. To her people."

"I reckon not," Byron says. He says it immediately, with immediate finality, as if he has been waiting all the while for this to be said.

"She wont need to do that. I reckon she wont need to do that." But he does not look up. He can feel the other looking at him. (285-86)

Byron knows that Hightower objects to his attentions to Lena Grove, but he does not care because he is in love. Next, Hightower tries to tell Byron Bunch that he is "attempting to come between man and wife" (290). But Byron Bunch knows that the two are not married, and he has decided to become responsible for Lena if she will have him. He knows that Lucas Burch may flee when he finds out that Lena Grove is in Jefferson, but at the same time he is afraid that Burch will not flee from her. Although Hightower continues to try to convince Byron not to involve himself with Lena Grove, he is too late. Byron thinks that Hightower has turned against the betrayed Lena and tells him so. Hightower replies:

"No woman who has a child is ever betrayed; the husband of a mother, whether he be the father or

not, is already a cuckold. Give yourself at least the one chance in ten Byron. If you must marry, there are single women, girls, virgins. It's not fair that you should sacrifice yourself to a woman who has chosen once and now wishes to renege that choice. It's not right. It's not just. (298-99)

But all of Hightower's arguments do not convince Byron Bunch to leave Lena Grove. Byron has made up his mind; and he helps Lena by getting her set up, ready to have the baby, in the cabin where Lucas Burch has been living. When Lena's birthing time comes, Byron Bunch brings Hightower in to help with the birth of the baby because he has had some previous experience with childbirth. Having failed to convince Byron Bunch to leave Lena Grove, after the birth of the baby Hightower tries to convince Lena to send Byron away:

"Let him go. Send him away from you. . . . You have a manchild that is not his, by a man that is not him. You will be forcing into his life two men and only a third part of a woman, who deserves at the least that the nothing with which he has lived for thirty-five years be violated, if violated it must be, without two witnesses. Send him away." (389)

Lena responds by telling Hightower that she has already

refused Byron's offer of marriage and that Byron is sending Lucas Burch to see her. Hightower is pleased because Lena thinks that she will never see Byron Bunch again. Hightower feels he has saved Byron from marrying a "fallen" woman who is beneath him because she has given herself to another man first.

All through the novel, Lena Grove never outwardly shows that she feels shame at being pregnant without a husband; she just acts like she is slightly inconvenienced by the fact that Lucas Burch does not marry her before he leaves town. Sally Page writes:

Though she has behaved shamefully in the moral context of her world by getting pregnant outside of marriage, Lena is not burdened by any sense of guilt. To marry before the child's birth is an acceptable means of correcting her fault in her culture, and she devotes herself to meeting that demand of her society. (142)

She sets out to find Lucas Burch, and people take care of her. She does not seem worried about what tomorrow will bring and lives exclusively from day-to-day. Although Lena Grove believes that Lucas Burch would be there with her if he knew that the baby was so close to being born, she is not very concerned with the fact that he is not there with her.

Therefore, when Byron Bunch offers to marry her before the birth of the baby, she refuses because she still thinks that Lucas Burch will come and "save" her. Her search for Lucas Burch has given her an excuse to see more of the world before she has to settle down with a family. As a result, she seems content to travel before and after the baby is born. She seems oblivious to the fact that Lucas Burch has fled from her again and equally oblivious to the fact that Byron Bunch is in love with her and wants to marry her and take care of the child.

Both Lena Grove and Byron Bunch share the belief that if they do not know something, it does not really exist. Lena Grove does not realize that Lucas Burch has run away from her and her pregnancy; she still thinks that he is just getting himself prepared to have a family, and that he is getting a place ready for them. Similarly, Byron Bunch does not admit to himself that Lena Grove is pregnant; therefore, Lucas Burch does not exist, and the baby does not exist--at least not until he sees proof positive in the form of the baby after it is born. At that point Bunch thinks to himself:

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 aint until now that I ever believed that he is Lucas Burch. That there ever was a Lucas Burch. (Faulkner, August 380)

This moment of revelation is also the point where Byron Bunch realizes that Lena Grove is not a virgin. Up until this very minute, even though he knows she is pregnant, he has not admitted to himself that she has been with another man. He just loves her. However, as Judith Bryant Wittenberg writes:

Even Byron Bunch, the most integrated of the male characters, teeters on the brink of being hampered by his fears, as when his instant and intuitive connection with Lena is implicitly, if only momentarily, threatened by the fact that her condition violates "the tradition" -- those rigid male ideas about virginity. ("Women" 120)

Bunch's nature gives him the need to help a "damsel in distress" even though the "damsel" is not a virgin. Lena Grove needs a father for her baby, even a surrogate father, although she does not seem to know of her need. Byron Bunch needs a worthy cause to fight for, and Lena and her child

become that cause. Byron Bunch is a good man who needs to help others. That need to help others is the reason that he has been friends with the Reverend Gail Hightower, an outcast, who has very few friends. Byron's first reaction to Lena Grove is to want to help her because, as Sally Page writes, "Her presence does arouse the good in the hearts of those she encounters, for they recognize that she is engaged in the sacred act of replenishing the earth and assuring the survival of man" (142). Byron Bunch does not consciously realize that that she is engaged in replenishing the earth, but he is drawn to her and wants to help her. He has so much to give, as is evidenced by the fact that he quietly rides thirty miles every Sunday to lead the choir in a rural church. When Lena Grove comes to the planing mill and finds him instead of Lucas Burch, Byron finds someone in need of his help. He is drawn to her and the relationship they can have together. He wants to take care of her and the child. He wants to have a family. Similar to the way Jackson Fentry became attached to the baby Jackson and Longstreet Fentry, Byron Bunch is willing to marry Lena Grove and be surrogate father to her baby. At the end of the novel when Lena Grove and Byron Bunch are off in search of Joe Brown (Lucas Burch), the furniture dealer who gives them a ride

later tells his wife what he heard Lena and Byron discussing:

"And that's how I found out that they were hunting for somebody, following him, or trying to. Or she was, that is. And so all of a sudden I says to myself, 'Ah-ah. Here's another gal that thought she could learn on Saturday night what her mammy waited until Sunday to ask the minister.' They never called his name. And they didn't know just which way he had run. And I knew that if they had known where he went, it wouldn't be by any fault of the fellow that was doing the running.

(Faulkner, August 474)

Lena Grove does not discourage Byron Bunch, but she does not encourage him either. She just takes life as it comes and does not worry about anything. She is still ostensibly looking for Lucas Burch. But if Byron Bunch wants to take care of her, she will let him. The furniture dealer says, ". . . he jumps down and runs up and helps her down like she and the kid were made out of glass or eggs" (472). Byron Bunch wants to ask Lena Grove to marry him, but he cannot bring himself to ask her again. According to Sally Page:

Lena's new lover, Byron Bunch, discovers early in the novel that he cannot resist Lena's power over

him. He sacrifices his pride, his self-image, and his moralities in order to pursue her. Aware of the perpetual comic humiliation of the man who would accept life's imperfections and endure them, Faulkner still affirms that through Lena Grove there is to be found both the fulfillment of life and the survival of humanity. (151)

Byron Bunch's love for Lena Grove enables him to want to raise the baby. Faulkner, in the last chapter, tells the reader through the narrator that although Lena Grove is still supposedly looking for Lucas Burch, in actuality, she just wants to see more of the world before she settles down once and for all; and Byron Bunch is there waiting for her to accept him. Lena lets Byron take care of her. She tells Byron, "Aint nobody never said for you to quit" (Faulkner, August 479). The narrator, a furniture repairer and dealer, also tells his wife his conclusions regarding Lena Grove and Byron Bunch:

I think she was just travelling [sic]. I dont think she had any idea of finding whoever it was she was following. I dont think she had ever aimed to, only she hadn't told him [Byron Bunch] yet. I reckon this was the first time she had ever been further away from home than she could

walk back before sundown in her life. . . . I reckon she knew that when she settled down this time, it would likely be for the rest of her life. That's what I think. (480)

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the preceeding chapters three of William Faulkner's surrogate fathers have been delineated. Although they represent totally different situations, the works do share some similiarities. One interesting similiarity is that Faulkner has disappearing fathers in all three of these works. In the Snopes trilogy, The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion, Hoake McCarron deserted Eula Varner when he learned that she was pregnant with his child. Also, in "Tomorrow," whoever was married to little Jackson and Longstreet's mother left when he was informed that she was pregnant. And in Light in August, Lucas Burch fled when he was told that Lena Grove was pregnant. Furthermore, all three take place primarily in Yoknapatawpha County and include Gavin Stevens as a lawyer in Jefferson. In "Tomorrow" Stevens is a beginning lawyer. During the progression of the Snopes trilogy Stevens grows up, goes to Harvard, and becomes District Attorney; and he is also the District Attorney in Light in August. Jackson Fentry and Byron Bunch are similar in that they both are good men who are able to show love. Also, both Jackson Fentry and Byron Bunch are enduring people who help others even though it hurts them. In direct contrast, Flem Snopes is devoid of love and compassion. Eula Varner (Snopes) and Lena Grove are both

depicted as earth mothers populating the region, and each one leaves home to have her child. They are different because Eula goes to Texas married to Flem Snopes, whereas Lena sets out in search of the father of her child. Glenn Meeter comments that both Lena and Eula are "powerful without exerting mind or will," but he also writes about the differences between Lena and Eula:

But the differences are noteworthy. Lena is maternal; she is pictured to us as pregnant and in childbirth and with a child in her arms, but never as merely erotic. Eula is erotic always, even in her own childhood; she has her baby off-stage, as far as the novel [The Hamlet] is concerned, and when in the final pages we see her with the child the scene's emphasis is once again on Eula as an object of desire. . . . (411)

In the Snopes trilogy Faulkner married Eula Varner to Flem Snopes before the world finds out that she is pregnant. Lena Grove, however, does not feel the compulsion to marry immediately to save her reputation. In fact, she refuses Byron Bunch's offer of marriage days before she is to deliver the baby. Sally Page seems to think that the character of Lena Grove shows a change in Faulkner's attitude toward women; she writes:

Lena Grove is not virgin. It is significant that Faulkner should endow Lena with the qualities of serenity, tranquility, and purity, which his romantic idealists dreamed were possessed by beautiful and virgin young women, despite the fact that she is unvirgin, unmarried, and very pregnant. Lena's character indicates the change in Faulkner's view of the ideal woman which took place between the composition of Mosquitoes and The Sound and the Fury. Her character makes it again apparent that he no longer idealized virginity, but asserted that women finds serenity and fulfillment in a submission to the natural reproductive process of life. (141)

Faulkner's surrogate fathers foster children who biologically belong to others. Faulkner writes about these surrogate fathers and many other fathers. Andre Bleikasten writes:

There would be little point, however, in categorizing them or in looking for some father archetype, for what seems to be at issue in Faulkner's intricate family chronicles is not the father as a person (a character), nor even the father as genitor, as the actual begetter of sons

and daughters, but rather the haunting question of fatherhood, in its psychoethical as well as in its wider cultural implications. (Bleikasten 115)

William Faulkner produced in his works aspects of his life and others' lives that he often encountered. And since Faulkner was a father as well as a surrogate father, he shared those and other feelings and experiences with his readers. Cleanth Brooks writes:

In his novels Faulkner has found his special interest in the failures of love--love violated, or love betrayed, or love perverted, but he knows the fact of love fulfilled, and the failures of love as he treats them actually point by implication to the positive case. (207)

Love fulfilled generally leads to a tomorrow, and Faulkner was interested in having a tomorrow. Both his Nobel Prize speech about man not just enduring but prevailing and his short story "Tomorrow" evidence his desire for man to have someone or something to come after him, whether it be his own son or daughter, adopted son or daughter, or some other type of immortality. Richard Adams writes:

The "tomorrow and tomorrow" formula strongly expresses Faulkner's feeling for the endless

burden of endurance that must be sustained if man, as the Nobel speech predicts, will ultimately "prevail." (15)

Although Faulkner had no sons of his own, he did have a stepson Malcolm Franklin and his own "tomorrow" since he had two surrogate children, his daughter Jill, and her three sons. Faulkner had his desire to endure specifically fulfilled in his grandson:

the guarantee of a kind of immortality. . . He would say that the artist wanted to leave a scratch on the wall of oblivion, to show that he had been here. His second grandchild had been named William Cuthbert Faulkner Summers. When he had learned to talk, Faulkner would say to him, "What's your name boy?" The small child, legs astraddle, hands in pockets, would answer, "Will Faulkner," and his grandfather would beam.

(Blotner, "Continuity" 25)

Malcom Cowley wrote in his "Introduction" to The Portable Faulkner that Faulkner's novels have the quality of being lived, absorbed, remembered rather than merely observed" (xxviii). Indeed, many of Faulkner's characters seem to have really lived. They often seem to be realistic

portrayals of people who once populated Mississippi. Toni Morrison wrote in "Faulkner and Women":

My reasons, I think, for being interested and deeply moved by all his subjects had something to do with my desire to find out something about this country and that artistic articulation of its past that was not available in history, which is what art and fiction can do but sometimes history refuses to do. (Morrison 296)

Morrison shares Faulkner's feelings about authors' (artists') ability to preserve their times and places, and their ability to preserve some measure of immortality for themselves. In an interview with Jean Stein, Faulkner said:

The aim of every artist is to arrest motion, which is life, by artificial means and hold it fixed so that a hundred years later, when a stranger looks at it, it moves again since it is life. Since man is mortal, the only immortality possible for him to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move. This is the artist's way of scribbling "Kilroy was here" on the wall of the final and irrevocable oblivion through which he must someday pass. (80)

Faulkner chronicled the land that he grew up on and loved. Malcom Cowley writes about "Faulkner's mythical kingdom":

Yoknapatawpha County--"William Faulkner, sole owner and proprietor," as he inscribed on one of the maps he drew--has a population of 15,611 persons scattered over 2400 square miles. It sometimes seems to me that every house or hovel has been described in one of Faulkner's novels, and that all the people of the imaginary county, black and white, townsmen, farmers, and housewives have played their part in one connected story.

(xii)

Faulkner himself told of his feelings about the county he created, Yoknapatawpha, which he affectionately calls his "little postage stamp of native soil." He proudly wrote about this "postage stamp" because it contains, in essence, his life and his life experiences. While illustrating this "postage stamp" for his readers, Faulkner's works were at the same time preserving an age that might have been lost to us if Faulkner had not opened his heart and shared his Yoknapatawpha with us. In "William Faulkner: An Interview," Jean Stein quotes Faulkner:

. . . I discovered that my own little postage stamp of native soil was worth writing about and

that I would never live long enough to exhaust it, and that by sublimating the actual into the apocryphal I would have complete liberty to use whatever talent I might have to its absolute top. It opened up a gold mine of other people, so I created a cosmos of my own. . . . I like to think of the world I created as being a kind of keystone in the universe; that, small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away the universe itself would collapse. (82)

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