“I Don’t Hate It”: Faulkner’s Artist Hero as Challenged Problem Solver

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Introduction

By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.
– Wordsworth, “Resolution and Independence”

The term “Artist-Hero” immediately evokes a specific character type. Characters such as Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus or Proust’s Narrator (In Search of Lost Time) immediately come to mind, connoting tortured male artists who come to life beneath a philosophical exploration of the circumstances of their lives. In general, the artist hero character has been taken to use mainly within the works of European modernist writers and, more specifically, to describe the main male characters within their narratives. These characters are, in general, highly introspective, bad at human interaction, and, above all, highly creative souls. Further, their creativity and artistic sense of self causes them to struggle with the world around them as they grow, until they reach a point at which it seems that they may overcome the bounds of the world. For most, it would seem that these characters originate and stay within the work of these European modernists.

Yet, this is not the case. The artist, and their heroic yet tortured narratives appear before modernism in poetry. Wordsworth, a Romantic (English, late 18th – early 19th century), wrote “Resolution and Independence,” which is a reaction to Wordsworth’s real life encounter with a leech-gatherer. However, the poem itself revolves around poetic associations and a tortured self. He describes hearing, “the woods and distant waters roar;/Or heard them not, as happy as a boy;/The pleasant season did my heart employ;/My old remembrances went from me wholly;/And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy” (Wordsworth,790, lines 17-21). In hearing and associating the sounds of nature with his boyhood joy, Wordsworth communicates a sense of longing for a younger time, as well as a melancholic outlook. Further, within the poem, Wordsworth writes, “By our own spirits are we deified/We Poets in our youth begin in
gladness;/But thereof come in the end despondency and madness” (790, lines 47-49). This comes right after Wordsworth references Chatterton’s suicide, and fits into the sense of the artist as growing into an unescapable melancholy, something which is explicated in the actions of Joyce’s and Proust’s artist heroes.

Meanwhile, Whitman, an American Romantic (19th Century), tackles the same themes in “Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking.” In this poem, which describes a young boy’s associations upon watching a pair of mockingbirds, Whitman writes, “A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,/Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,/I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,/Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,/A reminiscence sing” (Whitman, 1073, lines 18-23). Whitman’s young man both sees pain and joy, but turns to reminiscence and association as a way to understand and explain his emotional self. Whitman also writes that “I have treasur’d every note,/For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,/Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,/Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts” (1074, lines 62-65). This sense of melancholic remembrance again harkens to Joyce’s and Proust’s artist heroes and their associations of shape, sound, and sight with their past and present. There is also the sense that, for Whitman’s character, there is an inescapable connection between openness to an aesthetic experience and an openness to death. In gazing at the sea, the boy thinks “Whereto answering, the sea,/Delaying not, hurrying not,/Whisper’d me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,/Lisp’d to me the low and delicious word death” (1074, lines 175 – 178). In being open to the aesthetic experiences of the world around him, the boy hears and finds somewhat erotic pleasure in ‘hearing’ the word death. There is a sense that, as this moment comes towards the end of the poem and as the boy continues to ruminate on the word death, it is
triggered by an aesthetic understanding, awareness, and openness to the world. This play between a fascination with death and an aesthetic experience is significant in its echoing in both Wordsworth’s works, and in other works that explore the condition of the artist.

Both of these poets, despite being engaged with different literary movements, focus in on the artist and their unhealable wounds. They both point to an erotic loss at the center of their poetry, however, this loss is wholly unsolvable. For the artist of poetry, there seems to be no return to normalcy or ability to cope with the nature of artistry except for suicide. This feeling can be seen repeated not just through poetic words, but also through reality – poets throughout history, including Chatterton and Percy Shelley have all fallen victim to this sense of loss. Unlike the artists of Joyce and Proust, poetic artists (both fictive and real) have no choice but suicide in order to escape their senses of profound loss.

These two ways of understanding artists, though disparate, are also deeply connected. For all of these authors, modernist or not, there is an interest in the eye of the artist – how the artist sees the world differently and how the world, in turn, sees the artist as outsider. (yet what the artist sees is ultimate truth! Whitman understanding things that are generally not understood) In all of these different ways of seeing the artist, as well as the artist hero, it is clear that in literature, to be an artist is to engage with moral and psychological losses. There is no clear understanding of what these losses are and the way in which these losses emerge for the artist varies, but it is clear that characters with an artistic sensibility or inclination are pushed to grapple with deep losses through a singular lens, one which views the world in an entirely different way.

As these authors are known for their grappling with the nature of the artist and it is significant that they approach artistry and the tortures of artistry in a similar manner, it would
seem that they stand alone in their exploration of this artistic character. Yet, they do not. The work of American and Southern author William Faulkner, strangely, has a place within this context. Faulkner, though not always studied in relationship or conjunction to European modernist authors is a modernist author and was influenced by European modernist authors. Though he famously denied it, it is clear that Faulkner knew of, owned, and read the works of other modernists, such as Joyce. Further, direct references to other authors within his own texts demonstrate Faulkner’s knowledge of general literature. From here, it is unsurprising that Faulkner also includes an artist character in his writing. In the tradition of the modernists, his artists also fall into the archetype of artist hero – they are main characters that grapple against the struggles of the world and their family. Yet, Faulkner’s artist hero is also imbedded in the traumas of the poetic tradition. Faulkner’s artist hero also copes with the unhealable wounds and trauma that emerges within poetry. For Faulkner’s characters, “Incompatible versions of – lenses upon – the real propel Faulkner’s fiction of tragic encounter, motivating the arrest, vertigo, and anguish that are their hallmark” (Weinstein 237). That is to say, the encounters of Faulkner’s characters with tragedy motivate their actions, as well as the lenses through which they see and interact. This is a continuation of the poetic traditions of Wordsworth and Whitman.

Yet, Faulkner’s artist hero is also wholly unique. Most clear is that none of Faulkner’s artist heroes are actually artists. In fact, few interact with artistry, either of the visual arts or of the literary arts. However, these characters stand in as artists – they are people who experience the traumas and crises of the novel in unmediated and immediate ways, just as the artist heroes imagined by Proust, Joyce, Whitman, and Wordsworth do. Their designation as artist, and artistic and creative sense of self comes from an ability and need to imagine a solution to crisis in an
aesthetic and morally pleasing way. Yet, despite this imagination, Faulkner’s artist heroes still face an ultimate loss of power in being faced with a problem that is ultimately unsolvable.

Further than just their lack of conventional artistry, another element of Faulkner’s artist hero that sets them apart is their investment in a familial or dynastic lineage. The artist heroes of Proust, Joyce, Wordsworth, and Whitman stand somewhat alone in their interactions with the world. That is to say, the problems of their family do not consistently appear as major points of trauma. For Faulkner’s artist heroes, however, past family trauma and problems consistently emerge for the artist hero. There is a “feeling that an ancestor’s actions can determine the actions of his descendants for generations to come by compelling them periodically to repeat his deeds is the form that the fate or doom of a family takes in Faulkner” (Irwin 61). For Faulkner’s artist hero, a return to the memories of childhood or a movement forward is informed by the traumas of the past, both personal and political, ultimately ending with a sense of doom. Their past is inescapable and enters into their narrative at every moment. Faulkner’s artist hero meets unabated trauma that is informed by the histories of not just their families, but also of Yoknapatawpha County and the South.

From the traditions and lineages of Faulkner’s contemporaries and the poets that precede him, Faulkner’s characters can be read as artist heroes. The artist hero appears throughout Faulkner’s narratives, from his earliest to his latest novels, indicating an intense interest on the author’s part in the narrative of the artist hero. Yet, through a closer read and further analysis of these characters purely within Faulkner’s works, the consistent use of the artist hero points to a further function of the character beyond reactive to personal and dynastic troubles. In each Faulkner narrative that features the artist hero, similar patterns appear. Through these patterns, a deeper understanding of function of Faulkner’s use of the artist hero appears.
Chapter 1

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner’s most famous dynastic tragedy, the Compson family reckons with an end to childhood innocence, as well as the destruction of a family legacy. Quentin Compson, the eldest son of the family, takes a large part in the destructive nature of the family. Due to his placement in the narrative, Quentin fulfils the role of the artist hero, and further, fulfills Faulkner’s need for a failed artist hero within his narratives. As the artist hero, Quentin (along with other artist heroes) attempts to solve problems of time and sex. He seeks to resolve these two issues that are at odds with one another and, at the same time, perfectly in sync. The things he seeks to solve are impossible, implying signs of either folly or courage.

Quentin’s narration within *The Sound and the Fury* reveals a process of inner thought which causes him to function as the artist hero. Quentin never finds a space to fit in, leaving him as an outsider in his communities, which in turn leads to his suicide. This suicide can be seen doubly – as an expression of failure, yet also as a process which makes his artist hero efforts seem genuine and causes his narrative to be taken more seriously. This sense of doubling, especially in suicide, is a function of modern fiction, and continues throughout Quentin’s narrative. Everything in his life is doubled, from the renunciation and consummation of his love for Caddy to the doubling of his actions in the South and at Harvard. Quentin is a doubled outsider, who searches for a solution to the question of sex and time, but ultimately fails to find an answer. Yet, in failing, Quentin solidifies his place as a sympathetic and serious character.

Within his family, Quentin occupies an uncomfortable space. Despite being the picture of a probable perfect son, with his intelligence and attendance to Harvard, Quentin remains uneasy within the Compson family structure. Quentin is not entirely unaware, as his disabled brother Benjy is, but is also not ruthless enough to not care about his uneasy status, as Jason, his other
brother, might be. Instead, Quentin remains on an unsteady ground within his family structure and is marked as an outsider within the family. Quentin remains constant in his need for familial love, which he never fully receives. The only person who even begins to offer Quentin the love he craves is his father, who has something in common with him. Both spend emotional and mental energy on seeking to explain time, something which Quentin’s father attempts to explain to him through advice. However, Quentin’s father only gives him bad advice and any warmth that his father displays upon him is full of self-contempt. His father tells him that, “In the South you are ashamed of being a virgin… He said it was men invented virginity not women. Father said it’s like death: only a state in which the others are left and I said, But to believe it doesn’t matter and he said, That’s what’s so sad about anything” (The Sound and the Fury 50) Quentin, too, shares his father’s self-contempt, but he rejects the nihilistic outlook his father holds. Quentin cannot believe that something could not matter. He continuously rejects his father’s notions that everything is devoid of meaning and that things do not matter. Quentin, then, in the act of suicide, overcomes this outlook by proving that life does have a sense of meaning.

Benjy, too, outside the Compson family maintains the role of outsider. Yet, within the family, Benjy garners affection, mainly maternal, specifically from Dilsey and Caddy. These affections are, in a sense, what Quentin hopes and wants to achieve. With this, “Benjy is in certain respects a double of Quentin – in his arrested, infantile state, in his obsessive attachment to Candace, in his efforts to keep Candace from becoming involved with anyone outside the family” (Irwin 52.) Yet, Caddy lavishes maternal affection on Benjy, doing whatever she can to ensure his happiness. In Benjy’s section, Caddy realizes that the smell of her perfume upsets Benjy because it causes her to smell different. So, Caddy gives her perfume to Dilsey. Benjy thinks, “Caddy smelled like trees. ‘We dont like perfume ourselves.’ Caddy said.” (The Sound
Caddy willingly gives away and gives of herself to make Benjy happy. She is entirely focused on his happiness despite what she might need to give away. This affection is far from the way she views and interacts with Quentin, leaving him obsessive towards someone who will never give him the affection he craves. There is no doubt that Caddy loves Quentin, however, she sees him as immature in relationship to herself. To her, Quentin is an amateur – someone to pity for his lack of knowledge in the world. Thus, in their relationship, Caddy resists Quentin’s savior urges and, in a sense, distances herself from the nurturing Quentin, as he wants. The obsession further alienates Quentin from the family and further places him outside his narrative.

Quentin is not only an outsider in his home, but also in each environment he occupies. In the South, Quentin, as a Harvard boy, is seen as an outsider. By attending Harvard, he is seen by those around him as a Northerner, and, because of that, as other. Even a paradigmatic Southern boy is more at home in his skin than Quentin is. But, when Quentin tries to relate to Cambridge and the culture of Harvard, he is again an outsider as a Southern boy in a Northern land. Even the other Southerners at Harvard are so grotesque to Quentin that he cannot relate to those who come from his homeland. The only one who acts in Quentin’s interest is Shreve. Despite this, Shreve still does not comprehend Quentin, leaving Quentin as not fully understood by those around him. After Quentin fights with Gerald Bland, Shreve attempts to explain it by saying, “‘If you cant be a Bland, the next best thing is to commit adultery with one or get drunk and fight him, as the case may be’” (The Sound and the Fury 105) Despite Shreve not understanding Quentin’s reasoning behind the fight, he backs him up and tries to explain Quentin’s actions to the other boys. But, despite his support, Shreve never fully understands Quentin’s motivations or reasoning. Once again, Quentin is further alienated within his environment. Within his family, Quentin is not
fully accepted, nor is he fully accepted in his school environment. It seems as though wherever Quentin goes, he is forever an outsider. Quentin cannot be placed comfortably within any specific community and, rather, sits just on the outside of the communities he tries to enter into.

Quentin’s separation from the communities that surround him is not just a product of action within the text. It is also a product of the text itself. Formally, the text of *The Sound and the Fury* marks Quentin as separated from the rest of Compson family. Unlike the narratives of Jason or Dilsey, Quentin’s narrative enters into his interiority. Though Benjy, too, expresses this type of interiority, Quentin’s expressed interiority is markedly different. Benjy’s interior thought is expressed through related memory, sparked by the concrete actions of the world around him. Quentin’s, on the other hand, is expressed by a “sinking in” (Sartre 88). Quentin looks introspectively towards the way in which he interacts with the abstract tendencies of the world around him. As he walks around Cambridge, Quentin’s stream of consciousness is influenced by experience and feeling. In seeing a watch shop, Quentin thinks, “There were about a dozen watches in the window, a dozen different hours and each with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that mine had, without any hands at all. Contradicting on another. I could hear mine, ticking away inside my pocket, even though nobody could see it, even though it could tell nothing if anyone could. And so I told myself to take that one. Because Father said clocks slay time” (*The Sound and the Fury* 54). In this passage, Quentin begins with an observation, of the dozens of watches in the window. Yet, he quickly moves to relating these watches to the contradictions of watches upon one another, or, in a broader sense, the contradiction of the act of time keeping. Finally, Quentin’s thoughts round back to his father and the way his father reckons with time. The passage goes on to further move into Quentin’s interiority, where he muses about his father’s declaration that “time is dead” (54). The
formulation of this passage – concrete observation leading into abstract musing – is repeated throughout Quentin’s section. These moments are, unlike Benjy’s related thought process, only lightly related to the physical world around him. Quentin’s narration is, instead, obsessed with abstraction and a removal from reality. The separation from reality within narrative further reflects Quentin’s outsider status.

Of course, the creation of the abstract thought formulation is a narrative choice on Faulkner’s part. Yet, this is not the only element that further bolsters Quentin’s outsider and artist hero status. The narrative also serves to blur the lines between Quentin’s reality and his thoughts, giving a further sense of Quentin as removed not only from his communities, but also from his actions. Between his musings on time and his past with Caddy, Quentin wanders around Cambridge, trying to return a young lost girl to her home and making his way towards where he will eventually commit suicide. The line between these moments is blurred, making much of the narrative feel to be in a dream-like state. As he is spotted by the young girl, Quentin, “waved my hand, but she made no reply, only her head turned slowly as the car passed, following us with her unwinking gaze. Then we ran beside the wall, our shadows running along the wall, and after a while we passed a piece of torn newspaper lying beside the road and I began to laugh again” (The Sound and the Fury 93). The tone of this passage begins to seem like a dream or scene from a film, from fleeting shadows to a singular piece of newspaper. This then moves into Quentin thinking, “But still I couldn’t stop it and then I knew that if I tried too hard to stop I’d be crying and I thought about how I’d thought about I could not be a virgin” (93). The line between the action of walking and thinking is dissolved. Much as action leads to thought formulaically, not much seems to feel solidly concrete, except for action and thought melding into one motion.

Further, within the narrative “The past takes on a sort of super-reality; its contours are hard and
clear, unchangeable. The present, nameless and fleeting, is helpless before it...The present is not; it becomes” (Sartre 89). As Quentin’s present unfolds, it is almost indeterminable from the past, while the past begins to transcend above Quentin’s present. In some moments, it feels as if Quentin’s past is more real than his present. This again pushes Quentin outside of the concrete world – in his concern and obsession with the past, Quentin is unable to interact with time in the same way that others are.

From the first sentence of Quentin’s narrative section, time is already fractured. Quentin notes, “I was in time again” (The Sound and the Fury 48). The use of ‘again’ signifies that Quentin’s physical placement may not reflect his emotional and mental statement. Time, then, is not linear or whole for Quentin. This is further expanded as Quentin’s narration unfolds and he struggles with the idea of time. But, the use of this phrase in the opening sentence to his section creates a fractured relationship with time – for the rest of the section Quentin will both grapple with time and be unable to exist in the same linear timeline that he is supposed to. Moments like these in the narrative, “registers as a locus of vertigo, anguish, and belatedness. It is saturated in trauma and longing. One discovers oneself in the wrong time (a claim as pertinent for Faulkner as for his most salient protagonists); the time one would know is past before one has properly recognized it as time” (Weinstein 143). Quentin is not comfortable in his time. It seems as though Quentin would never be able to fit in properly with a present. Rather, he finds himself comfortable in understanding his past, while ignoring his present. Quentin’s inability to exist within the linear timeframe he is meant to again defines and delineates him as the biggest outsider in the narrative.

Yet, if Quentin is formally positioned as the outsider, why is he a character of high identification? He does not fit in with his family or his environment but becomes a highly
sympathetic character. The reader is encouraged to root for him, to hope for Quentin to finally succeed in overcoming time and letting go of his obsessive desire to cleanse his sister of sexual impurity. This, again, can be attributed to the formal elements of the novel. In novels such as *The Sound and Fury*, sympathetic focus turns to the “characters whose inner lives and outer dilemmas are shaped to intersect imaginatively with the problems and possibilities of others attending to them, both within and outside the fictions themselves. Everything about the crafting of these novels testifies to identification as a value” (Weinstein 204). In creating Quentin, Faulkner crafts an interiority that begs for identification and sympathy. The tortured artist hero, despite all the elements that make him an outsider, is one that readers should look to support and find success in. From here, Quentin’s fractured sense of time, blurred understandings of reality and unreality, and introspective thought functions lend themselves to a search for a success that will only come once within the narrative.

This success comes in the form of Quentin’s confrontation with Herbert Head. This fight reaffirms Quentin’s moral depth and firmness of his beliefs as he argues with his sister’s fiancé. This moment of fierce protection places Quentin in a hero’s position. As Herbert attempts to bond with Quentin, he says, “Quentin I like your appearance you don’t look like these other hicks I’m glad we’re going to hit it off like this” (*The Sound and the Fury* 69). Quentin’s only response is, “Thanks you’d better stick to Jason he’d suit you better than I would” (69). Knowing how Quentin views Jason, this insult is one of worst Quentin could bestow. Quentin treats Herbert with a level of coldness that causes Herbert to consistently strive for approval or connection. In this moment, Quentin maintains the upper hand and effectively ends the argument with “Keep your hands off of me you’d better get that cigar off the mantel” (70). Here, Quentin succeeds in causing Herbert a high level of discomfort and, in his own way, succeeds in
protecting Caddy. Although Herbert Head will marry Caddy, this moment defines Quentin as morally sound. Despite Herbert’s attempts to brag about his money and bribe Quentin with it, Quentin holds his morals and continues in his attempts to protect Caddy. Quentin’s morals are put to the test and he succeeds, showing that what he thinks and talks about is how he truly feels and defines how he will act.

Yet, this moment leads to failure - Quentin’s failed suicide attempt with his sister. After remembering his confrontation with Herbert, he moves back into his time at Cambridge and the narrative of wandering. Soon, however, Quentin comes to remember his moments with Caddy after discovering that she has had sex with Dalton Ames. He suggests that they kill themselves or claim that Quentin had sex with Caddy and run away. Caddy remains casual and morally detached towards Quentin in this moment:

poor Quentin

she leaned back on her arms her hands locked about her knees

you’ve never done that have you

what done what

that what I have what I did

yes yes lots of times with lots of girls

then I was crying her hand touched me again and I was crying against her damp blouse then she lying on her damp blouse then she lying on her back looking past my head into the sky I could see a rim of white under her irises I opened my knife

do you remember the day damuddy died when you sat in the water in your drawers (The Sound and the Fury 94).
Caddy only sees Quentin as “poor Quentin.” To her, his attempts to convince her that he has been involved with other women are nothing more than sad attempts. Caddy does not take Quentin seriously in the slightest. Quentin cannot emotionally rationalize this and, instead begins to cry. Quentin wants to be the grownup in the situation – he tries to convince Caddy that he is sexually experienced, more so than her. Yet, Caddy can see through this and does not respect Quentin as her savior or her elder. To her, Quentin is almost pathetic. Quentin then moves to the recurring image of Caddy in the muddy drawers (which served for Faulkner as the inspiration for the novel). He remembers the innocence they once had, as well as Caddy’s younger sexual purity. This moment stands as the beginning of Quentin’s obsession with watching and attempting to protect Caddy. The repetition of this as he tries to attempt a double suicide reaffirms Quentin’s continuous obsession with Caddy and her sexual purity – this is something that he has been obsessed with since childhood. This, in turn, makes Quentin a morally sound character within his obsessions. His obsessions are not just passing fancy – they are strong and long lasting. The attempt of suicide, then, can be understood as what Quentin thinks to be a genuine solution to the problems of Caddy and sex. This then lays the foundation for her further rejection:

Caddy do you remember how Dilsey fussed at you because your drawers were muddy
don’t cry
Im not crying Caddy
push it are you going to
do you want me to
yes push it
touch your hand to it
don’t cry poor Quentin
but I couldn’t stop she held my head against her damp hard breast I could hear her heart
going firm and slow now not hammering and the water gurgling among the willows in
the dark and waves of honeysuckle coming up the air my arm and shoulder were twisted
under me
what is it what are you doing
her muscles gathered I sat up
its my knife I dropped it (96).
Quentin tries to kill Caddy, in an attempt to free her from the sexual impurity that he sees within
her. However, Quentin is unable to do anything but cry and once again, think on the past. This
moment, as well, is an extremely sexual moment, leading into another moment of doubling.
While Quentin wants to save his sister from the sexual advance of the men around her, he also
sees the suicide as a sexually charged moment. Quentin, like the other suitors, cannot help but be
inclined to treat his interactions with Caddy in a sexual light. Despite his attempts to “save”
Caddy, Quentin sees his sister in an essentially sexual way. In contrast to his moment with
Herbert Head, Quentin appears weak and highly emotive. Additionally, in this moment, Caddy
can be seen as “‘lost’ psychologically and aesthetically as well as morally: she is the very symbol
of loss in Faulkner’s world – the loss of innocence, integrity, chronology, personality, and
dramatic unity, all the problematic virtues of his envisioned artistic design” (Sundquist 10). The
struggle played out within Caddy’s life also has a profound effect upon Quentin, especially in
this moment. Though he tries his best, Caddy will always remain a symbol for Quentin of all he
cannot and will not succeed in saving. Despite his best (although ineffectual) efforts, Quentin
will never save his sister or pull her away from sexual impulse, in the same way that he will never overcome time.

Further in the narrative, Quentin’s confrontation is doubled again as he attempts, later in the narrative, to confront Dalton Ames. In this scene, Quentin, unlike in his scene with Herbert Head, is outclassed. Directly after the memory of the attempted suicide, Quentin remembers seeing Dalton Ames as he leaves Caddy. Unlike Quentin’s confrontation with Herbert, Dalton is not nervous or seeking Quentin’s approval in this seem. Rather, he waits for Quentin, leaning on the rail of a bridge with “a piece of bark in his hands breaking pieces from it and dropping them over the rail into the water” (*The Sound and the Fury* 101). The action of casually dropping bark into the river implies a level of nonchalance regarding the situation. Further, when Quentin demands that Dalton leave town, Dalton continues to break bark into the river, continue to dismiss Quentin. Quentin continues to become angrier and angrier, Dalton remains the same nonchalant figure that he is at the beginning of the scene. Finally, Quentin “hit him I was still trying to hit him long after he was holding my wrists but I still tried then it was like I was looking at him through a piece of colored glass I could hear my blood” (102). Quentin is so angered by Dalton that he loses control of himself, trying to land a punch. But, Dalton is easily able to hold him back, without a bead of sweat. Dalton doesn’t seem to come across as completely unsympathetic. Despite his seducing nature, he can be read as a character with more substance than Herbert Head. Perhaps, then, Quentin is unable to overcome Dalton’s authenticity. Herbert is entirely inauthentic and puts on airs to try to impress Quentin. Dalton does not fall into this trap and presents himself as how he truly is. Quentin is unable to overcome this as he is not fully himself all the way through. Quentin hides his desires internally and does his best to keep them to himself. These attempts, however, are ultimately unsuccessful. Quentin
can overcome an inauthentic man, but authenticity is a problem for him. In contrast to the scene with Herbert, Quentin allows his intense feelings to overtake him. Dalton’s authentic commitment to his ways provokes Quentin’s angers and in the end, Dalton easily overcomes Quentin, leaving this confrontation a failure. Dalton will not leave Caddy alone nor will he leave town as Quentin hopes. Dalton, too, is not afraid of or intimidated by Quentin as Herbert is, and ultimately, sees him in the same piteous situation as Caddy does, but without any warmth or affection. Here, Quentin’s attempts to save his sister fail.

This failure bleeds directly into another failure for Quentin. Internally, his mind is with Caddy and his fight with Dalton. Externally, however, Quentin is in Cambridge with other Harvard students. His internal obsession soon has real life consequences. He thinks, “her blood surged steadily beating and beating against my hand

It kept on running for a long time, but my face felt cold and sort of dead, and my eye, and the cut place on my finger was smarting again” (The Sound and the Fury 104). As he thinks about Caddy, Quentin starts a physical fight with Gerald, who is best defined as an obnoxious seducer. Yet, Quentin is so stuck inside his memories, that he barely even recognizes that he has fought Gerald. The only thing that pulls him out of his memory is the physical sensation of blood dripping down his face. This moment is a sign that Quentin has lost full control of himself. He can no longer differentiate between his memories of the past and his body’s actions in the present. Instead, everything has blended into one moment, one sensation. Even Quentin’s friends wonder what has gone wrong with him. After the fight, Shreve says, “You may have hit him. I may have looked away just then or blinked or something. He boxéd the hell out of you. He boxéd you all over the place. What did you want to fight him with your fists for? You goddam fool” (104). Quentin’s actions no longer make sense in his present situation. What he does has no
logical grounding. Instead, his physical actions are a reaction to his emotional traumas of the past. Now, Quentin has lost control of his understanding of the line between past and present. Quentin, just like Benjy, has become a person who cannot tell past from present. For both of them, moments of time collide and weave together, making them almost indiscernible. What is different, however, is that Benjy’s loss of control over time is dissociative, whereas Quentin’s is forced. Where Benjy is unable to understand the problems and concerns over his failures to separate past from present, Quentin is entirely aware. In this awareness, Quentin knows that he has failed to keep apart his problems of the past and the motions of the present. The knowledge of this failure, stemming from his fist fight with Gerald Bland, then, is what brings Quentin to his final act.

Quentin’s final act is another moment of doubling. As he commits suicide, he doubles the earlier attempt to kill both himself and his sister. Quentin’s entire narrative builds up to this moment – even as he wakes up, as he breaks his watch, as he buys weights, as he wanders around Cambridge, as he remembers his past, Quentin is always moving towards the moment at which he will commit suicide. When he approaches this moment, his internal monologue falls apart:

nobody knows what i know and he i think youd better go on up to cambridge right away you might go up into maine for a month you can afford it if you are careful it might be a good thing watching pennies has healed more scars than jesus and I suppose I realise what you believe i will realise up there next week or next month and he then you will remember that for you to go to harvard has been your mothers dream since you were born and no compson has ever disappointed a lady and I temporary it will be better for me for all of us and he every man is the arbiter of his own virtues but let no man prescribe for
another man's wellbeing and he was the saddest word of all there is nothing else in the world its not despair until time its not even time until it was

The last note sounded. (*The Sound and the Fury* 113)

In this moment, Quentin’s internal thoughts are devoid of periods, correct tenses or usage of words and correct capitalization. Everything is purely stream of consciousness, as Quentin remembers what his father has said to him. This moment feels to perhaps be moving towards a moment of epiphany – this could be the moment in which Quentin comes to higher realization. Yet, this moment maintains a sense of emptiness. Instead of reaching a higher realization, Quentin remains locked within reliving memory. Yet, Quentin’s act of suicide does not remain without meaning. By killing himself, Quentin makes a final statement about his life. He affirms that his life does have meaning, unlike what his father believes. With the suicide, Quentin again (as in the confrontation with Herbert) reaffirms his moral integrity. He kills himself as he cannot live as his sister remains distant and as time tortures him. The act of suicide confirms his deep entanglement with Caddy and time as genuine. This, again, places Quentin as highly sympathetic.

Although Quentin’s suicide can be read as a moment of moral purity and as a statement of his belief in the meaning of life, much remains unsolved. Quentin never reaches a moment of epiphany, as is expected of the artist hero. Instead, his obsessions with breaking time and saving his sister are unresolved and moments that could become epiphanies remain empty. In the end, “as the furious momentum of narrative finally halts, it is these issues, these ultimate epistemological dilemmas, that leave Quentin, and perhaps Faulkner, as if paralyzed ethically – and perhaps therefore narratively, novelistically” (Parker 22). That is to say, the impossible questions that Quentin strives to resolve leave not only Quentin paralyzed in a state of
unknowing, but also perhaps Faulkner as well. Both seem to be frozen by the search to solve the impossible question of time and sex. These two questions, which cannot be resolved, can almost only be cast aside through Quentin’s death. For Quentin, and even Faulkner, death, in a way, provides the necessary tool against obsession. Rather than remain frozen and stuck within his memories and obsessions, Quentin makes the choice to remove himself from the equation. In knowing that these questions can never be resolved, his choice is profound. Again, it reaffirms the strength of his morals and how deep his struggles with these questions lie.

In these five moments in Quentin’s past and present, there are clear reflections of success and failure that reflect the doubling of Quentin’s struggles with the impossible questions. Quentin’s narrative revolves around a longing for an absent center that, for him, would be found with the solving of the impossible questions. That is to say that Quentin continuously looks for something that could fulfil what is missing in his life. This constant search is an act of seeking the presence of abstract conceptions (solving the questions of sex and time) that can never fully be present. Quentin’s struggles as the artist hero can never be resolved as what he seeks to resolve is fully abstract. Although he may overcome his struggles in specific moments, overall, despite his moral integrity, Quentin can never resolve his questions. On a larger scale, this seeking out:

anticipates a problem Faulkner would never fully resolve, but, rather, would make the implied subject of all his work: that the estrangement of present from past is absolutely central to the Southern experience and often creates the pressurred situation in which the past becomes an ever more ghostly and gloriously imposing model to the same extent that – like the childhood of a doomed, beautiful girl – it cannot be recaptured, relived, or even clearly remembered. (Sundquist 7)
Through his narrative Quentin is haunted by his past and paralyzed by his self-consciousness about his past. The past intersects and takes away from the present as a ghost of regret that Quentin experiences as, if not more, vividly than his present. Faulkner’s other artist heroes seem to experience this in the same – for all of them, the past informs and shapes the character’s present and imposes itself as creating a longing for what the artist hero feels is absent in their respective narrative.
Chapter 2

The next of Faulkner’s novels, published almost exactly a year after *The Sound and the Fury*, again features an emphasis on the outsider artist hero. *As I Lay Dying* has many elements in common with its predecessor. The novel contains multiple points of view, explores familial relationships, and offers exploration of character through internal monologues. However, what marks *As I Lay Dying* separate from *The Sound and the Fury* is its innovations and plays upon the novel it follows. The multiple points of view collide and intersect one another, with a different narrator each chapter. As well, *As I Lay Dying* takes the idea of multiple points of view many steps further than *The Sound and the Fury*, with characters narrating beyond their logical bounds. One character narrates from beyond the grave, while another sees and describes events even as he is miles away. Outside of a technical assessment, *As I Lay Dying* also uses the multiple points of view to illustrate different characters’ levels of knowledge. While the multiple points of view in *The Sound and the Fury* are representational of different moral stance, the multiple points of view in *As I Lay Dying* are separated epistemologically. Each character in *As I Lay Dying* habituates a different space of knowledge and of understanding of the actions and moral repercussions of the novel. Additionally, *As I Lay Dying* does not have the tragic tone of *The Sound and the Fury*. Instead the novel is more of a picaresque full of black humor. Rather than creating moral attachment to characters, the novel keeps emotional distance and relies more on dark humor to create an attachment to the plot. This, then leads to an artist hero that occupies a space far removed from the space that Quentin Compson occupies. Darl Bundren is the artist hero and his voice dominates the narration. Yet, this dominates does not create a feeling of intimate connection to the actions of the novel. Rather, his narrative voice creates and demonstrates an emotional separation. This leads to Darl as not just a repetition of Quentin, but
as a change from the artist hero that Quentin is. This artist hero is one who can be called a
sociopath. Darl is a destroyer, rather than a creator and maintains a perverse set of social values.
Despite this, Darl still maintains many of the same features as Quentin, including a sense of
absolute candor. He ultimately fails in his actions, is highly introspective, looks to solve
impossible questions, and is an outsider within his own family.

Darl sees himself as markedly separate from his family, but does not make attempts to fit
in with the rest of the Bundrens. Throughout his narration, Darl makes observations about his
family—about their secrets, their feelings, and about what they do and do not do. Importantly,
when looking at Darl against Quentin, it can be noted that Darl revels in his separation, unlike
Quentin, who suffers from his. One night, Darl thinks, “I used to lie on the pallet in the hall,
waiting until I could hear them all asleep, so I could get back up and go back to the
bucket...Then I would wait until they all went to sleep so I could lie with my shirt-tail up,
hearing them asleep, feeling myself without touching myself, feeling the cool silence blowing
upon my parts and wondering if Cash was yonder in the darkness doing it too, had been doing it
perhaps for the last two years before I could have wanted to or could have” (As I Lay Dying 11).
Darl wonders if Cash also does the same actions as him at night— if Cash has ever lifted up his
nightshirt and felt the air blow over him— but does not make an attempt to find out or align
himself any further with Cash. It almost seems as though this wondering is just a quick passing
thought, that Darl is not looking for identification with Cash through the action. Rather, Darl
questions if his actions are repeated by others. The answer to this question does not seem
particularly important to Darl. Whether others repeat his actions or not will not determine if he
chooses to continue with the actions. In that way, Darl rejects any notion of needing to fit in with
those around him. As well, this moment separates Darl from Quentin in his lack of interest and
preoccupation with sex. Darl, it seems, is entirely asexual – he barely reacts to those around him and their sexual endeavors, other than taking pleasure in knowing something about them that others do not know. Quentin, on the other hand, sees sex as tragic and is wholly invested in the sexual lives of the other members of his family. This, then, begins to differentiate the two characters from one another and demonstrates how Faulkner begins to play with the trope of the artist hero across his novels.

Despite knowing the secrets of his family members and being able to somehow see things that cannot truly be seen, Darl does not seem to care the effect this knowledge has emotionally on the members of his family. This is the exact opposite of Quentin, who is wholly consumed by the effect he has upon his family, from Benjy’s field being sold to Caddy’s marriage. Rather, Darl is concerned with his own state of being and how he fits into linguistic terms. He thinks:

In a strange room you must empty yourself for sleep. And before you are emptied for sleep, what are you. And when you are emptied for sleep, you are not. And when you are filled with sleep, you never were. I dont know what I am. I dont know if I am or not. Jewel knows he is, because he does not know that he does not know whether he is or not. He cannot empty himself for sleep because he is not what he is and he is what he is not. Beyond the unlamped wall I can hear the rain shaping the wagon that is ours, the load that is no longer theirs that felled and sawed it nor yet theirs that bought it and which is not ours either, lie on our wagon though it does, since only the wind and the rain shape it only to Jewel and me, that are not asleep. And since sleep is is-not and rain and wind are was, it is not. Yet the wagon is, because when the wagon is was, Addie Bundren will not be. And Jewel is, so Addie Bundren must be. And then I must be, or I could not empty myself for sleep in a strange room. And so if I am not emptied yet, I am is.
How often have I lain beneath rain on a strange roof, thinking of home (As I Lay Dying 80-81).

This passage explicates Darl’s main concerns. He attempts to create a formulation for how the verb “to be” operates in the terms of his experiences. In thinking about how one falls asleep (the act of “emptying yourself”), Darl tries to define states of being and non-being, presence and absence. If one is asleep, how can they be? This line of questioning quickly turns to Darl’s own state of being, making it clear that he does not understand his place in his family, the world, and in linguistic definition. Darl cannot tell if he exists within the bounds of language or not. Darl then turns to Jewel, who he defines as knowing that he exists, purely because he does not know what Darl knows – that Jewel’s father is not Anse. This, then, complicates the passage. Does Darl’s definition of being relate to belonging and parentage? And, further, if Darl does not know if he is or not, does this mean that Darl’s parentage is contested? This remains unanswered, as Darl thinks about Addie’s body. He thinks that the wagon must be because when the wagon is not in use, then Addie will not be, or, rather, Addie will be buried. Then, because Addie is, then Jewel and Darl must be as well. Were they not, they could not fall asleep. Darl ends by thinking that if he is not asleep yet, then he “is.” This confusing formula of the verb of being points to Darl’s obsession with concrete definition. He is unable to do so within conventional linguistic terms, leading to his formulations of attempts to define himself, his brother, and his mother. Yet, this act of definition does not seem to contain any warmth for those Darl attempts to define. Darl is more concerned with understanding the linguistic terms and the formulation of understanding. This concern is deeply embedded in Faulkner. Faulkner’s novels “tend to be about the difficulty of understanding itself, and about the problems engendered by that difficulty, for both the
character and the readers” (Parker 10). For Darl specifically, the problems that arise for him within this difficulty of understanding are existential and about finding his own state of being within the world. The problems that come of this are related to his outsider status. The end of this passage points to Darl as understanding his outside position. He muses about “how often” he has laid beneath a “strange roof, thinking of home.” This demonstrates that Darl has thought about his state of being and what home means more than once, even in his family home. Further, the sentence points to his childhood home as “strange” to him and not a space that Darl feels comfortable enough to call home. This can be expanded to Darl’s place within the family as well. Despite being linked to his siblings and his parents through blood, Darl never feels fully comfortable within the family and dreams of a place of belonging. He is, in a sense, homeless in the world. Perhaps, for Darl, this belonging only lies in linguistics and the breaking of language.

The rest of the Bundren family also sees Darl as an outsider, but make no attempts to usher him into the family, nor do they attempt to understand him. The rest of the Bundrens just view Darl as someone different and outside of their reach. By the end of the novel, after Darl has been sent to Jefferson as a result of attempts to burn Addie’s casket, Cash, who consistently tries to be fully understanding of everyone in the Bundren family, attempts to rationalize why Darl had to be sent away. Cash thinks, “I would think what a shame Darl couldn’t be to enjoy it too. But it is better so for him. This world is not his world; this life his life” (As I Lay Dying 261). Cash feels bad that Darl will not be able to partake or enjoy the activities of the family anymore. However, he also knows that Darl cannot be a part of the Bundren’s world, that the life Darl has been given is one that he cannot and will not fit into. This is one of the only moments in which Darl is seen judicially – Cash does not fear Darl and, instead, tries to rationalize why Darl does not fit in, not only in the family, but also in the novel. In relationship to Quentin, Darl is known
and seen as an outsider. While Quentin is strange, it is hard to think that anyone could echo Cash’s words and apply them to Quentin. Quentin could have a place in the world, which makes his suicide a tragedy. Darl, on the other hand seems not to fit into any real space, making the tone of *As I Lay Dying* less tragic.

Despite Darl’s extreme outsider status, he, like Quentin, grapples with attempting to solve impossible questions. For Darl, these relate to linguistics and the truths of his family’s many secrets. First, and foremost, Darl spends the whole of his narrative struggling with Addie and her infidelity to his father, Anse. It is important to note that this preoccupation, as well as Darl’s many others, does not emerge out of a moral entanglement or desire to avenge for the one that has been wronged. Rather, Darl’s preoccupations emerge out of a need for knowledge, as well as a desire to share and see the effects of this knowledge. Thus, his morals are always skewed from what is expected. Darl does not operate in a moral universe that can be identified with, further alienating him. Specifically, in the case of Addie and her infidelity, Darl seems to want someone to acknowledge and, in a sense, repent her actions. Logically, the only one that can do so is Jewel – the result of Addie’s affair. Darl thinks, “I cannot love my mother because I have no mother. Jewel’s mother is a horse” (*As I Lay Dying* 95). This distinction and definition emerges multiple times throughout the narrative as Darl consistently marks Jewel as even further separate in familial relation. Significantly, however, is the fact that Darl is unable to speak the plain truth of what has happened. Instead, he can only define Addie’s infidelity as making her a “horse.” Even when asking Jewel if he understands what Addie has done, Darl can still only speak in terms of horses. He tells Jewel:

“Your mother was a horse, but who was your father, Jewel?”

“You goddamn lying son of a bitch.”
“Dont call me that,” I say.

“You goddamn lying son of a bitch” (213)

In this instance, Darl both wants to see if Jewel knows the truth of his father as well as seeing Jewel’s reaction. As well, Darl, in a sense, wants Jewel to repent for Addie’s actions by confronting the truth of her infidelity. However, how or why Jewel could or should repent for Addie’s actions is entirely unclear. With this, Darl is not quite able to verbalize the truth in concrete and straightforward words. For Darl, “the road taken by consciousness is sometimes traversed far more quickly than language is able to render it” (Auerbach 537). That is, Darl understands the terms of Addie’s infidelity in such a way that he is unable to concisely communicate it verbally. The definition of Addie as a “horse” in relationship to Jewel further pushes Darl outside of his family. Further, this moment defines Darl’s quest to answer the impossible question. Unlike Quentin, Darl has the answers to the question of his family’s dark secrets – he can and does define each of his family members through their secrets and needs. What he does not know, however, is how to define these problems in an intelligible language.

Then, the impossible question for Darl is the question of linguistic experience and existence. How can he define his own experiences and fit into the bounds of language? Ironically, this question of definition is something that Addie too struggles with and verbalizes in her section. Addie’s section, which is again impossible, as it is narrated by a character that is dead, reveals the true story of her affair and family entanglements. More importantly, however, is the layering of her attempts to both understand and break language that seem to dominate her decisions. Addie says, “That was when I learned that words are no good; that words don’t ever fit even what they are try to say at…I had been used to words for a long time. I knew that that word was just like the others: just a shape to fill a lack” (As I Lay Dying 171-72). Like Darl,
Addie is concerned with how to define herself and others through words. Yet, she is resigned to the fact that words are innately empty, that they have no true meaning. Darl, on the other hand, still believes that his words and the words that he chooses to define his family are of some importance. Darl defines and redefines his family’s relationships and their states of being, not as if to demonstrate the futility of abstract language, but rather to find the one word that will be able to fully encompass and concretely define the truth of his experiences. Within her section, Addie never looks to language for an answer – she has decided upon its meaninglessness. Addie and Darl’s opposing views is significant in defining Darl as the artist hero of the narrative. While Addie has accepted the futility of language as fully capturing the experiences of living, Darl still seeks to find ways of manipulating language to represent his truths. This act of continuous seeking, then, is a creatively and curiosity driven impulse. Without this impulse, Darl would, like Addie, give up entirely. Then, would his sociopathic tendencies emerge? Would they drive him to burn the barn or to attempt to define and explain Addie’s infidelity? The answer is probably not. Without his sense of language as lacking and needing to be both broken and filled, Darl would remain in a state much like Addie before her death, alive physically, but entirely unattached and, in a sense, already dead.

However, Darl’s search for the destruction of language to accurately capture his experience almost wholly revolves, like the narrative itself, around Addie and her casket. As Darl travels to Jefferson with the rest of his family, he is primarily focused on two things: getting his family to understand Addie’s infidelity and, most of all, preventing Addie’s burial in Jefferson by destroying her casket. There are, without a doubt, a myriad of possibilities as to why Darl would want to destroy the casket: as an act of freedom from her for his family, as an attempt to free himself from her, or even as just another moment of destruction. But, none of these
possibilities seem to fully encompass Darl’s potential reasoning for the destruction. From the beginning of the novel, Darl has a strange relationship with Addie, one that goes beyond just their similar skepticism of language. Despite not being physically present, Darl narrates Addie’s death. He describes this moment when, “She lies back and turns her head without so much as glancing at pa. She looks at Vardaman; her eyes, the life in them, rushing suddenly upon them; the two flames glare up for a steady instant. Then they go out as though someone had leaned down and blown upon them” (As I Lay Dying 48). Darl is nowhere near this moment physically, but is somehow able to not only describe the actions of his mother, but also create a poetic picture of the exact moment in which she dies. The description of this moment is significant in its immediate creation of an intense link between Addie and Darl. This seals them as intimately connected. This connection would seem to make an emotional connection between the two, however, this is never forged. Instead, Darl thinks, “I would not have believed that Addie Bundren would have needed that much room to lie comfortable in” (222). Darl rarely refers to Addie as his mother, only as Addie Bundren, which creates emotional distance from her as a mother figure and from Darl as a member of the family. Further, Darl comments on the size of the casket as surprisingly large, which seems incredibly cold. In understanding Darl’s deep connection with the destruction of Addie as ideal mother and of her physical casket, Darl’s distance becomes even clearer and starts to shed light on his need to destroy Addie. While Quentin Compson is concerned with his own sense of being and how he exists in the world and with his family, Darl is largely concerned with Addie’s existence and how to define it within the limits of language. In noting this, the manipulation of the artist hero between Quentin and Darl is not only about emotional connectivity, but also about their personal preoccupations. While much of what Quentin is concerned with links strictly back to his own self and existence, Darl seems to
focus primarily on external problems of the world and how language defines them. He does spend time thinking of his own existence and his lack of connection with those around him, however, this does not affect Darl in the deep way it affects Quentin. Darl, as well, is marked apart from Quentin in his knowledge of the impossible.

Despite not being physically present, Darl seems to just know or have knowledge of moments that should not be accessible to him. Darl’s narration of Addie’s death is a significant example of this, but this knowledge extends to every aspect of the narrative and serves as a way to characterize Darl’s dark poetic soul. That is to say, Darl contains the poetic outlook and narrative style that tends to define an artist hero, but applies it in a darker, almost vengeful way. With his lack of emotional connection, his knowledge is not applied in a caring or empathetic way. As in the moments with Addie, Darl is hard and harsh with his judgements related to his knowledge. Darl has a judgment for everyone around him, even Dewey Dell. Darl “said to Dewey Dell: ‘You want her to die so you can get to town: is that it?’” (As I Lay Dying 39). Darl seems to be overwhelmingly angry at the idea that Dewey Dell would have a stake in Addie’s death and the trip to Jefferson, which is strange considering how he feels about Addie. This moment does not demonstrate an underlying emotional connection that Darl might have. Rather, it shows Darl’s twisted set of morals and understandings that seem to be at odds with one another. This is not just a confusion on Darl’s part or a forgetfulness on Faulkner’s. Rather, “Faulkner is trying to render the transcendent life of the mind, the crowded composite of associative and analytical consciousness which expands the vibrant moment into the reaches of all time, simultaneously observing, remembering, interpreting, and modifying the object of its awareness” (Beck 62). This rendering is not only present in Darl’s observations, but also in his moral standing. His mutable and strangely murky morals are constantly moving and changing.
based on the action of the person that his judgement is placed upon. Darl holds a set of moral standards that change based on actions and motivation, rather than, like Quentin Compson, a set code of morals.

Despite the uncanny and strange nature of Darl’s knowledge, he, like Quentin, is doubled within the narrative. While the main source of doubling for Quentin is in action, Darl’s doubling emerges through reflection in another character. Vardaman, the youngest of the Bundrens, serves as this reflection. While Darl’s internal thoughts and reactions take up a majority of the novel, Vardaman’s sections seem to communicate similar thoughts and reactions. The major link between the two comes with their attempts at definition. In what might be the most famous sentence of *As I Lay Dying*, Vardaman states “My mother is a fish” (*As I Lay Dying* 84). This statement comes soon after Addie’s death and is an attempt on Vardaman’s part to rationalize his mother’s death and her current state of being. Just like Darl’s definition of Addie as a horse, Vardaman defines his mother through alternative words. However, unlike Darl, Vardaman’s definition is not based on dark or deeper knowledge. Rather, it is purely based on his past experiences with fish. With this, Darl and Vardaman become doublings of one another at different stages of development. Vardaman can be called pre-linguistic, in the sense that he has not developed or learned enough to have the nuanced understanding or vocabulary to define states of being. He says, “I can feel where the fish was in the dust. It is cut up into pieces of not-fish now, not-blood” (53). Vardaman explains death through negation, the act of no longer being something. Then, the death of his mother makes her a fish, because she, like the fish he has held, is no longer alive. This basic definition of existence is an elementary version of what Darl sees within the world. Darl, on the other hand, can be called post-linguistic, as he does understand the basics of life, death, and being, but chooses to work against language and to search for a way to
accurately place words to his experiences. Thus, Vardaman and Darl represent two extremes of linguistic understanding. Despite this, Vardaman is still able to interact as a double of Darl because he “becomes an observer, nearly helpless to understand the phenomena he observes but nonetheless diligent in reviewing, comparing, and sorting the data and asking the questions in an effort to comprehend” (Parker 33). This is to say, Vardaman is unable to coherently interpret the actions of those around him due to his age. This is significant in his relationship to Darl. Because Vardaman cannot understand any of what is around him, Darl’s strange use of language does not seem as foreign to him. Rather, it just becomes another natural part of life that Vardaman must review, compare, and sort. Additionally, Darl’s similar use of animals as a truthful definition gives Vardaman a comfort, in the sense that he also has to create definitions, albeit in a very different way, through animals. It is possible to think that Vardaman might become Darl as he grows, but within this narrative it is important that Darl has a double.

The doubling is another manipulation of Quentin Compson’s narrative. While it can be said that Quentin is doubled by Benjy, his actions are continuously doubled. Darl, however, cannot have the doubling of his narrative be in his actions. This would, in a sense, normalize Darl’s actions and link them into a pattern of being that Darl constantly transcends. As well, unlike Quentin, Darl is not tortured or consumed by time. This would cause the doubling of action to become less significant as Darl does not constantly travel between moments in his life that connect, as Quentin does. Darl’s actions must remain strange and somewhat uncanny in order for his character to remain sociopathic and unpredictable, to the point where sending him to Jackson seems logical. However, the doubling of character with Vardaman provides a sense of grounding in Darl’s character. This makes Darl have at least a small sense of humanity in him. Yet, the grounding comes from the youngest member of the family, who is unable to process and
understand the world in the same way that the rest of his family does, which causes Darl to still remain outside of his family’s approval. His thoughts cannot be rationalized as just youthful innocence, but the connection to Vardaman gives Darl a slight connection to another character. Faulkner cannot let go of doubling in Darl’s narrative as it additionally provides a point of connection for the reader with a character that seems distant. Yet, for Darl, the connection cannot be too close, as Faulkner doesn’t want Darl to become an object of affection, as Quentin does when his successes and failures are doubled throughout *The Sound and the Fury*. The small human connection causes Darl to remain overall distant and mysterious, while still upholding many of the characteristics that Faulkner adds to his artist heroes. This not only explains Vardaman’s doubling, but also provides evidence for why Darl is constantly negated and rejected by Dewey Dell.

While Vardaman’s youthful innocence and lack of adult coherence provides an opening for doubling and the potential humanization of Darl, Dewey Dell serves as a voice of negation and fear, who pushes back against Darl and his knowledge. Though she, at her core, is unintelligent and gullible, Dewey Dell’s fear and hatred of Darl communicates that perhaps it is right to hold a level of fear for Darl’s dark knowledge. She, unlike her father and brothers, doesn’t see Darl’s oddities as just part of his personality. When describing how she became pregnant, Dewey Dell:

…saw Darl and he knew. He said he knew without the words like he told me that ma is going to die without words, and I knew he knew because if he had said he knew with the words I would not have believed that he had been there and saw us…And that’s why I can talk to him with knowing with hating because he knows. (*As I Lay Dying* 27)
Dewey Dell knows that Darl knows about her pregnancy, but is unable to describe exactly how she knows that Darl knows or how Darl knows, other than saying that he told her ‘without words.’ This strange passage has underlying tones of confusion and fear as Dewey Dell attempts to define exactly how Darl could know, even as he wasn’t there. However, she is unable to define how Darl came about his knowledge. Dewey Dell is the one character that tries multiple times to reckon with Darl’s impossible knowledge. She is the only character to interact with Darl around his knowledge and her secret needs. Then, the underlying confusion and fear of the passage, as well as the mentions of Dewey Dell’s hatred, serves to negate the potential humanity bestowed upon Darl by his connection with Vardaman. Darl, in a sense, terrorizes Dewey Dell with his knowledge, shedding light upon a real fear of what exactly Darl can or will do with what he knows. Dewey Dell serves to work against the doubling between Darl and Vardaman, constantly reminding of the fear that connects directly or Darl’s knowledge and the potential destruction he could rage with it.

With all these elements of Darl’s personality and actions in mind, the relationship between Quentin and Darl is clear. Yet, one large difference remains – Darl does not commit suicide, but rather is sent to Jackson by his family after attempting to burn the barn and Addie’s casket. Then, it would seem, that Darl would not receive the same sort of treatment that Quentin receives before his suicide, where language seems to, at the same time, break apart and become entirely coherent. Yet, Darl’s final narrated section is an adaption of this treatment. In this section, which is supposed to be in his own voice, he narrates being taken away to Jackson:

Darl has gone to Jackson. They put him on the train, laughing, down the long car laughing, the heads turning like the heads of owls when he passed. “What are you laughing at?” I said.
“Yes yes yes yes yes.”

...It looks no different from a hundred other wagons there; Jewel standing beside it and looking up the street like any other man in town that day, yet there is something different, distinctive. There is about it that unmistakable air of definite and imminent departure that trains have, perhaps due to the fact that Dewey Dell and Vardaman on the seat and Cash on a pallet in the wagon bed are eating bananas from a paper bag. “Is that why you are laughing, Darl?”

Darl is our brother, our brother Darl. Our brother Darl in a cage in Jackson where, his grimed hands lying light in the quiet interstices, looking out he foams (As I Lay Dying 253-254).

The first, and most striking element of this passage is the multiple changes between first and third person. The general expectation for each of the chapters of As I Lay Dying is that the chapter will be in the first person point of view of whomever the chapter is titled after. This section completely subverts expectations and makes it hard to know what perspective it actually comes from. The beginning makes it seem as though Darl may be narrating, just with strange changes in perspective, but with the last few sentences, it seems like the chapter might be a combination of the perspectives of all of Darl’s siblings. Either way, this section is even more confusing and incoherent than anything Darl has said in any other section, challenging Darl’s supposed sanity and his interactions with time. There is a sense in this section that, if Darl is narrating, not only does he have access to the other characters and their interiority, but he also has access to exist narratively without the constraints of time. This sense emerges from verb tenses – “Darl has gone to Jackson,” but at the same time he is being put on the train. Darl has already been sent to Jackson, but at the same time can narrate how he was brought to Jackson as
though it is happening in the present. Additionally, the ending makes it seem as though Darl is already in and has been in Jackson for an extended period of time, again confusing the sense of time as it applies to Darl. With this, like in other modernist narratives “…a subject’s movement through space become uncanny – for the protagonist, sometimes for the reader as well” (Weinstein, 96). The uncanny nature of space and Darl’s movement serves to dislocate Darl further from the narrative and the rest of the Bundrens and place him within a space that is entirely his own. The incoherence of this section, the last narrated by Darl, seems to reflect the end of Quentin’s section. However, Darl’s ending does not come back to a high level of coherence. Instead, his section seems to break down further and further, confusing both time and perspective. This then, can be Darl’s ‘suicide’ scene. In this moment, he is no longer the same person as he has been in every other section and has experienced almost a full break in stability of narrative. Unlike Quentin, Darl’s suicide moment does not serve as a moment of moral fulfillment, but rather of a full break from his past linguistic self.

The question that remains is if this can be considered a success or failure, in light of Quentin’s suicide as a moment of moral fulfillment. Darl’s twisted moral code and judgements are too contradictory for him to reflect Quentin’s ending of moral authenticity. Darl comes closer to success in his physical goal, by being able to actually act and start the fire, but still ultimately fails as the casket is saved. The ending scene, as well, is a hybrid of failure and success. Being sent to Jackson is a clear failure of Darl to fulfil his need for his family to acknowledge the Addie’s pitfalls, as well as their own. However, the break of language somewhat can be seen as a success of Darl’s goal to transcend language. Though not fully realized, the changing perspectives and tenses demonstrate a disregard of grammar and perhaps signal a step closer towards successfully breaking language and finding a truthful way to define experience.
The link between Quentin and Darl is strong. Both face impossible questions that they seek to solve, as well as a placement within the narrative that defines them as the artist hero. They are highly intelligent and are ravaged by the figurative problems of the world. However, their main differences stem from their emotive connections. While Quentin is almost fully consumed by emotional connection, Darl is devoid of emotion and human connection, making him sociopathic. This change in emotional knowledge and depth causes Faulkner to create a character that shares much with Quentin, but that also differs greatly. The movement from Quentin to a Quentin without emotion is the first of the many changes that Faulkner applies to Quentin and the basis of his artist hero character in order to seek success for the artist hero. Yet, in *As I Lay Dying*, Darl takes steps closer to success, but ultimately remains a failure as he cannot fully break language or begin to concretely vocalize the dynamics of his family or of language itself. From here, Faulkner must again displace his artist hero to explore if the artist hero is at all capable of success.
Chapter 3

The next of Faulkner’s novels stands out as an anomaly within his works. *Sanctuary*, at least at first look, seems to pull away entirely from any established patterns in his works. Structurally, it is entirely different. Mythically, it is as well. *Sanctuary* is well-known not only for its popular reception (one of mainly titillated disgust), as well as Faulkner’s own thoughts regarding the novel. In an introduction, “speaking of the plot of the book, Faulkner said, "To me it is a cheap idea, because it was deliberately conceived to make money’” (Keefer 98). Faulkner also described the novel as a ‘potboiler’ and many times claimed the book was written in three weeks (Keefer 98). Paired with the author’s disdain for it, *Sanctuary* is not usually considered or placed with his other works. However, *Sanctuary* contains elements of Faulkner’s innovation and the artist hero. This novel, though, is built on a basis of parody and perhaps, frustration for Faulkner.

First, it is important to understand the structural changes Faulkner implements in *Sanctuary*. Chronologically, this is the first novel of Faulkner’s major and well known works that is not broken into sections by character point of view. Instead, it is written with normal chapters. Of course, these chapters focus on different characters and pieces of the narrative, however, they do not offer any internal access as *As I Lay Dying* or *The Sound and the Fury* do. At its most basic, *Sanctuary* makes a move away from what one might consider to be ‘traditional’ Faulkner. Additionally, *Sanctuary* tends to avoid spending time internally with the characters. Unlike with Darl and Quentin, this narrative avoids offering deep internal investigations. This is strange as “what is precious in this modernist literature is the identificatory traffic between reader and text. The diagnostic change wrought into the text’s experimental form is meant to release within the reader’s subjectivity” (Weinstein 7). Without this experimental form, is it possible to identify
within the narrative? This question is automatically evoked purely by the lack of a structure that is recognizable as Faulkner’s. *Sanctuary*, then, treats poetics in a different way than any of his other novels. In most of his narratives, Faulkner spends time lavishing over description or crafting his prose with lines that could be taken as poetry. Considering Faulkner’s disdain for *Sanctuary*, it would be easy to assume that Faulkner does not include any sense of poetics. This assumption would be wrong – Faulkner still slips in moments of poetic prose. In the very beginning of the novel, Faulkner writes, “Where the branch from the spring seeped across it Benbow saw the prints of automobile tires. Ahead of him Popeye walked, his tight suit and stiff hat all angles, like a modernist lampstand” (*Sanctuary* 7). Although not long and winding like many of Faulkner’s other moments of poetic musing, these two sentences demonstrate that Faulkner is not entirely divorced from his style. He still uses vivid words and figurative language in the narrative. Yet, these moments feel like anomalies within the narrative and when they appear, stick out. The focus of *Sanctuary* feels to no longer be about the internal self of the characters or of the mutability of time or language. This novel is more based around plot and moments of perversity. A portion comes from Faulkner’s motivation to write a popular novel that was also vulgar and shocking, particularly in the sexual aspects. The novel can also be read as a parody of sorts – as if Faulkner was frustrated with reception of his previous novels and wanted to capture the attention of a wider audience, even if it was, in his opinion, a ‘cheap novel.’ Most striking is that despite all of Faulkner’s attempts to differentiate *Sanctuary* from his other novels, the artist hero remains. In this novel, Horace Benbow fulfills this role, albeit with a more parodic outlook than Darl or Quentin.

At first read, it is not obvious that Horace is the artist hero, as it is with Darl or Quentin. As the novel’s tone and function is wildly different, many of the elements of Faulkner’s artist
hero are more obscured. Yet, Horace’s first introduction seems to begin to identify him with the artist hero:

> From beyond the screen of bushes which surrounded the spring, Popeye watched the man drinking. A faint path led from the road to the spring. Popeye watched the man – a tall, thin man, hatless, in worn gray flannel trousers and carrying a tweed coat over his arm – emerge from the path and kneel to drink from the spring. (*Sanctuary* 3)

This introduction is the first of the artist hero in third person. Popeye, who is the novel’s villain, is the first to see and cast any judgement upon Horace. Later, his judgement can be questioned, but as the first character to have interaction with the narrative, he seems trustworthy. In this scene, Popeye hides as he watches Horace. Soon, he will engage and ask Horace about the book he has in his pocket. But, at first, Horace emerges from the woods with his trousers and coat (neither of which match) to kneel and drink. Any time there is an emergence from the woods or water involved in a first description, notice is generally taken. Horace’s description does not, however, spend time on this potential moment of symbolism. Yet, when looking at Horace as the artist hero, the act of emergence and drinking from the stream can be seen as symbolic of an emergence into an unknown, as well as a cleansing. Horace has just left his wife and daughter both to free himself of routine and also to free himself from their overwhelmingly sexual auras. Benbow finds himself oddly attracted to his daughter and that his wife is full of sexual energy. In the act of drinking from the stream, Horace, in a sense, has tried to cleanse himself of this. Yet, the narrative spends no time on this potential symbolism. Instead, it moves to narrating in third person from Horace’s perspective, in which Popeye is described and explored.

In Horace’s third person narrations, however, is where it becomes most evident that in this narrative Horace serves as the artist hero. The manner in which Horace describes those
around him has many similarities to the manners in which Quentin and Darl describe their experience of the world. For all three characters, there are highly poetic moments in which it seems as though Faulkner the poet has taken over the characters’ narrative selves. In specifically looking at Horace, one of these moments comes just as he meets Popeye. As Horace walks with Popeye, he thinks, “He smells black, Benbow thought; he smells like that black stuff that ran out of Bovary’s mouth and down her bridal veil when they raised her head” (Sanctuary 7). Even without the literary reference, the descriptive language is highly reminiscent of Darl’s musings on sleep. As well, this moment serves to foreshadow how Popeye will be the villain of the narrative, that he, like the ‘black stuff’ that came out of Bovary’s mouth, will be poisonous. Additionally, Horace also spends time thinking and talking about time. He says that, “‘Time’s not such a bad thing after all. Use it right, and you can stretch anything out, like a rubber band, until it bursts somewhere, and there you are, with all tragedy and despair in two little knots between thumb and finger of each hand’” (183). Though Horace may have a different understanding of the positive or negative aspects of time, he still echoes Quentin’s worries about the transparency of time and its manipulations. Tonally, Horace tends to speak more plainly, even on the issues of time and figurative language. Despite this, he is the only character in the novel who echoes much of the existential crises that Faulkner explored in Darl and Quentin. This then leads to the construction of Horace as an everyday artist hero, even as the narrative, overall, reads as somewhat parodic or critical of Faulkner’s past works.

In terms of relation to other novels, Horace can also be seen as a reimagining of Quentin, just as Darl is. But this time, Faulkner parodies Quentin’s extreme moral authenticity, as well as exploring how a Quentin character would and could function as a grown married man, who is rediscovering the possibility of agency. Prior to the start of the narrative, Horace has just left his
wife and is traveling to his sister in Jefferson. As he tells his story to Ruby, Popeye, and the others in the house, Horace describes the moment at which he decided to leave:

‘No. Just Friday. But I have done it for ten years, since we were married. And I still don’t like to smell shrimp. But I wouldn’t mind carrying home so much. I could stand that. It’s because the package drips. All the way home it drips and drips, until after a while I follow myself to the station and stand aside and watch Horace Benbow take that box off the train and start home with it, changing hands every hundred steps, and I following him, thinking Here lies Horace Benbow in a fading series of small stinking spots on a Mississippi sidewalk’ *(Sanctuary 17)*

Aside from the clever vulgarity of the dripping, smelly shrimp, this moment reflects some of Quentin’s pre-suicide concerns. Horace’s description of the sensation of watching himself as thinking his last mark would be a ‘fading series of small stinking spots.’ Like Quentin, Horace is concerned about his impact on the world, as well as the breaking of a repetition. However, Horace is largely concerned about his morals and having an impact outside of his family, while Quentin worries about his impact upon his family (particularly Caddy). As well, Quentin’s concerns about the act of breaking is one of breaking time. This can also be tracked through Darl, whose main concern is the breaking of linguistic convention. With the similarities of these concerns, it can be understood that Horace fits into Faulkner’s model of the artist hero, albeit in a sad and defeated way. The narrative of *Sanctuary* begins with Horace taking agency and breaking out of his repetitious life, where he lives under the thumb of his overwhelmingly sexual wife and stepdaughter, which exposes his connections to Darl and Quentin, particularly in his concerns and use of language.
Horace also fits into other conventions of Faulkner’s artist hero. It is important to note that Horace fulfills these conventions, again, in a way that is not immediately recognizable against Darl and Quentin. Much of Horace’s characterization and position within the plot itself relates to his occupation as a lawyer, as well as his high moral grounding. Horace is overwhelmingly concerned about his perception of himself as highly moralistic. In hearing that Goodwin is in jail and not guilty, Horace decides to get involved. He rationalizes this by stating, “I cannot stand idly by and see injustice” (Sanctuary 119). The strength of this statement is reminiscent of Atticus Finch (in To Kill A Mockingbird) and his dedication to justice. However, when Horace says this, it is clear that he believes in justice (which is in line with his morals), but that Horace does not have the ability to be able to successfully act against the injustice of the blame on Goodwin. Horace, however, does not fully understand his own motives for this declaration. There is a sense that Horace cannot fully acknowledge that his declaration is not entirely selfless. Rather, it is motivated by an unacknowledged sense that Ruby is authentic and, in no longer standing idly by, Horace will be able to achieve a different relationship to the feminine – one that is free of the rabid sexuality of Temple or of the taboo attraction Horace feels towards his daughter. Immediately after Horace states this, Miss Jenny (one of Horace’s relatives) states that he “‘wont ever catch up with injustice’” (119). From this, we know that Horace has authentic and strong moral urges, but that, at the end of the day, he is wholly ineffective. This is further illustrated as Horace understands the depths of what has happened. He asserts that “‘I’m going to do what she said; I’m going to have a law passed making it obligatory upon everyone to shoot any man less than fifty years that makes, buys, sells or thinks whiskey……scoundrel I can face, but to think of her being exposed to any fool…….” (166). This solution is both highly violent and ineffective. A portion of the high emotion lent to this
moment is part of the parodic nature of Horace’s character and the narrative itself, however, it also serves to further Horace’s inability to create and execute a true solution to what he faces. Without a doubt, Horace’s idea to shoot any man who has any involvement with whiskey, from the makers to even those who think about it, is unrealistic and silly, comic at Horace’s expense. Horace’s morals are desperately authentic, however, what is most striking is Horace’s search for and attraction to the idea of a wholly ‘authentic’ life. Constantly, Horace sees himself as inauthentic, but the strength of his morals tells that this outlook is wrong. Much like Quentin struggles against the authentic and non-authentic in the form of Caddy’s suitors, Horace faces a struggle to define authenticity within his own life. Perhaps, then, this points to a new facet of the artist hero. This facet is one of a self-deprecating outlook, in which the artist hero sees themselves as non-authentic, which, rather than being accepted as truth, serves as a sign of true authenticity. If this is true, what then can be said of the search against the impossible question? For Quentin, the two are entirely linked – his quest is a product of his view of himself as non-authentic. For Horace, however, this relationship is not at play. Horace’s morals lead him to a quest, as well as an ‘impossible’ question. As a comic character, Horace’s quest is not one of high existential crisis and is only labeled as ‘impossible’ because of its relationship to the true impossible quests and questions that Faulkner’s other artist heroes face. Horace’s ultimate goal is to save Goodwin from conviction and death, while his ‘impossible’ question revolves around how to find agency within his own life. Horace fails to solve both of these, not due to a lack of a potential solution or due to abstract natures of the question and quest. His failure to succeed is primarily because of his own ineffectual nature. The quest to save Goodwin is the clearest example of how Horace’s nature affects his abilities as the artist hero. Goodwin is wrongly arrested for the murder of Tommy (committed by Popeye) and it becomes Horace’s personal
mission to save him from jail. However, Goodwin refuses to admit any of the details about Popeye and Temple, so Horace sets off (after hearing of her whereabouts from Clarence Snopes) to find Temple and bring her back so that she can testify in favor of Goodwin’s innocence. However, when he reaches Memphis, Miss Reba, the brothel owner, tells Horace that she and Popeye have disappeared. At the second day of the trial, Temple reappears and gives false testimony that Goodwin raped her. Goodwin is found guilty and lynched, while Narcissa drags Horace back to her house so that the crowd will not kill him as well. Although Horace is right about Goodwin’s innocence, he cannot get him freed. Horace is unable to play the game of Memphis or of interacting with gangsters, and acts as though everyone, including Temple, will tell the truth. For the most part, Horace has a wrongful belief in the authenticity of those around him and their potential to speak truth, even when it does not benefit them. Directly after the trial, “Horace couldn’t hear them. He couldn’t hear the man who had got burned screaming. He couldn’t hear the fire, though it still swirled upward unabated, as though it were living upon itself, and soundless; a voice of fury like in a dream, roaring silently out of a peaceful void” (296). In this moment, Horace faces the biggest failure of any artist hero thus far. With failing to fulfil his quest, Horace does not kill himself or get sent away. A man, instead, is killed. This brings failure to another level, as it affects Horace’s external situation. Even in this moment of poetic rumination, it is clear that Horace is the biggest failure thus far of the artist heroes. This failure, then, leads to Horace’s utter failure to answer his “impossible” question of how to find agency in his own life. In leaving his wife, Horace takes a step towards agency and independence. For a majority of the narrative, Horace fights back against Miss Jenny and Narcissa’s outlooks, instead doing exactly what he wants to do and what he thinks is right. After the lynching, however, Horace returns back to his wife, essentially ending his narrative in
somewhat of a full circle. In leaving his wife, Horace becomes caught up in the life of Goodwin, Ruby, and Temple, while finding his own level of agency. One would hope that Horace, even in light of his failure, could maintain this agency. Yet, Horace’s failures continue as he brings himself back to the routine (including carrying shrimp every Friday) that he so desperately wanted to escape.

With the intense scale of Horace’s failures, it would be possible to suppose that every aspect of Faulkner’s artist hero would then also be exaggerated. However, the one piece of the artist hero that is downplayed is that of the outsider element. Unlike Darl, Horace is not emotionally detached, but also does not reveal his darker desires or lose himself in his own existential thoughts, as Quentin does. Instead, others look upon him as just an ineffectual and quixotic person. Horace is not ostracized, nor is he accepted. In relationship to the novels, it is somewhat strange that Horace does not face as much scrutiny from society as the other artist heroes do. This then, relates to the profound misogyny of Sanctuary. Its plot should make Temple Drake a sympathetic character, but she stands as one of the most despicable female characters (apart from, perhaps, Mrs. Compson) in Faulkner’s novels. Sanctuary, too, has a vicious portrayal of Narcissa. In this novel, the woman who represses her sexuality is just as bad as the woman who sexual excites, which is, of course, a highly misogynistic view. Ruby is the only woman to escape the scrutiny – she, unlike the others, is sexually authentic and it seems as though Faulkner almost admires her sexual authenticity. In relationship to Horace’s outsider status, the misogyny of this novel sets the stage for Horace to not be fully outside the bounds of society. With so many female characters that are unable to be respected, Horace is allowed to maintain an iota of belonging. In this novel, the artist hero is not fully outcast.
Rather, Horace sits just slightly outside of the social experiences of everyone, from the society of Jefferson, to the gangsters, to those in the brothels of Memphis. Even Goodwin, the man who he tries to save, treats Horace as somewhat odd and out of touch. Within Jefferson, even, “Horace moved among them, swept here and there by the deliberate current, without impatience. Some of them he knew; most of the merchants and professional men remembered him as a boy, a youth, a brother lawyer – beyond a foamy screen of locust branches he could see the dingy second-story where he and his father had practised, the glass still innocent of water and soap as then – and he stopped now and then and talked with them in unhurried backwaters” (Sanctuary 112). In this moment, Horace walks through Jefferson. He is not entirely ostracized as he talks to those around him, however, in the way that he is “swept” by those around him, it is quite clear that the society that surrounds Horace think that he is somewhat peculiar and perhaps, even a bit of a sap. Horace does not have a concrete role within the society, and, as someone who wanders around town, sits upon the outside. Though this is somewhat subtle, Horace as somewhat of an outsider is best illustrated in his time with Miss Jenny and Narcissa.

After leaving his wife, Horace travels directly to Jefferson to live with his sister and Miss Jenny, the great-aunt of Narcissa’s husband (who has died). During his time in their home, he almost always takes the brunt of their jabs and joking. Though this does not seem to affect him much, it does mark him as outside of their domestic unit. As well, they constantly urge him to return home to his wife, further delineating him as not a natural or even wholly welcome part to their household. They criticize all he does, including when he decides to take on Goodwin’s case and help take care of Ruby. Benbow tells “his sister and Miss Jenny about the case over the supper table. ‘You’re just meddling!’ his sister said, her serene face, her voice, furious. ‘When you took another man’s wife and child away from him I thought it was dreadful but I said At
least he will not have the face to ever come back here again. And when you just walked out of
the house like a nigger…” (Sanctuary 117). Narcissa’s barbs all circle back around to Horace’s
inability to fit into the life and roles that are prescribed for him. In this sense, Horace is pushed
into the outsider role, even in his home.

One of the strangest and least consistent aspects of Faulkner’s artist hero revolves around
the artist hero’s sexual life. Quentin is preoccupied with his sister’s sexual life and his
participation in it, although he never actually interacts in that way with her. Darl, on the other
hand, is entirely asexual. Sanctuary revolves around highly sexual plot devices, so Horace
interacts with the sexual lives of the women around him in a new way. Horace is preoccupied in
knowing the suitors of his sister, however, his preoccupation is protective, rather than lustful.
Upon his arrival at his sister’s home, Horace watches his sister interact with Gowan Stevens,
Narcissa’s current suitor and the man who brings Temple Drake to the Goodwin house. Miss
Jenny tells Horace that, “‘A young woman needs a man.’ ‘But not that one’ Benbow
said…‘Which one is that? Is that the same one she had last fall?’” (Sanctuary 24). Horace is
concerned with his sister’s romantic life and the number of suitors she has surrounding her,
however, he is not much concerned with the sexual implications of who she is seeing. This is
directly opposite to Quentin’s interest in his sister’s sexual life, yet still not in line with Darl’s
complete asexual nature. Horace’s sexual interest, rather, settles upon his daughter, Little Belle.
This specific formula of sexual interest is new to the figure of the artist hero. After returning
from Memphis and finally finding out what has happened to Temple, Horace:

…found the light and turned it on. The photograph sat on the dresser…Enclosed
by the narrow imprint of the missing frame Little Belle’s face dream with that quality of
sweet chiaroscuro. Communicated to the cardboard by some quality of the light or
perhaps by some infinitesimal movement of his hands, his own breathing, the face appeared to breath…Then he knew what the sensation in his stomach meant. He put the photograph down hurriedly and went to the bathroom. He opened the door running and fumbled at the light. But he had not time to find it and he gave over and plunged forward and struck the lavatory and leaned up his braced arms. (222-223)

This scene is again highly vulgar and shocking, but also marks an important turn for the artist hero. This is the first time in Faulkner’s artist hero chronology that something has actually been done in reaction to sexual interest. And yet, even in a crude moment, Horace’s narration maintains the fluidity and poetic style that has been seen in other pieces of his narration, as well as that of the other artist heroes. The mention of chiaroscuro, a Renaissance-developed oil painting technique, as well as the use of words like ‘infinitesimal’ create a gap between Horace’s actions and his thoughts. While the action itself is taboo and rude, Horace is still in the mindset of the artist hero – seeing qualities of art in his daughter’s portrait as he becomes sexually aroused. This is not a normal moment. Yet, it also is significant as the parodic artist hero is able to act in the face of sexual desire. Horace still is alone and his sexual desire is perverse, but he, unlike Quentin or Darl, is able to react to it and act upon it alone.

As a highly sexual novel, Sanctuary exaggerates much of Quentin’s sexual angst and overstresses the sexuality of all of its characters. Horace especially falls victim to this, as does Temple. With this in mind, a connection between Horace and Temple as doubled can be seen. Horace does not have an exact double in plot or character as Quentin or Darl might, however, connections and contrasts appear in his relationship to Temple. Temple and her morals (or lack thereof) become a preoccupation for Horace. Temple Drake, the woman who becomes the central witness of Goodwin’s case, is an intriguing female character. In looking at her overall
plot, from her rape to her forced prostitution, it seems as though she should be sympathetic. Early on, as Temple is in Gowan Stevens’ car, she tells him “‘You’d better take me back to Oxford,’ she said…‘You’d better…’” (Sanctuary 37). This foreshadowing makes it seem as though Temple will ultimately be (as Caddy was) the tragic woman of the novel. But Temple is one of, if not the, most unsympathetic and unlikeable female characters in Faulkner’s works. She is rude and off-putting, even going so far as to lie in Goodwin’s case (cold & feels no remorse). Horace can be seen as so ineffectual that he causes Goodwin’s lynching, however, it is his trust in Temple’s truthfulness, along with Temple’s testimony that truly leads to Goodwin’s death. In being questioned, Temple lies, stating that she hid from Goodwin and that Goodwin was the one to shoot Tommy (rather than Popeye). Then, as the District Attorney claims that Goodwin was the one to rape, Temple offers no truth or alternative story. Though this may be an effect of the trauma of her rape and time in Memphis, Temple’s attitudes and Faulkner’s treatment of her actions make it almost impossible to feel sympathetic for her and her plight. Temple’s narrative takes up half of the main novel, however an emotional connection is never forged between her and the reader. Horace’s narrative, in general, takes up the other half. With this in mind, what doubled connections can be made between them. Thinking in regards to doubling in Faulkner’s other narratives, it would be easy to make claims regarding a basis of connectivity through their placement as two of the central characters. However, the relationship between the two is much more nuanced. In many narratives, “The rejected instincts and desires are cast out of the self, repressed internally only to return externally personified in the double, where they can be at once vicariously satisfied and punished” (Irwin 33). That is, the repression of internal desire tends reemerge even more strongly externally and is then both fulfilled and punished. When this is applied to Horace and Temple, this can be seen as their relationship, which can best be described
as mirrored, rather than doubled. Horace internalizes and represses desires, then presenting as 
highly moral, but unable to save an innocent man due to his belief and trust in others. Temple, 
then, is the other half of this equation. Her sexual desires (which may, in a sense, be similar to 
Horace’s) habituate externally, from which she is both perversely fulfilled (her time in Memphis) 
and punished (her rape and final exile from her father to Europe). Rather than the repression and 
emergence of desire being encapsulated in one character, they are split between Horace and 
Temple, making them, together, fulfil a doubled sense of desire. Additionally, their mirroring 
extends to their morals. Horace’s righteousness is the exact opposite of Temple’s self-serving 
idea of justice (or, in blunter terms, her urge to lie to save face). Together, these two characters 
take up the space of where the doubling of another artist hero would fall. However, the model of 
Faulkner’s artist hero is again reshaped, this time with mirroring rather than doubling. In this 
instance, it is hard to judge why this happens – is it part of Faulkner’s parodic sense of the novel 
or is it an experiment hidden within layers of parody?

With all these strange elements, it is easy to write off Sanctuary, as Faulkner did publicly, 
as flash fiction. However, the novel is much more complex and layered with elements of parody, 
as well as experiments of the artist hero. The novel can be read as self-reflexive parody, as 
Faulkner essentially making fun of himself and seeing just how far he can push his 
experimentations. As the novel was, although published after As I Lay Dying, written directly 
after The Sound and Fury, it can also be seen as a way to make a somewhat lighter artist hero. 
Yet, “for Faulkner, on the contrary, the past is never lost, unfortunately; it is always there, it is an 
obsession” (Sartre 90). Faulkner seems to continue to make returns to the character of Quentin 
Compson, as well as elements of his narrative and obsessions. In Sanctuary, Faulkner finds
elements of humor and exaggeration as he continues to experiment with the artist hero and to see how close the artist hero can come to success.
Chapter 4

The next of Faulkner’s novels, *Light in August*, marks the beginning of a change within his works. This novel begins Faulkner’s transition from writing with a focus on sexual plots to a writing with a focus on racial plots. This, however, does not change the elements or the way in which Faulkner’s artist hero appears. The artist hero of *Light in August* upholds many of the conventions, while still representing change and innovation from the artist heroes of Faulkner’s past novels. Written and published directly after *Sanctuary*, *Light in August* also stands as a return to Faulkner’s “traditional” style. The novel revolves around two major plots – one of a young woman’s search for the man the impregnated her and the other of a black man’s history leading to his eventual murder of his mistress. Though these two plots seem entirely separate, they intertwine and interact, happening in the same town at the same time.

In *Light in August* it is hard, at first, to definitively assign one character as the artist hero. It seems as though multiple characters could fill the space of artist hero that Quentin, Darl, and Horace have all previously inhabited. Specifically, Lena, the young pregnant girl, and Joe Christmas, the black man, seem as though they may be the artist hero. After all, they are both main characters and, at most basic, have plots that seem fitting for an artist hero to emerge from. Yet, neither fully fulfills the artist hero role. Lena lacks the interiority that is characteristic of artist heroes, while Christmas lacks the moral angst and confusion that emerges out of the artist hero’s search or quest. What is true is that “despite the later novel’s extraordinary increase in narrative syntactical complexity Light in August is much harder to keep in focus than Absalom, Absalom!” (Sundquist 91). This narrative complexity extends beyond plot itself into creating a confusion regarding the whereabouts of Faulkner’s recurring artist hero. However, with an eye that expands beyond main characters, the artist hero can be found in the character of Gail
Hightower, the disgraced minister. Even as a secondary character, Hightower fits many of Faulkner’s pre-prescribed characteristics for his artist hero, as well as expanding to include new characteristics of the artist hero from general modernism. However, this time, the artist hero serves not as a lens into plot, but rather as a moral reflection for other characters (in this case, Byron Bunch).

It seems odd that a secondary character serves as the artist hero. In Faulkner’s past works, as well as other works that feature an artist hero, the primary character is able to give access to their interiority, something which is characteristic of the artist hero. Hightower does not have as high of a level of interiority as past Faulkner artist heroes, however, as a moral reflector he shares his own views and morals verbally. As well, Hightower, though secondary, has a fully developed life story outside of the narrative itself. Early on, in the third chapter, this backstory is explored, as it is explained why Hightower became a disgraced minister and, in a sense, a recluse. When Hightower’s wife is found dead in Memphis with another man, “The papers printed it, with the story: wife of the Reverend Gail Hightower, of Jefferson, Mississippi. And the story told how the paper telephone to the husband at two a.m. and how the husband said that he had nothing to say” (Light in August 67). From here, Hightower is forced to step down from his pulpit, is accused of interracial relationships, is targeted by the KKK, but ultimately decides to stay in Jefferson. This smaller narrative occurs before the main narrative of Light in August, however, it is easy to imagine this narrative being able to be expanded into a full novel, one that features Hightower as the primary character and as a typical artist hero. The inclusion of this narrative is a clue towards Hightower’s placement in the novel. He is one of the first characters to be given a full narrative within the novel itself that serves primarily to explain how he ended up where he is. This should not be ignored. Hightower, although not the main focus of the novel,
is given a life and plotting that extends before the novel begins. He is the only secondary character in the novel to be given this treatment. A part of this extends to further cement his position as the artist hero over the main characters. Yet, there is also a portion of Faulkner’s own experimentation tied into this unusual use of narrative space. In Light in August, “the novel’s expressed antagonisms between public and private, along with the attendant misunderstandings and hypocrisies they make possible, are realized in a narrative form whose rhetorical melodrama creates stories as they are needed, virtually at the moment they come into the action of being” (Sundquist 78). In any other Faulkner narrative, the exploration of Hightower’s past would not be necessary. Yet, in Light in August, Hightower’s life story is needed and comes into being within the novel as a way of delineating and separating him from the rest of Jefferson. It shows him not just as a disgraced minister, but as someone who has been affected primarily by the actions of others. It gives Hightower a clear coding as the artist hero, as background as he may be, and promotes his narrative as important, even in relationship to the narratives of Joe Christmas and Lena. This additionally creates an expectation of Hightower as somewhat crazed, yet it is clear that Hightower is the most morally wise and insightful in this novel.

In terms of the formulaic elements of the artist hero, one of the most striking and obvious characteristics that Hightower displays is that of the outsider. Hightower’s outsider status is the most obvious of all of Faulkner’s artist heroes. He is disgraced and separate from the rest of society, yet Hightower seems to also have no stake in fitting in socially. In a description of Byron Bunch, he is said to visit “Hightower in the small house where the exminister lives alone, in what the town calls his disgrace…the fifty-year-old outcast who has been denied by his church” (Light in August 48). What is notable about this is the use of the word ‘outcast.’ For the first time, the artist hero has been concretely named as an outcast. Further, ‘outcast’ is used as an
identifying adjective for Hightower. Beyond his status as an ex-minister and as a fifty-year-old, he can also be identified as an outcast. Additionally, this moment offers up an outside perspective on how the general town feels about Hightower. In calling his house Hightower’s ‘disgrace,’ it can be understood that not only can Hightower be identified by his outsider status, but that the rest of Jefferson society identifies him as such. He is identified by others for his disgrace and his outsider status. This is unusual for the established patterns of the artist heroes. Though they all are outsiders, none are so blatantly identified as such. This can be attributed to Hightower’s secondary placement in the novel, but it remains significant that as a secondary character, he is obviously separated from the community around him. As well, there is a sense of reciprocation – not only is Hightower identified as an outcast, he also welcomes and plays the part of outsider. He is isolated, but seems to accept this as a result of his past. Hightower, in relationship to Quentin, Darl, and Horace seems to be the most at peace with his outsider status. While Quentin constantly fights against it, Darl seems to utilize his outsider presence as a weapon, while Horace attempts constantly to fit into or at least be praised by those around him. Hightower, on the other hand, stays mostly in his house, not seeming to do much to either accept or reject his sense of isolation.

What seems to be missing in an analysis of Hightower as the artist hero, however, is a clear question or quest that he seeks to fulfil. There is somewhat of a sense that Hightower might not even have a quest or question to pursue, even as the narration of his past reveals an obsession with his grandfather’s death in the town during the Civil War. Rather, within the narrative, Hightower tends to sit as a moral mirror for Byron, as if he has already moved past the typical artist hero quest. Perhaps, then, the full narrative of his life prior to the events of *Light in August* includes this quest. Yet, within the narrative, Hightower serves to help Bryon, primarily,
understand the events around him. As Byron talks to Hightower about Lena, he “tells it quietly, fumbling, his face lowered, in his flat, inflectionless voice, while across the desk Hightower watches him with that expression of shrinking and denial” (Light in August 83). In this moment, Byron confesses his complicated feelings of his perceived responsibilities to the pregnant Lena and her search for the man who impregnated her. Hightower, however, stays behind his desk as Byron tells him of taking Lena to the boarding house. He does not move through the whole of the story, and rarely speaks beyond asking Bryon further questions. It is clear that Hightower has opinions, but he allows Byron to explain himself and asks questions, for the most part, rather than casting statements. It is clear that Bryon approaches Hightower not just as a friend, but also as someone full of wisdom who can offer advice on how to proceed. Hightower is not seen or utilized as a character of action Hightower himself even admits this as he thinks “‘I am not in life anymore’ he thinks. ‘That’s why there is no use in even trying to meddle, interfere. He could hear me no more than that man and that woman (ay, and that child) would hear or heed me if I tried to come back into life.’” (301). The thought ‘I am not in life anymore’ is reminiscent of the timeless nature of Darl, yet implies something entirely different. For Hightower, this statement is one of resignation. It is clear that he is no longer invested in creating action – he thinks there’s “no use” in trying to “come back into life” to convince Bryon that Byron’s intentions towards Lena are anything but selfish. Further, in relationship to the impossible question or quest, the statement implies that, at some point, Hightower was “in life.” There was a time when Hightower was engaged and active in helping others, even if he knew they would not listen to them. This statement of past activity can also be understood as a nod towards a potential impossible question or quest, whether personal or otherwise. The Hightower that sits in his home now is entirely different from the past Hightower and this perhaps, is the largest indicator of
Hightower’s past as the time in which he fulfilled Faulkner’s formula of the artist hero. The Hightower portrayed now is somewhat defeated and resigned, but still has elements of the artist hero.

One element that is immediately clear is Hightower’s lack of action, as well as lack of faith in his own authenticity. In stating that he is ‘not in life,’ Hightower indicates a dissociation from life and action. For much of the novel, it is clear that he has no faith in his own ability to be active within the plot. It seems as though he is somewhat shamed by his past. Instead of involving himself in the narratives, Hightower stays inside behind his desk and gives advice to Byron. This is also a sign of his lack of faith in his authenticity. Yet, Hightower does eventually take action, but when it is necessary. He delivers Lena’s baby when he is the only one who can possibly do it, showing that he is able to take action. However, when Mrs. Hines asks Hightower to claim Joe Christmas as a homosexual lover to provide an alibi so that Joe will not be lynched, Hightower cannot step up to the plate. This demonstrates that he has not fully reentered into a space of action. But, when Christmas is found in Hightower’s home by Percy Grimm, Hightower tries to claim Joe as his lover so that he will survive. When it comes down to the wire, Hightower will take action, showing his strong morality. But, Grimm does not believe Hightower and murders Joe. Hightower’s actions in Lena’s plot is life-affirming, while his actions in Christmas’ plot is tragic. These two moments of major action for Hightower help him move towards becoming a morally self-accountable character that can be active in helping others.

Hightower also has a strange relationship to sexuality. He had a wife, but she was unfaithful and was, in a large town scandal, murdered by her lover in Memphis. Hightower, then, has no real place for sexual desire, nor does he seem to express much authentic sexual energy (other than the claim that he is Joe’s lover). Hightower is different from the other artist heroes in
that his personal sexual preferences seem to have little or no effect on his story within the plot of *Light in August*. But, Hightower had some form of sexuality prior to his wife’s death. He is unlike Darl in that he is not wholly asexual, but for him in the moment of the narrative, sexuality is unimportant.

What is important, however, is Hightower’s relationship to religion. Hightower, by his occupation, is entrenched in religion. This is a first for an artist hero and, besides one chapter in *As I Lay Dying*, seemingly the first character to be heavily identified with religion. This entrenchment and identification, however, does not relate primarily to personal belief, but rather to the stake that religion plays in Hightower’s life and the way in which affects his moral outlook. However, as most things are in Faulkner’s work, Hightower’s religious and moral understandings are somewhat fractured. As a minster, Hightower is someone who believes in serving his congregation’s interests. As a person, Hightower would rather dole out advice than actually taking part. In hearing that Joe Christmas is being hunted while in a store, Hightower:

> passed through the door and into the street…Someone spoke to him in passing; he did not even know it. He went on, thinking *And him too. And him too* walking fast now…even in the quiet street where scare anyone ever paused not to look at, remember, the sign, and his house, his sanctuary, already in sight, it goes on beneath the top of his mind that would cozen and soothe him: ‘I wont. I wont. I have bought immunity…I just wanted peace’ (*Light in August* 310-311)

This moment of high emotional energy shows both a resistance away from and a strong inclination towards action and identification with justice and what is right. Though Hightower would like to avoid the guilt and empathy he has for Christmas, there is a part of him that just cannot and this is a show of his moral core. This is something in him that, regardless of how
much he wants to live in isolation, will not let him fully run away from feeling fear and empathy. This could be accounted for by his religious background, however, this theory is fractured by Hightower’s own words. As Bryon visits Hightower to tell him of Christmas’ capture, Hightower accuses Bryon of selfish and carnal intentions towards Lena. Bryon tries to states that Hightower is a man of Gad, however Hightower responds:

‘I am not a man of God. And not through my own desire. Remember that. Not of my choice am I no longer a man of god. It was by the will, the more than behest of them like you and like her and like him in the jail yonder and like them who put him there to do their will upon as they did upon me, with insult and violence upon those who were created by the same God and were driven by them to do that which they now turn and rend them for having done it. It was not my choice. Remember that.’ (365)

In stating that he is no longer a man of God, Hightower does mean, in part, that he no longer serves in a congregation. This short speech does, without a doubt, begin with the basic plot point of Hightower’s status as ex-minister. Yet, it extends beyond this. Because of everyone in the town, Hightower can no longer claim a deep connection to religion. He sees this as a result of the choices of others, from his wife, to those who sought his removal from his pulpit after his wife’s scandal. Yet, in the statement ‘I am not a man of God,’ it also becomes clear that the removal from the pulpit has somewhat fractured Hightower’s relationship to religion. In the same way that he is conflicted upon his own feelings that seem at odds with one another in relationship to the hunt for Joe Christmas, Hightower is at odds with his religious identity and what it means to be a man of God who has been defrocked. Religion is deeply entrenched in Hightower’s character, but the narrative shows a religious understanding that has been fractured irreparably.
This irreparable fracture is most apparent in Hightower’s epiphany. It is notable that Hightower’s epiphany is the closest of Faulkner’s artist heroes to resemble an expected epiphany, like that of Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus. However, as might be predictable, the moment of epiphany does not lead into further action. It begins at the end of the novel, just after Joe Christmas’ murder has been described and is contained within one chapter. The chapter opens in third person perspective, as Hightower describes his own perspective and understandings of his life story. Though Hightower’s story has already been described early on in the narrative, this time it further illustrates Hightower’s own perception of his authenticity, as well as how his obsession with his grandfather’s past emerged and how his marriage fell apart. What overshadows much of this, however, is the final pages of the chapter in which Hightower has an epiphanic vision. In looking at Faulkner’s artist heroes, this can be identified as the first full moment of realized epiphany. In a sense, this is Hightower’s rewards for his actions. Though declaring himself as Joe Christmas’ gay lover does little to stop his lynching, the pure fact of Hightower’s step into action redeems him in the author’s eyes. The epiphany comes to fruition as somewhat of a reward for this action. Hightower himself, by stepping forward has earned himself one final moment of clarity and vision. The epiphany begins as Hightower “can feel the two instants about to touch: the one which is the sum of his life, which renews itself between each dark and dusk, and the suspended instant out of which the soon will presently begin” (486). Though Hightower is educated, this line is out of place for his character. Generally, he speaks, at least to Byron, with straightforward words and uncomplicated syntax. This, then, signifies Hightower’s entry into the moment of epiphany, as well as to his moment of death. He feels that he is about the reach a place between two instants – that of life and of death, but also that of knowledge and understanding (or, rather, taught knowledge and understanding of an epiphanic
truth). From here, Hightower begins to have visions of the faces of those around him, include Byron, Joe Christmas, and many others in a “mediaeval torture instrument” (*Light in August* 491). This wheel, also referred to as a halo, represents for Hightower the “wrenched and broken sockets of his spirit, his life” (491). In these moments, Hightower thinks and sees the faults of his life – as if they all happen and collide at once. This section is largely coherent, almost an entry into epiphany, rather than the true moment itself. The largest moment comes in the last page of the chapter where:

Then it seems to him that some ultimate dammed flood within him breaks and rushes away. He seems to watch it, feeling himself losing contact with earth, lighter and lighter, emptying, floating. ‘I am dying,’ he thinks. ‘I should pray. I should try to pray.’ But he does not. He does not try…The wheel turns on. It spins now, fading, without progress, as though turned by that final flood which had rushed out of him, leaving his body empty and lighter than a forgotten leaf and even more trivial than flotsam lying spent and still upon the window ledge which has no solidity beneath hands that have no weight; so that it can be now Now

It is as though they had merely waited until he could find something to pant with, to be reaffirmed in triumph and desire with, with this last left of honor and pride and life. He hears above his heart the thunder increase, myriad and drumming. Like a long sighing of wind in trees it begins, then they sweep into sight, borne now upon a cloud of phantom dust. They rush past, forward-leaning in the saddles, with brandished arms, beneath whipping ribbons from slanted and eager lances; with tumult and soundless yelling they sweep past like a tide whose crest is jagged with the wild heads of horses and the brandished arms of men like the crater of the world in explosion. They rush past, are
gone; the dust swirls skyward sucking, fades away into the night which has fully come.

Yet, leaning forward in the window, his bandaged head huge and without depth above the twin blobs of his hands upon the ledge, it seems to him that he still hears them: the wild bugles and the clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves (492-3).

This moment is both a revival and an ending for Hightower. There is a sense that this vision is revitalization for the Hightower who previously claimed that he is “not in life anymore.” This vision, when framed as a “final flood,” makes the moment pull Hightower back into life, even as he is on his deathbed. Hightower even thinks that this epiphany is as if “they had merely waited until he could find something to pant with, to be reaffirmed in triumph and desire with.”

Hightower himself recognizes the significance of this as a moment in which he is “back” in life and engaged with something that could lead to action. This epiphany, then, seems as though it will lead to Hightower’s success as an artist hero, which would be a solution to Faulkner’s problem of the artist hero as a failure. But Hightower dies right as the vision ends, so clearly there will be no action, but the vision gains back respect for Hightower. If he is deserving enough for Faulkner to write him an epiphanic vision, then he is a character to be respected.

Hightower’s death comes as he envisions the cavalry that his grandfather fought with in the Civil War, which could imply action, but instead is utilized as a bridging into Hightower’s death, as well as his “suicide” moment. That is not to say that Hightower actually commits suicide, rather that this moment can be seen as equivalent to Quentin’s suicidal moment. With the reentry of his grandfather into the vision, it can be understood that Hightower’s narrative has become entirely circular – his decision to join the ministry is influenced by his grandfather, which he then comes to feel ashamed of. He decides against action, then is pulled into action by Byron, before once again returning to the imagery of his grandfather. This can, in part, be seen a return to his
obsession. This return to the obsession is a sign of Hightower’s failure to fully reengage with life and find faith in his own authenticity. The vision, then, is a taste of authenticity and full engagement with life. Hightower never will get to savor this engagement and authenticity, but does get a moment to feel as if he is in life again. Yet, for Hightower, his grandfather seems to be the source of where he draws his own authenticity, so the success of the vision remains a qualified one, as the obsessions of Hightower’s past cannot fully be left behind, even in his final moment. Though this is not explicitly stated as his own goal, it is one that the narrative pushes him towards. He does begin to move towards action as he helps Lena give birth, but these are all prompted by others or the urgency of the situation. As well, his attempts to move beyond his obsession with his grandfather are part of an unconscious project to affirm his authenticity, something which, as the artist hero, Hightower struggles to believe in. Thus, the return to the imagery of his grandfather means that he will never believe in his authenticity, once again marking the artist hero as a failure. Even as Hightower experiences an epiphany closest to that of the typical modernist artist hero, he still cannot succeed within Faulkner’s narrative.

Despite Hightower’s failures, this scene is what the novel has been building towards. It mentions the ending of the ‘light in August,’ but is also where the themes of the novel, which have been disparate upon multiple plot lines, culminate. In this vision, Hightower understands how far one has to go in order to move back to life. He communicates, however, a sense of disappointment – no one will ever know of his potential return to life. It will never be recognized that he has moved back into life and this is a failure. Hightower’s ultimate failures come from a lack of recognition from those around him. This reveals that he is a character worth caring about – his failure is not his own and Hightower, at least to Faulkner, has done everything he can to
bring about a success. This is a new and complex formulation of success and failure for the artist hero, but ultimately ends in a failure.

The last element of Faulkner’s artist hero that remains obscured by Hightower’s placement in the novel is that of a double. As noted previously, Faulkner’s artist heroes that are primary characters have doubles within their novels. What then can be Hightower’s relationship to the other characters when he is not the main focus? This question is especially confused in *Light In August*, as for a majority of the novel, there are two plots occurring at once. In the novel, Lena and Joe Christmas stand as doubles against one another – a woman who creates life against a man who destroys it. Hightower does not seem to fit into this. Rather, it seems as though he is in the center. His opinions and his actions are never reflected, but they do have impact upon the plot. He sits morally in between innocence and violence, never quite identifying with either. In a meeting with Byron, “Hightower sits again in the attitude of the eastern idol, between his parallel arms on the armrests of the chair” (*Light in August* 315). In being described as a Buddha, Hightower is implied to be truly wise. Additionally, this comparison to a religious figure is never used to describe any other character. A religious figure such as the Buddha is not doubled, but rather is a central figure of wisdom and respect. Hightower, then, is the same.

Gail Hightower, disgraced ex-minister and artist hero, is not the focus of *Light in August*. However, he acts under all of the elements that Faulkner adds to his artist heroes. What is significant about Hightower is his state of removal, both socially and within the narrative. As a secondary character and outsider, he is isolated, but remains empathetic. He is the most educated and invested in literature of all the previous artist heroes. Hightower, strikingly, is the most redeemed of these heroes – he moves from a state of non-action to being invested and involved. He comes the closest to success in his epiphanic moment, but his death causes him to fail to
break free from his obsession with his grandfather and to accept his own authenticity. Ultimately, Hightower is a highly experimental artist hero and, even so, is unable to truly succeed.
Chapter 5

Though published ten years after *Light in August*, *Go Down Moses* is the next of Faulkner’s novels to place a high level of focus on the artist hero. In this novel, the artist hero returns to a place of centrality, though not within an expected structure. *Go Down Moses* is made up of connected short stories that are linked through the McCaslin family, and more specifically, the voice of Ike McCaslin. These short stories, for the most part, are written in a style recognizable as Faulkner’s. Throughout there are moments and sections of poeticism combined with colloquial and southern voices. Additionally, the novel is recognizable in that in “reading Faulkner, we often cannot tell whether we read a story of events, or a non-story of the conspicuous lack of events, so much seems to be made of so little” (Parker 1). *Go Down Moses* revolves around only a few events, but continuously returns to them, rearticulating and further exploring the trauma and effects the events create. Though structured in a wholly new way, the primary voice within the novel, Ike McCaslin, maintains the elements of Faulkner’s artist hero and makes new and closer steps to success.

Ike appears throughout the short stories, both as a child, young adult, and old man. His first appearance is also the first sentence of the novel. It opens, “Isaac McCaslin, ‘Uncle Ike,’ past seventy and nearer eighty than he ever corroborated anymore, a widower now and uncle to half a county and father to no one” (*Go Down, Moses* 5). This sentence opens the novel both with a lens on Ike McCaslin and with a lens on his marital and parental situation. He is first defined by age, then by his widower status, then by his lack of children, but relationship as a secondary relative. This then indicates that these elements of Ike’s life are his most defining. Additionally, this sentence is not a full sentence grammatically. The sentence only contains adjectives and no verbs. It stands alone and is followed by a new paragraph that jumps into a
broader description of Ike’s status. This sentence, then, serves to primarily define Ike and frame the way in which he is socially connected. Additionally, he is later defined by his lack of children and lack of wife. In a parenthetical statement in the story “The Fire and The Hearth,” Ike is said to be “childless, a widower now, living in his dead wife’s house the title to which he likewise declined to assume, born into his father’s old age and himself born old and became steadily younger and younger” (103). Once again, he is primarily identified by his lack of children and of wife. These two moments also come before the stories in which Ike is mainly featured, making it so that when the narrative turns to his youth, Ike’s status in old age is solidified – the reader already knows where Ike will end up.

Though Ike does exhibit many, if not most, of the traits of Faulkner’s artist hero, the element that sets Ike most apart from other artist heroes is his somewhat aggressive masculinity. It frames much of how Ike acts within the narrative and how he fits into the larger narratives of the artist hero, making it important to begin an analysis of his character with his masculinity. “The Bear” and “Delta Autumn” both revolve around hunting, blood, and features only males. Ike’s masculinity, however, is complex. Much of his masculine preoccupation revolves around one moment: when, at the age of ten, “He pulled trigger and Sam Fathers marked his face with the hot blood which he had spilled and he ceased to be a child and became a hunter and a man” (Go Down, Moses 169). The marking of his face with blood signifies a turn from child to man for Ike. This moment brings him into the violence of the adult world and sticks within his mind as the moment in which he is defined as ‘man.’ This personal definition as man is something that does not appear for any other artist hero. Darl seem to be largely unconcerned with his masculine status, while Quentin, Horace, and Hightower unconsciously search for masculinity, whether through sex or action. Ike, however, is marked as a man through the violence of hunting at the
age of ten, making his masculinity solid and not in question. Further this moment treats the
becoming of a man as both grotesque and visceral. The spreading of blood is no doubt surprising,
while the use of the word ‘hot’ brings forth a more vivid image. It is hard to imagine any other
artist hero as acting underneath this combination of the grotesque and the visceral. While many
have visceral experiences, many miss or cannot recognize the grotesque. In a narrative of
Faulkner’s work, it can be understood that, “…later Faulkner accesses early Faulkner only in the
mode of nonrecognition. The moment uncontrolled, trauma unbated, recovery a groundless
fiction…” (Weinstein, 162). The emergence of masculinity as a named concern in Faulkner’s
narrative is new, but when seen in relationship to Faulkner’s other artist hero works, it can be
understood as an underlying concern for the artist hero. Additionally, the uncontrollable nature
of this memory and how it reappears throughout Ike’s narrative signifies it as important and
somewhat traumatic for him. The emergence of masculinity within Faulkner’s greater canon also
reflects back on an anxiety and trauma that is quietly present. This can be connected back to
Quentin’s concerns of virginity and Faulkner’s misogyny in Sanctuary. Ike reflects these
concerns in a much more obvious way than any other artist hero. This, when applied to the
formulations of the artist hero, creates an artist hero that addresses his own traumas of
masculinity, which further changes the understandings of success and failure.

This traumatic masculinity also serves to further define political tasks as part of the artist
hero’s problem. That is, the past of the artist hero and his family comes into play as part of the
tasks or questions the artist hero looks to solve. Overall, “Faulkner shows that the present is
submerged in the past, that what is lived in the present is what is lived in the past” (Pouillon 80).
The political tasks of the artist hero, then, are explicitly tied into webs of the past, almost as if
their actions of the present serve as a reaction or reflection of the past. For Quentin, his
obsessions of Cady revolve around the image of her muddy drawers, while Darl bases his actions around his mother’s infidelity and Hightower both loves and rejects his grandfather’s Civil War past. These underlying moments of the past as pushing forth actions of the present is even more overt in Ike’s life. Ike McCaslin comes from a family tree that is split between legitimate descendants and descendants of Lucius Quintus Carothers’ (LQC) McCaslin’s rape of his slave, Tomasina. Ike, as a descendant of the LQC McCaslin and as the artist hero must atone for the racial and sexual crimes of his family. This emerges in his hunting – as Ike learns from Sam Fathers, the son of a Choctaw chief and a black slave, he admires Sam’s close relationship with nature and the spirituality that comes of it. This connection to the earth is coded as something that Ike, as well as the legitimate McCaslins will never have. Rather, it is the descendants of those who have been harmed by the actions of Ike’s predecessors that have the connection Ike craves. This, however, is not fully authentic. Sam’s ancestor Ikommotube is the one who ‘poisoned’ the purity of a native land by selling it to a white man. Sam, then, does not actually have the idealized relationship to the land that Ike craves. However, Ike is unable to see this and, rather, sees only untamed masculinity and connection to nature. Sam Fathers brings in the wild dog, later named Lion, that will eventually kill Old Ben, the bear, but makes it clear that he does not need to tame the dog. He says, “I dont want him tame…But I almost rather he be tame than scared, of me or any man or any thing. But he wont be neither, of nothing” (Go Down, Moses 205-6). Sam looks to create a relationship with the wild animal that does not involve, as the white men around him think he should, making it docile. Rather, he begins to build trust, succeeding in creating a connection with the animal. In a sense, Sam is the ideal of an untamed masculinity – one that is the opposite of Carothers’ masculinity. Ike sees all of this happen and wants to, like Sam, has a close relationship to nature. Their relationship is, for Ike, a first step
towards solving the problem of the guilt of the crimes committed by his family, and perhaps, with the inclusion of Choctaw blood, the racial and sexual crimes of the white men against both the Black and Native populations. However, as can be imagined, this is no task that can be resolved by one man. When this is understood as Ike’s quest, rather than just a successful hunt, elements of failure begin to appear. It is clear that he cannot be successful, but will exert all his energy towards solving an impossible question of repentance for the sins of those before him.

With all that rests on Ike McCaslin’s shoulders and his status as the artist hero, it should come as no surprise that many of his internal moments are highly poetic. They are very much like Quentin Compson’s moments of internal thought. The poetic thought pattern is present through all of Ike’s life, beginning even as he hunts as a young boy. In the woods, Ike:

listened, to no ringing chorus strong and fast on a free scent but a moiling yapping
an octave too high and with something more than indecision and even abjectness
in it which he could not recognize, reluctant, not even moving very fast, taking a
long time to pass out of hearing, leaving even then in the air that echo of thin and
almost human hysteria, abject, almost humanitarianly grieving, with this time nothing
ahead of it, no sense of a fleeing unseen smoke-colored shape. (Go Down, Moses
187)

The description of this listening, prompted by Sam, reveals Ike’s deep poeticism, even as his young age. Though this moment seems to come almost directly from Faulkner’s mouth, it still points to Ike’s spiritual relationship with the words and the earth and the ways in which he hears and connects to what is around him. This description is not the only time in which Ike’s poeticism is reveal.
Later in “The Bear,” at the age of twenty-one, Ike’s narration suddenly switches in style. Though still in third person, this chapter of the story (which closely resembles European modernist styles), confirms both the dark truths of the McCaslin family and Ike’s innate poeticism. When looking at a leger of the history of the plantation, Ike sees “the yellowed pages scrawled in fading ink by the hand first of his grandfather and then of his father and uncles” and thinks of his uncles herding slaves “into the tremendous abortive edifice scarcely yet out of embryo” (Go Down, Moses 248). It is not hard to imagine any of the past artist heroes as using this phrase. Along with this, the doubling of adjective before noun and the intense focus on exacting description (namely, the use of the phrase ‘scarcely yet’) is a pattern that Faulkner uses in his moments of poetics and in his imagining of the artist hero’s interior. From here, Ike discovers not only that LQC raped and impregnated Tomasina, but also that Tomasina was likely LQC’s daughter by another slave, Eunice, who committed suicide. This discovery via the leger causes Ike to refuse his inheritance of the plantation. This understanding of time and the actions of the past as being processed in the present further relates back to Faulkner’s overall treatment of action. Faulkner “represent(s) time in its anteriority, time as what has already passed objectively, yet not passed subjectively (in thought, feeling, and understanding)” (Weinstein, 87).

The shift to a modernist-style narration that focuses on Ike’s discovery of his family’s racial and sexual entanglements is the point at which the past can begin to be processed subjectively. This then, relates back to Ike’s quest to atone and make amends for his family’s actions, as well as his spirituality and masculinity. In Ike’s narrative, his artist hero poetics are not much separate from his quest to make amends and atone for his family’s sins. Rather, they are an essential part of the discovery of the problems of the past and of the subjective understanding and reckoning of these problems. This sense of poetics as part of the quest is reminiscent of Darl’s attempts to define,
but also stands alone as the first time that poetics are not just a feature of the artist hero’s mind, but are tied into the quest. This sense implies Ike as unable to process his family’s past in a normative narrative – instead, he must rely on poetic thought and imagery to understand and begin to amend the horrors Carothers inflicted upon his slaves.

As a portion of his family history’s trauma is deeply related to sexual problems, the problem of sexuality in the artist hero’s life is in flux. After rejecting his inheritance, Ike becomes a carpenter and marries a woman, who tries to convince him to retake the plantation through sexual favors but he is unconvinced. In this moment Ike reveals that:

he had never seen her naked before, he had asked her to once and why: that he wanted to see her naked because he loved her and he wanted to see her looking at him naked because he loved her but after that he never mentioned it again, even turning his face when she put the nightgown on over her dress to undress at night…it was nothing like he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man-talking until after a no-time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a movement on time more older than man she turned and freed herself and on their wedding night she had cried (Go Down, Moses 298-99).

This inclusion of this marks one of the only times Ike interacts with a woman of his age, as well as the only moment sexuality emerges for him. Even so, it is part of Ike’s modernist narration and is just a memory. However, what is interesting is Ike’s general disinterest in sex. Though he hunts and tries to achieve a masculine outlook, he seems to be almost more asexual than Darl. Where Darl was rarely confronted with sex, Ike is barely interested in sexual engagement – he has only asked his wife once to see her naked, but only because he sees it as a sign of love. As well, he doesn’t seem to be engaged with her rejection; after she presumably says no, Ike merely
turns his head. He also seems to not be present as they actually do have a sexual moment. Rather, he calls it a “no-time” before he returns to himself. This is incredibly different than any previous artist hero. Perhaps it is the sexual sins of Carothers that makes it impossible for Ike to relate to sex or that his disinterest is part of the atoning he must do against the sins of his family’s past. Either way, it is important to note that Ike’s need for spiritual connection with the earth, as well as his focus on hunting, overtakes a desire for sex, making hunting a replacement for sexual connection.

Another aspect that is interesting about Ike as the artist hero is his highly level of social ability. Most of his narrative connects him to and ties him to a number of people and interactions, both in past and present. Yet, he is also an outsider. In the woods Ike “stood for a moment – a child, alien and lost in the green and soaring gloom of the markless wilderness” (Go Down, Moses 197). His relationship to nature is one that makes him an outsider. Ike desires Sam Fathers’ spirituality and connection, but can never quite reach that level. Instead, Ike is left to feel like a ‘child’ and ‘alien’ within the space he desires to enter. This feeling is not unique to the artist hero, however, the space which Ike wishes to enter is entirely new. He still does not quite get accepted into general society, from his rejection of his inheritance to his attempts to meet his relatives that are the result of LQC’s rape, he stands out. Even his wife cannot understand why Ike will not return to the plantation. Ike’s moral integrity and need to atone for the past, at most basic, sets him apart from the rest of those in the general society, who continue to build off of the sins of the past. These people, such as Lucas Beauchamp, see themselves as exploiting Ike’s naivety or hold the belief that Ike is a stupid fool. This understanding of Ike, however, is incorrect.
Though not entirely clear at first, every portion of Ike’s narrative relates to overcoming the racial and sexual problems created by his family. in “The Bear,” however, Old Ben (the bear) is finally killed, as is Sam Fathers (death of Ben as a disappointment, killed by Boone, not white but still a disappointment). The end of “The Bear” also features a return for Ike to the past as he remembers how “Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: ‘Chief,’ he said ‘Grandfather’” (Go Down, Moses 313-14). Ike has a moment of spirituality in the same way Sam had six years prior, which appears to make his attempts to connect to nature successful. This, plus the death of Old Ben, makes it appear as though Ike has finally been successful in his quest. The connection to the Native roots of Yoknapatawpha County, as well as Ike’s overt masculinity, seems to be what the other artist heroes have been lacking. Perhaps, then, an artist hero can be successful.

If Go Down Moses ended with “The Bear,” there is no doubt that Ike could be classified as successful. But, it seems as though Faulkner cannot allow this as the penultimate and next story “Delta Autumn” illustrates the outcome of “The Bear” as Ike takes others into the woods to hunt as he once did with Sam Fathers. As an older man, Ike still holds onto his past and seeks to replicate it with a younger generation. But, most striking when held against “The Bear” is that Ike does not maintain his moment of connectivity and spirituality. Rather, he still searches for that connection, further signifying that he has not been able to fully atone for the problems of his family tree. In large contrast to the untamed wilderness of the woods in “The Bear,” most of the forest “was gone now. Now a man drove two hundred miles from Jefferson before he found wilderness to hunt in… - the land across which there came now no scream of panther but instead the long hooting of locomotive…and all that remained of that old time were the Indian names on
the little towns” (Go Down, Moses 325). Now, the act of entering the woods is not one of entering into untamed wild or into Native spirituality. Rather, Ike’s need to continue the tradition of hunting (He tells his companions: “Then you boys will hunt. You’ll have to. When I first started hunting in this bottom sixty years ago…” (328)) is an attempt to recapture some of what he experienced with Sam Fathers. This, then, demonstrates his inability as a white man, to continue to connect spiritually with the earth, especially as Jefferson continues to develop and move away from its agrarian and native roots. Further, even almost sixty years later, Ike continues to ruminate on the moment when Sam Fathers spread blood on his face (334). as well as the moments in which he discovered his family’s dark secrets and moments with his wife.

This continuous return and rumination is important in defining Ike’s failures to save his family tree from its past because it again signifies that Ike is unable to fully connect to the earth and to Native spirituality. Ike will always be a part of a family that committed racial and sexual crimes. Despite his attempts to embody what he sees as untamed native masculinity and to atone for his family’s sins through connection with Sam, Ike will always remain a twelve-year-old boy, being marked with blood for the first time; a boy that has only barely been introduced into the grotesque nature of the world, rather than an old man who has solved the crimes of his family.

Yet, the ultimate moment of failure for Ike comes at the end of Delta Autumn. As the younger men hunt, a woman comes to the hunting camp with a child, identifying herself to Ike as the granddaughter of Tennie’s Jim, who was the grandson of Tomey’s Turl, the product of the LQC’s rape of Tomasina. She reveals herself as Roth’s lover, which is both incest and miscegenation. This is somewhat of a repetition of the non-consensual relationship between LQC and Tomasina, which is the basis of what Ike seeks to atone for. This new relationship, though consensual, is another moment in which the McCaslin family becomes tied into taboo sexual and
racial relationships. Further, Roth asks Ike to give the young woman money to pay her off, implying that the child will not be accepted as part of the McCaslin lineage and will be another piece of the sexual and racial crimes of the McCaslin family. This also implies a belief that the sins of the past can be paid off with money, something that Ike is entirely against. This then inspires a certain amount of contempt against Ike, as he understands that money alone cannot solve the problems of the past. This undoubtedly is a failure of Ike’s attempts to absolve his family line of sin. With this it can be understood that Ike is a victim of time and that he “comes to the tragic awareness that, because of the irreversibility of time, man in time can never get even, indeed comes to understand that the whole process of getting even is incompatible with time” (Irwin 4). Thus, everything that Ike has attempted to do, from relating to Sam Fathers and the earth to tracking down Fonsiba and giving her money, is somewhat meaningless in his quest to atone for his family’s sins. Ike will never be able to ‘get even’ with or overcome his family’s history. No matter what he attempts, his family’s racial and sexual crimes repeat themselves. In this sense, Ike fails because he cannot overcome time or change the actions of the past.

*Go Down Moses* one of Faulkner’s later novels and perhaps the last of the artist hero sequence. However, it is significant that the artist hero still does not succeed – the quest or impossible question the artist hero seeks to solve will always be stronger than the philosophical impulses of Faulkner’s artist hero. Yet, it is also significant that Ike is the first artist hero to have an almost-success. There is a sense that Ike, perhaps due to his masculinity and awareness of the darker secrets of his family, could be a success. Yet, the sins of his family are too great – not even Ike can overcome the past, despite its large presence in his life. Yet, Ike is never portrayed as a fool or as insane. He is the character that is the most aware of his family’s darker secrets and is the one to pursue and attempt to atone from these secrets. His failure is not one of foolishness
or incompetence, but one that emerges from any human’s inability to overcome time and sins of the past.
Chapter 6

Arguably Faulkner’s most famous novel other than *The Sound and the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom* is part detective story, part imaginative narrative, part dynastical tragedy, and part exploration of perspective. In looking at the novel through the lens of Faulkner’s artist hero, it can be quite confusing. The main character of the novel is Quentin Compson, however, the main characters of the plot (the story within a story) are the Sutpens, a family whose history Quentin attempts to understand. Beyond just Quentin’s appearance, the multiple layers of point of view, as well as the number of characters makes it hard to quickly and clearly identify a singular character as artist hero. But, *Absalom, Absalom* is also a narrative of deception – what is told may not be true and what is accepted as true is never from the first person. So, how does the artist hero fit in? Does it fit in at all or does Faulkner’s biggest exercise in character and dynastic creation stray entirely away from the artist hero?

First, it is important to recognize who is not the artist hero. With a cursory glance, it seems as though it must be Quentin – after all, Quentin was the artist hero of *The Sound and the Fury* and acts as somewhat of a basis for Faulkner’s other artist heroes. Yet, this assumption is wrong. The Quentin Compson of *Absalom, Absalom* is not the Quentin of *The Sound and the Fury*. Within the first few pages, Quentin is described as “two Quentins now – the Quentin Compson preparing for Harvard in the South, the deep South dead since 1865…and the Quentin Compson who was still too young to deserve yet to be a ghost but nevertheless having to be one for all that” (*Absalom, Absalom* 4). It is clear that Quentin has a different function in this novel and is, for the purposes of the narrative, not the same as the Quentin Compson who will kill himself in *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin in this narrative, rather, functions as a lens – it is Quentin who hears and reacts to all of the stories he is told about the Sutpens and then pieces
together and imagines what he believes to be true (doesn’t solve the central moral problem of the story have to come to terms that you can’t solve it – Quentin doesn’t do this). Absalom, Absalom, at its core, is not about Quentin. He is merely a focusing figure.

The next figure that could seem to be an artist hero is, surprisingly, a woman. Rosa, who is the one to first tell Quentin of the Sutpens, seems to have potential similarities to other artist heroes as she details her entanglement in the Sutpen family and her hatred of the patriarch, Thomas Sutpen. However, Rosa lacks one key quality – a lack of confidence in her own authenticity. Early on, Rosa tells Quentin that, “No. I hold no brief for myself. I don’t plead youth…and most of all, I do not plead myself” (Absalom, Absalom 12-13). This is part of Rosa’s story, but it also confirms that she believes in and only cares about herself. Rosa does not make excuses for her actions, nor does she question them. Yet, her telling of her story is designed to make her somewhat of a martyr, even as she does not have all of the facts. She is, overall, a narcissist and self-serving, someone who is inauthentic, but doesn’t know or doesn’t care. This is the exact type of character that Faulkner despises and would rather make fun of, so she cannot be the artist hero. Thomas Sutpen, on the other hand, is limited from being the artist hero due to his lack of true authenticity. Sutpen, who is somewhat of a Gatsby-esque character, spent his entire life looking towards building and actually building wealth and a family dynasty, which is what he calls his ‘design.’ Sutpen, however, unlike Gatsby, gets smaller the more his truth is revealed. He looks for class revenge, but goes too far as he exploits Wash Jones and Millie, who are both of a lower class. Sutpen even states that “‘You see, I had a design in my mind. Whether it was a good or a bad design is besides the point” (212). This design is only for himself – the revenge he wants to exact does not extend to help those of the lower class. The design, though talked up by Sutpen, turns out to be little more than pretending to be rich by building a home, getting a wife,
and having an heir. It is clear too that “Sutpen was acting his role too…a role of arrogant ease and leisure which, as the leisure and ease put flesh on him, became a little pompous” (56-7). Sutpen not only puts on airs to become wealthy and part of high society, but also begins to believe in his wealth and high class as authentic. This belief in a false authenticity is reminiscent of Herbert Head, the only suitor that Quentin overcomes in *The Sound and the Fury*. Thus, Sutpen cannot be the artist hero – his false authenticity is something that Faulkner has hated in past novels and would not be able to accept as part of the artist hero.

After looking at all the characters are not the artist hero, one question remains: is there actually an artist hero in *Absalom, Absalom*? It would seem that this novel disproves an idea of the artist hero as a reigning tertiary concern in Faulkner’s work, along with sex and race. However, like many events within the novel, the artist hero is present, but concealed. The character who most embodies the characteristics of the artist hero is Charles Bon, Thomas Sutpen’s illegitimate son. Thomas fathered Charles with Eulalia Bon, the daughter of the Haitian Plantation owner where Thomas served as overseer. After finding that Eulalia was half-black, Thomas abandoned the family. Charles reappears when he meets Henry Sutpen at the University of Mississippi before becoming engaged to Judith Sutpen, who Charles’ his half-sister. Charles is killed in the end by Henry, after Thomas tells Henry that Charles is partially black and related the Sutpens. What is most interesting about Charles Bon is that he is the one character who has the least internal access in the novel. That is, everything about Charles Bon is built upon the rumors of others. No character in the novel actually speaks to Bon directly or even truly meets him. Even Miss Rosa, who was alive at the time, “did not see any of them, who had never seen (and was never to see alive) Charles Bon at all” (*Absalom, Absalom* 58). Rather, understandings
of him are built around one letter (which is the only clue that comes directly from Bon himself) and Shreve’s imaginations (which the novel points to as true).

With this in mind, it is hard to definitively identify many of the characteristics of the artist hero that rest entirely internally – there is such a small fraction of his mind that is seen that it seems there is no way to decipher Bon as artist hero. It is Bon’s positioning within the narrative that first points to him as the artist hero. He is an outsider in the Sutpen family and society – Bon comes from New Orleans and is an illegitimate son that was abandoned by his father. These, as well as his mixed race lineage, set him outside of the bounds of “respectable” Southern society. Additionally, his relationship to sex and love is entangled in a way that is somewhat characteristic of the artist hero. Bon falls in love with and is engaged to his half-sister. Whether he knows that they are related or not is questionable, however, what is important is that his sexual relationship is not normative – it is twisted by incest and destroyed by his racial heritage. In understanding Bon’s narrative position in the Sutpen tragedy, it is clear that his place in the novel affords him elements of the artist hero. The next clue of his place as artist hero is his letter, the only time in which his own words are used.

Bon’s letter to Judith is the only time when Bon’s own voice is absolutely truthfully represented. He writes it to Judith from the Civil War, where he and Henry Sutpen are in the Confederate army. This letter is the only moment of true internal access for Bon and reveals much about his poetic soul, as well as his problems with time. The letter opens with Bon writing, “You will notice how I insult neither of us by claiming this to be a voice from the defeated even, let alone from the dead” (Absalom, Absalom 102). The moment in which Bon is writing is when the Civil War is coming to a close, so the Confederate army is beginning to fail. This points to the beginnings of defeat, but also to Bon’s authenticity. Bon writes that he will not
claim to be a voice that he is not, which can be translated into Bon not being someone he is not, indicating towards an authenticity that is the exact opposite of Thomas Sutpen’s. This is another element of the artist hero – though it is not explored further, this indication further characterizes Bon as an artist hero. As well, the letter shows Bon’s poetic self and his dealings with time. He writes, “So that means it is dawn again and that I must stop. Stop what? you will say. Why, thinking, remembering…to become once more for a period without boundaries or location in time…with a sort of dismal and incorruptible fidelity which is incredibly admirable to me…still immersed and obliviously bemused in recollections of old peace and contentment the very names of whose scents and sounds I do not know that I remember” (104). The syntax of this section is incredibly similar to other artist heroes of Faulkner’s books. It, along with the rest of the letter, is written in a high style, with complex words and grammar structures, something which only Faulkner’s artist heroes do. Additionally, this section deals with problems of time and the recollections and reentries of the past. In writing about thinking, Charles dreams of becoming free from the boundaries of time, as well as his immersion in recollections of the past. This is something that could be said by Quentin, Darl, or any other artist hero. Like the others, there is a poetic longing for freedom from the bounds of time and the interruptions of the past. Again, these point to Bon’s artist hero status. As the only moment that reveals Bon’s internal mind, it is highly significant.

With all of these elements, a strong case can be argued for Bon as the artist hero. What seals his status as artist hero is Bon’s quest. Interestingly, it is quite unclear what that quest is, only that it relates to the Sutpen family. Either it is to marry Judith despite his mixed race heritage (thus overcoming his mixed lineage to join high society) or to have Sutpen confirm himself as Bon’s father (and then, in turn, seek revenge for the sins against his mother). But, the
answer to this is unclear and ultimately unsolvable. Quentin repeats that his Father thinks that “nobody ever did know if Bon ever knew Sutpen was his father or not, whether he was trying to revenge his mother or not at first and only later fell in love” (Absalom, Absalom 216). The other characters may decide what they think Bon may have been doing, but in the end it doesn’t truly matter if they have figured out Bon’s motivation – what is important is that Bon does not enter the Sutpen story without reason. He is searching for something and is on a quest, even though it is highly obscured.

If Bon’s quest is unable to be concretely stated, his success is equally as obscured. His full intentions are unable to be fully seen, but it seems as though Bon may succeed in some sense. If his quest is to marry Judith, his death makes him a failure. However, Bon’s death is out of his control and he does indeed become engaged. If anything, an engagement signifies a level of success – if he wasn’t murdered, it is probable that he would indeed marry Judith. If Bon’s quest is to get Sutpen to acknowledge him as his son, then he also has some level of success, as he infiltrates the Sutpen family. But, Thomas does not acknowledge this to Bon’s face, rather telling Henry of their relation. So, Bon is associated with Thomas, although not to his face. In the end, there is little access to Bon’s interiority – it can’t fully be understood how Bon feels about himself or what he intends to do. Additionally, what causes other artist heroes to be identified as failure are their doubts and complex feelings regarding what they plan to do. With Bon, these doubts never emerge so success or failure is based on events alone. Almost all of what is known of Bon’s character is hearsay or built upon the events that surround him, making it almost impossible to define his success or lack thereof.

What is most interesting about the artist hero narrative of Absalom, Absalom is the continuation of the quest of the artist hero and attempts to solve the problems of the family past
even after Bon’s death. This comes about through Judith, his half-sister and fiancée. In his writing, Faulkner has an entirely complex relationship with his female characters, either characterizing them as cold or too precious to write their interiority. This shift, then, to a female carrying forward the artist hero legacy is significant. After finding out of Bon’s death and finding his picture of the Octaroon woman (a woman whom he had fathered a child with), Judith understands exactly what Bon is trying to communicate. Rather than being an actual declaration of his love for another woman, Judith (who could be described as being in somewhat of a ‘vulcan mind-meld’ with Bon) understands this to be Bon’s attempt to help her move past him/not mourn him. In understanding this, Judith immediately moves to plan Bon’s funeral, something with Rosa (who witnesses all of this) does not entirely understand. This is, however, a significant moment in the course of the artist-hero narrative. Beyond just innately understanding Bon’s intentions, Judith takes up (intentionally or not) the quest of the artist hero to repair the sins of the past. She however, unlike past artist-heroes, actually takes actions to begin to initiate this repair. It is soon revealed that Judith has buried Bon in an unusual spot for a lover. In continuing his investigation of the Sutpen family, “Quentin looked at the three identical headstones with their faint identical letter, slanted a little in the soft loamy decay of accumulated cedar needles, these decipherable too when he looked close, the first one: Charles Bon. Born in New Orleans, Louisiana. Died at Sutpen’s Hundred…‘She did it,’ he said” (Absalom, Absalom 155). What is unusual is that Bon is buried in the family plot. This act accepts Bon into the Sutpen family – if Judith was unaware of their relation, she would not have buried him in her family plot. This act accepts Bon as an actual part of the Sutpen family. This then, is a gesture of reparation for Thomas Sutpen’s rejection of Bon as a child. As Bon is dead, this does not entirely make up for Sutpen’s actions, however, the gesture is significant – Bon would not know if he was not buried
within the family plot, but Judith still does it. This, then points to Judith as the first of the artist-
heroes to perform a gesture, symbolic or otherwise, that can be read as a reparation.

Further, however, Judith makes another gesture of reparations by taking in Charles
Etienne de Saint Valery Bon, Charles’ son with the Octaroon woman. It is revealed that Charles
Etienne is also buried in the family plot, another acceptance of the mixed race portion of the
Sutpen family. Along with this, the moment in which Judith takes in the boy is described in
detail, giving access to Judith’s interiority and again, showing her as connected to Bon’s past
poeticism:

She again, still without moving, not stirring so much as a muscle, as if she stood
on the outside thicket into which she had cajoled the animal which she knew was
watching her though she could not see it...instead just speaking it, her voice soft
and swooning, filled with that seduction, that celestial promise which is the
female’s weapon: ‘Call me Aunt Judith, Charles.’ (Absalom, Absalom 169)

In asking Charles Etienne to call her Aunt Judith, Judith takes a doubled responsibility. She
identifies herself as a caretaker – in the South, an Aunt is not necessarily related via blood, but
serves as another caretaker and as non-blood kin. However, Judith is aware of her relation to
Charles Etienne and, in identifying herself as Aunt, Judith again identifies Bon as part of her
biological family, somewhat fulfilling his quest. Judith also overcomes a small part of the racial
trauma of the Southern past. She does not care about Charles Etienne’s black blood, both from
Bon and from the Octaroon woman and accepts him for something society would repudiate him
for. This, however, is not a full repair to the sins of the South and Judith herself is not entirely
free of the racism that surrounds her. Yet, Judith still commands respect through her actions that
seem to be entirely opposite of what a respectable Southern woman would do. Despite her
romantic love for him, Judith continues forward with Bon’s possible quest to seek familial acceptance, as, at every turn, she identifies him as related and part of the Sutpen family. Though she does take action, Judith is not wholly successful. Charles Etienne, despite being nurtured by Judith, grows up a tortured young man, one who appears white but knows that he is not. Charles is sent to jail, then sent away by General Compson, before returning with a fully black wife and son. He, along with Judith, then dies of Yellow Fever. Rather than becoming a Southern gentleman or a wholly positive character, Charles’ past and lineage is complex, which leads to his ultimate downfall. Judith is unable to control or change this, leaving Bon’s overall quest only partially complete. It is however, important to take note of her very real and very successful gestures of inclusion of Bon and his lineage in the Sutpen family after his death.

In relationship to the other artist heroes, Bon is the most obscured, but also the closest, if not the only one, to reach success. However, it can never truly be known if he actually is successful in the way the reader wants him to be. Yet, Bon’s personal success lies in the love he has with Judith – one that is seen as genuine and that, even after his death, continues to serve as a way to solve the problems of his past and Thomas’ rejection of him. This also points to a level of frustration Faulkner has with the artist hero and their interiority. In Absalom, Absalom, Faulkner shies away from the interiority of the artist hero, but still cannot help but give a character elements of the artist hero. Faulkner once stated that when he shaped his works, he saw “‘a moment in experience – a thought – an incident – that’s there. Then all I do is work up to that moment. I figure what must have happened before to lead people to that particular moment, and I work away from it, finding out how people act after that moment. That’s how all my books and stories come’” (Parker 132). In not focusing on the artist hero and their interiority, Faulkner is able to focus on the moment in experience and the plotting and narrative that led up to it, rather
than the tortured thoughts and mind of the artist hero. It is, perhaps, a breath of fresh air for Faulkner. Yet, with the inclusion of the obscured artist hero, it is clear that Faulkner cares deeply about the mission and life of the artist hero, but is unable to, at this moment, have it been the main focus of his novel.
Conclusion

In understanding the progression of the artist hero through Faulkner’s major works, the function of Faulkner’s artist hero, as well as his concerns with the success of the artist hero can be seen. Through Quentin, Darl, Horace, Hightower, Ike, and Charles Bon, Faulkner finds interest in not just the quest of the artist hero but also in utilizing the artist hero as a vehicle for his overarching concerns.

Faulkner’s works, overall, are primarily concerned with the vulgarities of sex and the problems of race within a broken South (the South after the Civil War). Within his narratives, Faulkner explores the consequences of the overall Southern past and the pasts of individual families. In the first half of his novels, Faulkner focuses in on sexual problems, from incest to rape. His focus then transitions to focusing on problems of race, including miscegenation and slavery. As the focus of Faulkner’s work, it is clear that these themes are the ones which Faulkner is most concerned with. Yet, the problems of this broken South are wholly unsolvable. Faulkner cannot force the entire South to repent for the sins of the past or to repair the brokenness of the South himself. Rather, he shows the problems of the Southern past through his literature. But there is still a frustration – even though he shows what comes of the broken South, Faulkner cannot himself repair it.

But why write about the irreparable? Faulkner himself stated that his novels had a “definite order, a hidden but discoverable shape. ‘Each book had to have a design’” (Parker 17). In knowing this, Faulkner’s writing choice cannot be rationalized as pure coincidence. The repetition of the artist hero across his narratives, regardless of emphasis on sex or race, is important. Equally important is the realization that none of these artist heroes succeed in any of their quests. Unsurprisingly, these quests all have a relation to solving a problem of the past that
affects the present. These are both within and outside of family structures. Further, “Faulkner’s fiction tends to refer back to itself as a self-generating process, shifting emphasis from the immediacies of felt experience to the hazards of telling and retelling. But no matter how far it recedes, the referential horizon is always there” (Bleikasten 85). Faulkner’s artist heroes are both designed and interrelated.

After issues of sex and race, the artist hero character appears to be Faulkner’s tertiary concern. And, in understanding that sexual and racial issues are intertwined in Faulkner’s exploration of the broken South, it is clear that the artist hero is also interrelated in Faulkner’s mind. Across all of his narratives the artist hero consistently strives to solve an impossible quest or answer an impossible question – this quest never comes to fruition, just as Faulkner’s need to solve the problems of a broken Southern history will never be fulfilled. If Faulkner the man cannot solve the South, can Faulkner the author? Via the artist hero, maybe. The artist hero in Faulkner’s works is the third element of an overall attempt to solve the racial and sexual problems and to atone for the sins of the South.

But, if the artist hero does not and cannot succeed, what is Faulkner’s motive for placing this character in most, if not all, of his narratives? The answer to this question is less clear. Perhaps Faulkner utilizes this character as a way to explore potential solutions to assuage his own Southern guilt and the failure of the artist hero emerges organically, rather than being a planned plot point. Or perhaps Faulkner knows that the South and the guilt of the South is inescapable and the use of the artist hero’s failure is to be a statement that the South can never escape its past. Neither seems wholly sufficient or can be fully argued. Yet, in continuing to explore Faulkner’s works and his life, the artist hero’s appearances and the consequences of these appearances is significant.
Bibliography


