

“Man will not merely endure: he will prevail”; How the characters in William Faulkner’s
novels meet and defy the expectations of the hero

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Abstract

This thesis explores and investigates what creates the character of the hero, and how the characters in William Faulkner's novels meet and defy these expectations and descriptions. The aim of this thesis is to study the characters in William Faulkner's novels, compare them to existing scholarship surrounding the identity of the hero, and then ultimately to create my own definition of what makes a Faulknerian hero, based upon the characters being studied and the existing scholarship. The key concept of this thesis focuses on intention, and it is my argument that intention is integral in identifying the Faulknerian hero. I will also be presenting the influence which the reader has in this identification. I will be presenting the idea that ultimately it is the reader's perception of a hero rather than the community perception of a hero which is most important and influential. Chapter one will explore the role of gender in William Faulkner's novels and how this influences the identity of the hero. I will be drawing on ideas of femininity and masculinity and the role these play in identifying the hero in southern society. Chapter two will explore the southern ideologies of violence and war and how the perceptions of these themes create ideas of what creates a hero. This chapter will also focus on the way racial prejudice and white supremacy in the South creates the identity of the hero in the eyes of the reader and of the community in the novel. Chapter three explores the ways in which religion and mythology influence both the reader's and the community in the novel's ideas of what creates a hero, and the way this influences Faulkner's characters. Christianity, its role in this research and in southern society is specifically highlighted. The ideas and characters explored in all three chapters will pinpoint my definition of a Faulknerian hero and will be brought together in my conclusion to clearly

outline these in reference to my key concept of intent/intention and what makes a Faulknerian hero.

Introduction

“I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.”¹

-William Faulkner, Nobel Prize in Literature Acceptance Speech, 1949

In this thesis I will examine how the characters in William Faulkner’s novels meet and defy the expectations of the hero. My methodology for this research is interdisciplinary, so I will be examining the characters in William Faulkner’s novels from literary, social and historical points of view. I will be examining how chosen characters in Faulkner’s novels are viewed by the society in which they are living, but also how they are viewed by the reader. Using this methodology, I will be focusing on the reader’s experience and perceptions of these characters. I will then discuss how the reader’s perceptions influence what makes a Faulknerian hero. I have chosen definitions of the word hero from different literary scholarship, and then compared William Faulkner’s characters to these definitions using the characters, actions, dialogue, thoughts and decisions.

From my research I have formed my own definition of what a hero is, specifically in regards to Faulkner’s characters and what creates a Faulknerian hero. My own definition of the hero is as follows: a hero is a character who will attempt to save one or more beings from a fatal, unwelcome or unfortunate circumstance. The hero will show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and furthermore the act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays. The hero will be willing to defy social expectation and, in some cases, the law in an attempt to fulfil their intention of saving. The

¹ Charles Neider. *Essays Of The Masters*. (New York: Cooper Square Press), 61.

intention behind the act is what makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. The execution of the Faulknerian hero's intention is one the reader will hope to be successful.

The key concept of my research and contribution to the discussion surrounding the Faulknerian hero is intention versus execution. That it is not the act itself which makes Faulkner's characters heroic, but it is the intention behind the act which shows the true heroism of the character. I use the word 'intention' here to describe what the character's motives behind their decisions are, and what their reasons are for their decisions. When using the word 'execution', I mean the result of their decision or act, and how this affects not only them, but those they intend to save.

'Perception' is a key term in my research, and I am using this to refer to how a character is viewed, with particular reference to the term 'hero'. I will be referencing the reader's perception of a character and the perception the society and community in which the character is living has also. These two perceptions will be identified individually, as often throughout the research the two will conflict, which in itself identifies certain characteristics of what makes a hero through my methodology of intention versus action.

Though the word 'character' can be used in a more general sense, it is important to understand that during this thesis, the word 'character' will often be used in reference to specific character forms and archetypes which will differ from each other. 'Character' in a general term will be used to describe the people in the exemplified narratives highlighted in this research, and it will also be used specifically in regards to specific characters. The mythological characters examined in this research are the characters in mythology who often

have non-human like qualities. They are the characters who scholars such as Joseph Campbell explore. The relationship between the reader and the mythological character is quite distant, as they are separated from each other with the use of different worlds and non-human like qualities. I will examine the structural aspects of Campbell's research which focuses on myth such as the quest narrative, and compare it to narratives in Faulkner's novels.

Modernist characters are presented and recognised in Faulkner's novels, and this is because Faulkner is a modernist writer. In *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*, Daniel J. Singal identifies Faulkner as a modernist writer who demonstrates strong reactions and oppositions against already established religious, political, and social expectations and ideas. An example of this is Joe Christmas's unspecified race, which challenges previous ideas of racial identity and segregation in the community. Individualism in modernist literature is arguably what creates the relationship between the reader and modernist character, because the main focus of the literature is the individual character. I will be using a reader response methodology which is appropriate for the modernist characters which Faulkner has created. The individualism approach allows the reader to focus on the character, and their qualities as a Faulknerian hero.

One of Faulkner's most identifiable styles is stream of consciousness, and his use of this in many of his characters also allows a relationship between the reader and Faulknerian character. My key concept of intention being at the core of what defines a hero in Faulkner's characters is appropriate for the reading and understanding of them, as the modernist style of

stream of consciousness provides insight into the intention of a character. This will allow for the reader to determine what defines a hero in Faulkner's characters.

The narrators and speakers of the novels often provide the reader with an insight into the goings on of the novel that the other characters might not know. The narrator's form differs between Faulkner's novels, and when discussing my chosen Faulknerian novels it is important to remember that the narrator is not always reliable. Just as the narrators vary between forms such as first person and third person, so does their reliability. Faulkner uses the narrator and speaker to create his paradoxical characters when using multiple speakers and narratives. Individual speakers and community speakers both judge, and withhold from judging, the hero. This is why there is importance in the reader's experience from the texts and why it is one of my responses to the novels and surrounding scholarships in my research.

There is discussion in this research regarding protagonists and antagonists. When using the term protagonist in this thesis, I am referring to the leading figure in the novel. Specifically, in regards to how these roles influence how the reader and the society where the narrative is set view a certain character. Whether the Faulknerian characters are seen as a protagonist or an antagonist often is subjective between the reader and the society in which the character is living. An example of this is Thomas Sutpen, who is the focus of many of the different narrative voices in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Depending on who is telling their story, Sutpen is presented as both an antagonist and a protagonist, a topic discussed in wider scholarship such as *Racism- A social evil in the novel Absalom, Absalom by William Faulkner*. When using the term 'antagonist', I am referring to the character who presents an opposing force to the protagonist.

The narratives in Faulkner's novels also have an influence on the identity of the protagonist and antagonists, for example if Darl is the protagonist in *As I Lay Dying*, Anse can be seen as the antagonist to Darl as he begins and perceives through the Bundren's trip to Jefferson. If Addie is the protagonist however, then Anse would be the antagonist, as she resents him for taking away her independence through marriage. It will also be argued that Anse uses Addie's death for his own gain. Faulkner's characters are presented through modernist writing, and there is scholarship to prove this. Stephen Kern in *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* describes the modernist writing style of having an "absent protagonists"², and Addie's chapter in *As I Lay Dying* is an example of this when she speaks from beyond the grave. Kern also argues that there is a paradoxical nature to Faulkner's characters, as they show a contradictory nature in the community and internally. This is also why the methodologies chosen in this thesis are used, as Kern also argues that because of the paradoxical and oxymoron nature of Faulknerian characters, these categories of protagonists and antagonists cannot be fully fulfilled. Furthermore, it can be argued that it is peripheral characters who are used the most to make an impact in the discussion of the hero and in Faulkner's fiction. I am contributing to the discussions surrounding Faulknerian protagonists and antagonists with my key concept of intent and intention as I am using this concept to identify who meet these roles.

Joseph Campbell provides scholarship regarding the structure of a hero narrative. Campbell writes about the three stages of 'world' which the character of the hero faces to complete their heroic quest. Within these three stages are twelve more, however the main outline of the heroic quest structure is split into three. Campbell's ideology of the heroic quest states that

² Stephen Kern, *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 21. Subsequent page references in text.

the hero starts his or her journey in the first stage which is the mundane, “ordinary world”³, then “passes the threshold” (64) into the second stage or the “special world” (64). According to Campbell this stage is where “the story takes off and the adventure gets going” (64). The third and final stage is where the hero returns to the “ordinary world” (64) which has changed slightly as “it would be meaningless unless he/she brought back the elixir, treasure, or some lesson from the special world” (64).

Christopher Booker focuses on plot with his scholarship *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. Booker presents the idea that any story can be categorized into “The Seven Basic Plots”⁴, and that though different characters stories may differ, they will all somehow fall into one of his identified categories. Though he does not specifically focus on the character of the hero, many of the plots Booker identifies are structured with heroic events or journeys which Faulkner’s stories also fall into. “The Seven Basic Plots” (55) are “Overcoming the Monster” (55) where the protagonist must defeat an antagonist who is a threat to either the protagonist or their home. “Rags to Riches” (55) where a poor protagonist gains such attributes such as wealth, fame, power or love, loses it and then earns it back through personal growth. “The Quest” (55) where the protagonist accompanied by friends or family journeys to find a certain treasure or location and faces obstacles and challenges along the way. “Voyage and Return” (56), where protagonist travels to a new land where they overcome obstacles and return home with a new experience; “Comedy” (56) where there is a joyful and humorous character who overcomes adverse circumstance and the result is the character leading a happy life. (Booker is known to stress that there is much more to comedy than just humour. Within this plot

³ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*. (Novato: New World Library, 2012), 64. Subsequent page references in text.

⁴ Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2017) 55. Subsequent page references in text.

Booker states that the comedy is caused by the plot and events getting more and more confusing until one revelation clarifies everything.) “Tragedy” (56), where the protagonist is heroic and great until they are undone and thwarted by a one major flaw, their unfortunate decline results in pity and sympathy and their end is tragic compared to their hopeful beginning. Finally, the last plot which Booker recognizes is the “Rebirth” (56), where the protagonist is changed into a better person or version of themselves due to a significant event or the meeting of a new person. This scholarship from Campbell and Booker focuses on structure and the execution of the hero’s act rather than the intention. I will be using these structural ideas to form my argument surrounding the significance of intention compared to execution when defining the Faulknerian hero.

There is also scholarship regarding the prejudices of the community in which the characters in Faulkner’s novels are living, and this has an influence on the community perception of the hero. Texts such as *Black Masculinity and the U. S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* by Riche Richardson and *Masculinity, Menace, and American Mythologies of Race in Faulkner's Anti-Heroes* by Lisa K. Nelson are examples of scholarship in this thesis which focus on how a character’s race influences their identity as the hero. In regards to the gender prejudices and expectations of southern society, Nelson also provides scholarship regarding this. Brian Norman in his book *Dead Women Talking: Figures of Injustice in American Literature* also provides scholarship surrounding the theme of gender, with specific reference to how dead female characters hold significance in novels. Scholarship such as this will help me to identify the expected roles of social groups in southern communities. This scholarship will further my argument that it is the reader who is most important when identifying a

Faulknerian hero and not the “raced, classed, and gendered ideology of the southern gentleman”⁵ Riche Richardson refers to.

The word ‘hero’ itself is open to many definitions, therefore an identification of the word ‘hero’ must be made before it is applied to any piece of work. The definitions I have chosen shall be used as a standard to which the characters in William Faulkner’s novels shall be held in my research, however it is from exploring, comparing and criticising these definitions that I have created my own definition.

When reading the definitions of the word ‘hero’ which are about to be presented, it is important to remember that they are not the only definitions that exist, nor are they definitively right or wrong explanations. As a collective, the definitions chosen produce a varying range of ideals and also are derived from different time periods and mediums of research, but they are not the only ones. I have chosen a wide range of primary and secondary reading for my research, in order for my research to be broad and accurate.

Harold Bloom in *The Hero’s Journey* states that “one definition of a hero is a person who, through genius or courage or might, can accomplish what a normal person cannot.”⁶ I am focusing on this quotation specifically for a definition of what achieves the status of a hero as it defines specific qualities which the characters can strive for. By highlighting “genius or courage” (63). Bloom is specifying what creates a hero, and therefore the occurrence or absence of these qualities will allow me to identify which characters can be identified as heroes in regards to Bloom’s standards. Furthermore, the actual descriptions themselves can

⁵ Riché Richardson, *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South: From Uncle Tom To Gangsta* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 75. Subsequent page references in text.

⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Hero's Journey*. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 63. Subsequent page references in text.

be open to interpretation just as the word hero is. Bloom's scholarship will allow many different arguments and discussions to be had in regards to the role of the hero in William Faulkner's characters. War and violence are themes and events which occur a great deal in many of Faulkner's characters' lives, for example in *Flags in the Dust* and *The Unvanquished*. Therefore, with the aforementioned definition in mind, -a discussion can be had over whether those who go to war and fight are using this attribute to achieve what a "normal person" (63), such as civilians, cannot.

It could be argued that as a source, Bloom is outdated and not socially relevant. However, I believe this to be untrue, and will argue that theorists like Bloom and Campbell to be relevant and valuable to my research. Though they write in reference to Greek mythology and other more dated archetypes, Bloom and Campbell's work can still be seen as relevant. Aside from religion, mythology is one of the oldest representations of heroes we have, I believe it sets a foundation for the standards to which we hold heroes and I intend to explore religion in relation to the hero, so it only fits that mythology is discussed too. The characters in Greek literature are some of the earliest examples of heroes we have, for example Achilles, Hercules and Odysseus. Both authors are relevant when discussing more contemporary heroes as we can see the evolution and differences between the two and where these heroic identities are derived from.

Authors Scott T. Allison and George R. Goethals in their book *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them* label eight qualities which define a hero called the "Great Eight"⁷. These traits are "smart, strong, resilient, selfless, caring, charismatic, reliable, and inspiring. It's unusual for a hero to possess all eight of these characteristics, but most heroes have a

⁷ Allison, Scott T, and George R. Goethals. *Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*. (OUP USA, 2010), 42. Subsequent page references in text.

majority of them.”⁸ Though this definition of what creates a hero specifies which qualities to look for, Allison and Goethals then go on to say that a hero does not have to possess all eight of the characteristics. Allison and Goethals lift the veil of perfection which arguably lays over the idea of what creates a hero. One could argue that the qualities which Allison and Goethals provide describe what makes a good person rather than a hero, however I believe they provide a less glorified view of what a hero should be, and a less common view also. Allison and Goethals use scholars such as Bloom and Campbell to influence their work and research. I have chosen to include this definition as a framework of comparison to Faulkner’s characters as it is a definition from a more contemporary source and I am focusing on the reader’s perspective. Having this definition means that the scope of descriptions being examined is widened as there are definitions from various time periods and authors. If the characters in Faulkner’s novels meet this definition of the hero, this will also mean that Faulkner’s characters are defined as heroes in a contemporary society. This allows a new perspective of how Faulkner’s characters are viewed both in their own society, and that of the modern-day reader.

Joseph Campbell, the author of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and *The Power of Myth* focuses on mythology in regards to the perception of the character of the hero. An observation he makes is “you could be a local god, but for the people whom that local god conquered, you could be the enemy. Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative”⁹. As an expert on the character of the hero in regards to mythology, this quotation

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⁹ Joseph Campbell. *The Power of Myth*. (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group 1986), 156. Subsequent page references in text.

presents the idea of the different perspectives that surround the figure of a hero. Campbell's statement suggests that what defines a hero is dependent upon who is defining them. It also supports the previous ideas of there being paradoxical features of a heroic character. To those whom the hero is saving, he or she can be defined as a hero, yet to those who they are defeating they can be seen as the enemy. This difference in perspective is the reason I shall be using this idea of hero and monster and the fine line between. The characters in Faulkner's novels can be seen as heroes depending on the perspective we are viewing them from. Applying this quotation to the character's actions will help gain a greater understanding of them and how they are perceived

Campbell also provides scholarship on what his perception of a heroic act is. Campbell states it is "saving a people, saving a person, or supporting an idea" (156). I have chosen this description to give insight into my research as, unlike the previous definitions, it focuses on the actions a hero does rather than the qualities they possess. This quotation shall be used in comparison to the previous descriptions of what defines a hero, and by making this comparison I intend to examine what a hero is, what a hero does and, to what extent these factors define them. A key concept in my research is regarding intention, and I will use this quotation to support this.

The primary texts explored in this study have been chosen as they each correlate and contrast different characters and ideas of what makes a hero in regards to my definition, and the already existing scholarship. Gender, war and religion are the main themes that will be focussed on in this thesis as they are some of the most prominent conflicts in the southern society Faulkner was writing in. These are also themes which dominate throughout my chosen primary texts. Furthermore, these themes influence the perception of what makes a

hero and also influence the intention of characters in Faulkner's novels, so I shall be using my concept of intention and reader response to explore this.

The texts by William Faulkner I have chosen provide a wide scope of narratives and characters for me to explore and analyse. They all have comparative and contrasting themes and characters which have enabled me to explore what a Faulknerian hero is, compare them to existing scholarship, and then create my own definition of the Faulknerian hero. I have examined these texts in regards to my key concept behind my definition which is the 'intention' of a character over the execution of their heroic act, and I have used scholarship surrounding these texts to further my observations and understandings.

Flags in the Dust follows the decline of the Sartoris family and the post-war society. The novel presents ideas of heroism and masculinity and how these factors create an ideal of the hero. This can be seen as a result of the ideas and mind sets created by war in the South. Young Bayard is the product of survivor's guilt, toxic masculinity, prophecy and a long line of patriarchs. It is the way these factors correlate in regards to my definition, and the already existing scholarship which is why I have chosen to include it in my research.

The Sound and the Fury is told non-chronologically and by different narrative voices, the first three chapters are told by the Compson brothers, and the fourth chapter is spoken by a third person narrator. The Compson's struggle with morality, masculinity and honour, and the warped sense of right and wrong which the Compson's have provides interesting discussion in regards to heroism and the qualities of the hero. Furthermore, the intention a character has in this novel is not always what it seems, the reader is shown a change in Young Bayard's intentions and actions throughout his narrative, so this is an appropriate case study for my key concepts of research.

As I Lay Dying is narrated by varying characters from chapter to chapter, all with different insights and perspectives of the goings on in the novel. The contribution which this novel provides is the difference between intention and execution of a heroic or non-heroic act. As a collective the Bundren's undertake a heroic quest all together. They meet the structural aspects of a hero's journey but not always with heroic intentions. From examining the Bundrens one can explore how a hero's identity differs when studied as an individual and as one family unit.

The protagonist in *Light in August* being a female provides examples and insight into how a reader and the community in which the novel is set reacts and is influenced by females who show qualities which defy their stereotype. Controversy surrounds women in Faulkner's literature as there are social expectations and prejudices upon them which if they fail to meet, result in negative repercussions. How women meet and defy these social expectations and the effect this has on a reader's understanding of the hero and of gender is why this novel is significant to this study.

The story of Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* is told by multiple narrative voices, some who knew him and others who are retelling the stories which they hear. The voices cross location and time. Sutpen proves to be a complex character to analyse because of this, as his multifaceted past and legacy creates many different identities for him- some which appear more heroic than others to the reader, and those narrating his story. Who and what Sutpen is changes depending on opinion and interpretation, therefore he is a significant character in this study.

The Unvanquished has a narrative which surrounds war, violence, honour and revenge. Often the acts committed in the narrative are from a preconceived idea of masculinity and honour that is romanticised by the southern community. Concepts and ideas of heroism and villainy and the influences war and violence has on a society are the focal points of discussion surrounding this novel.

A compilation of short fictional tales creates Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* and the three stories focused on in my research are 'The Bear', 'The Fire and the Hearth' and 'Pantaloon in Black'. The novels themes are what make it relevant to the characteristics and definitions of the hero. Themes such as religion, masculinity and initiation all have ideas and structures derived from the community, past ideas of heroism and what makes a hero. Race is also a significant theme in this novel. How Rider is perceived and controlled by his race and the prejudices of the South at the time has an influence on if he is seen as a hero or a villain, which is why I have chosen him specifically as a character to explore.

This thesis will provide a new input into the discussion surrounding Faulknerian heroes as I will be contributing from an internationalist view point. I will be focusing on characters as individuals especially in regards intention and intent. I am making the argument that it is the intention of one's actions which outweighs the success of execution when it comes to defining a Faulknerian hero. One of Faulkner's identifiable writing styles is his experimentation with stream of consciousness, the interpersonal perspective the reader is presented with is why I will argue that it is the reader who ultimately knows the intention of the character, so it is them who can recognise the meeting and defying of the expectations of the hero. The definition which I have conducted from my research of what makes a Faulknerian hero is one I have derived from the contrasts and comparisons between

Faulkner's characters and my chosen definitions of the word 'hero'. It is this definition, my key concept of intention vs execution, and the argument that the reader is the ultimate judge of what makes a Faulknerian hero that makes my research valuable and relevant to the existing scholarship of what makes a hero and the position of William Faulkner's characters in this discussion.

Chapter One: Gender and the Hero

This chapter will examine the role gender has in identifying the Faulknerian hero, and how the gender of Faulkner's characters influences the perception of what a hero is, and there is much discussion surrounding scholarship in regards to gender in Faulkner's novels. In many of Faulkner's novels, women can be viewed as heroines both as individual characters and collectively as a gender. Deborah Clarke highlights how masculine traits in women are what cause controversy in the society which Faulkner's characters live. I will draw upon this when arguing that it is women defying their expected 'feminine' qualities which portray them as heroes, in connection with my definition of the Faulknerian hero. Other scholarship such as *Masculinity, Menace, and American Mythologies of Race in Faulkner's Anti-Heroes* by Lisa K. Nelson focuses on the role race has in regards to the theme of gender. *Black Masculinity and the U. S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* by Riche Richardson also focuses on the relationship between race and gender in Faulkner's novels, specifically in regards to masculinity and the different expectations between white and black men and the factors which influence how they are seen in community.

It is scholarship such as this which has influenced my research and have helped create my argument that it is intention rather than action which creates a hero. This is because often expected gender and racial roles and external qualities are used to identify characters, and not their intentions or internal qualities, which is a concept I am introducing in this thesis.

Terms used in this thesis regarding gender such as 'femininity', 'masculinity', 'women' and 'men' are used contextually. By this I mean that in the time in which Faulkner was writing, the terms were more segregated than they are now. When using the word 'feminine' I mean qualities and attributes which are stereotypically associated with women, and when using the

word ‘masculine, I am referring to qualities and attributes stereotypically associated with men. The terms are contextual to the novels and I am aware of this when making my arguments.

Women as Heroes

In many cases in Faulkner’s novels, women often defy the stereotype set to them of being fragile and submissive by showing many strong and arguably ‘masculine’ qualities and attributes. My argument is that by showing women defying this stereotype, Faulkner is not only suggesting a heroic attribute in his characters but in women as a gender. If, by Harold Bloom’s standards, females fulfilling their expected stereotypes is what “normal person” (63) does, then the heroic women “through courage ... [can] accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63). The word ‘courage’ here is being used to describe having the bravery to defy the expectation of the southern, patriarchal society in which the female characters living. There are multiple instances in Faulkner’s novels where female characters show ‘masculine traits’ and where ‘male heroes’ show traits considered to be ‘feminine’. Therefore, I am also arguing that certain perceptions of characters are engendered in the eyes of their society and the readers of the novels.

In the post-Civil War society of *The Unvanquished*, Bayard says “Aunt Louisa and Mrs Habersham and all the women in Jefferson were enemies to their community for the reason that the men had given in and admitted that they belonged to the United States but the women had never surrendered”.¹⁰ Though it is the men of Jefferson who battled in the war and showed attributes of hero-like qualities such as courage; the women are the ones who show

¹⁰ William Faulkner. *The Unvanquished*. (London: Vintage, 1996), 216. Subsequent page references in text.

strength and resilience. The implication from this passage is that though they did not physically fight the war, in their hearts the women never surrendered like the men of Jefferson did. The use of the word “actually” (216) suggests that the speaker finds it ridiculous that these women have been created into enemies, and arguably it is. By not surrendering, the women of Jefferson are showing qualities of the “Great Eight” (42) such as “strength” (42) and “resilience” (42), but this is seen as deviant in the eyes of the men of Jefferson. The structure of this passage, specifically “but the women had never surrendered” (216) following on from “the men had given in” (216) signifies the finality and powerful solidity of this decision. The men may have given up but even after they do, the women remain. One could interpret that the men of Jefferson see these attributes of the “Great Eight” (42) as proof that women can break the social norm, and this is a threat to their masculinity which is why they are made into the enemies. Characters such as Aunt Louisa and Mrs Habersham are portrayed as heroes not because of their actions but because of their values when faced with hardship, and this is an example of Campbell’s idea that “whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative” (156). It is an interesting perception that although the men physically battled and fought, it is the women who truly show the attributes of the hero in through not surrendering, as they are showing values of the “Great Eight” (42) such as “resilience” (42). The women are doing what is expected of the men, so in regards to my definition of ‘masculinity’ provided, this is the attributes they are showing. The women’s intention is to fight, even though they do not physically do it, and it is examples like these which prove the concept of intention to be valuable when examining Faulknerian heroes.

To the men of Jefferson, the women are the enemy because of these attributes. Not because they hold un-heroic qualities, but because they hold qualities which the men themselves do not. The men resent these women but the readers admire them, this view is shown through the

speaker, and we see this with the word “actually” (216). Calling someone a hero is “all relative” (156), but so is calling someone the enemy. The women of Jefferson are viewed as the “monster” (156) which Campbell writes about, but to the readers they are heroes. The women of Jefferson also meet my own definition of the Faulknerian hero as their heroic acts come with a price which the hero ultimately pays- the resentment of the men in Jefferson. Furthermore, the women are willing to defy social expectation to fulfil their intention.

It is the women’s gender which cause this reaction in the men, as they are not conforming to their expected role of being passive and obedient. The character of Drusilla is also an example of this, as she also receives negative responses due to showing perceived ‘masculine’ traits of violence and sexuality. Deborah Clarke provides scholarship suggesting this also, as she explains that “Drusilla’s quest for violence is only condemned because of her gender”¹¹. Lisa K. Nelson uses an example of how a character’s race also supports this idea. Nelson discusses “the myth of the black rapist”¹², an ideology that all white women fear black men due to their sexual desires for them, and that all black men wish to rape white women. Nelson writes that this myth was designed to threaten white women, white supremacy and “simultaneously provided an excuse for racial control- the bestial nature of black masculine desire- and a script for racial punishment: lynching” (246). Nelson then goes on to example Joanna in *Light in August*, who does not fear or try to protect herself from Joe Christmas, a man of mixed racial heritage. Nelson argues that in Joanna’s “failure to perform ‘whiteness’ and ‘femininity’” (246) by fearing Joe, “she problematizes his own performance of

¹¹ Deborah Clarke. "Gender, War and Cross-Dressing". *Faulkner and gender*. ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. (University Press of Mississippi, 1996) 244

¹² Lisa K. Nelson, ‘Masculinity, Menace, and American Mythologies of Race in Faulkner’s Anti-Heroes’, *The Faulkner Journal*, 19/2 (Spring 2004), 246. Subsequent page references in text.

‘blackness’ and ‘masculinity’” (246). This idea creates a relationship dynamic between ‘femininity’, ‘masculinity’ and race, as in Faulkner’s novels one idea cannot exist without the other. If the roles which characters perceive and play influence one another, then the reader needs to be the one to identify a character, as they are not a part of that relationship dynamic in the novel.

It is my argument that a demonstration of strength in a perceived weaker character is seen as a threat by those who cannot match it. This observation provides an idea into what creates a hero as, in this example, it is unexpected heroic qualities not what is expected which hold the most impact. My definition of the Faulknerian hero has been partly formed by the women of the south as displayed in my previous examples. The endurance of the exemplified women comes with a price which they ultimately pay, as they are shunned by society. They are willing to defy social expectation for what they believe is right and showing more ‘masculine’ qualities. This is why my concept of intention and intent is at the key of my methodology, as it is the reader who can see this even if the community cannot.

In the novel *Light in August*, women are divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad’ by the men in society. It is an opinion in Jefferson that “no good woman can be fooled...because, by being good herself, she does not need to worry anymore about hers or anybody else's goodness; hence she has plenty of time to smell out sin”¹³. Women can either be good or bad, it is a very simplistic view which the community has. Here, the speaker is suggesting that a woman can only be seen as a good character if she can condemn and see sin in others. Once again, how a woman is recognised in the terms of heroic status is determined by the male characters and this is derived from the expectation that women should not be sinful. By this standard which

¹³ William Faulkner. *Light in August*. (London: Vintage Classics, 2005), 47. Subsequent page references in text.

is set by the men in the community, condemning other women is viewed as a more admired quality than that of not surrendering in war. Being able to “smell out sin” (47) is what the men of Jefferson believe to be a quality which makes a ‘good’ woman. I argue this is because these qualities do not affect nor intimidate the male characters or their ‘masculinity’. We can see this further when exemplifying the patronising tone of “by being her good self” (47). There is an animalistic and primal inference to the idea of smelling out sin as usually this is how an animal would track its prey. My inference is that the expectation of women is to have these natural and primal instincts of smelling out sin, as it is expected they should be the good and holy pillars of the community which attributes like these are measured. A woman not conforming to this high standard of morality proves to be especially deviant in southern society and this is shown in *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin tries to claim to be the father of his sister Caddy’s baby because she is unmarried and refuses to reveal the name of the father. It seems that in Quentin’s view, being seen as the culprit of incest is better than the alternative of having a woman in the family who is sexually promiscuous. It is moments like this in Faulkner’s novels where the extent the patriarchy will go to control women is clearly displayed. One of the definitions of a hero from Joseph Campbell is “supporting an idea” (156), and when women do not support the ideas of how men believe they should act; this is when they are seen as monsters rather than heroes. Faulkner is presenting to the reader that in southern society, when a woman has the potential to be seen as a hero, an attempt will be made to hinder this due to the insecurities of the male characters. Smadar Shiffman writes “our understandings of fictional character is based upon our knowledge of people in the world”¹⁴, and this is true of both the reader and the community in the novel. The

¹⁴ Smadar Shiffman, ‘Romantic, Radical, and Ridiculous: Faulkner’s Hero as Oxymoron’, *Style* 29/1 (1995), 18. Subsequent page references in text.

understanding the community in the novel has is based on the male character's knowledge and views of women, but the reader has a greater understanding and experience that they are given by the speaker. This is why in my definition, the hero's intention is one the reader will hope to be successful.

Lena in *Light in August* defies the expectation of her gender and her illegitimate pregnancy by also showing strength and resilience. When she is walking down the road in the first chapter, two men observe Lena and discuss her situation. The men converse saying "I wonder where she got that belly...I reckon she knows where she is going...she walks like it" (11). The way in which this line is written suggests that as a young, unwed and pregnant female; Lena should be metaphorically lost as well as lost on her journey, yet she is showing strength and resilience by taking it upon herself to make her journey. She is achieving that which Bloom defines as what "normal person cannot" (63) and by normal person, I mean a normal woman of southern society at the time in which Lena is living. By saying that Lena walks like she knows where she is going, Winterbottom and Armstid are portraying that they are surprised with Lena's determination and resilience in her journey. Lena does show the attributes of a hero with her journey to find her baby's father, yet the two men still feel the need to discuss her being pregnant. "I wonder where she got that belly" (11) is a rhetorical question as it is clear that she is pregnant from sex outside of marriage, yet it is the first topic which Armstid and Winterbottom discuss in regards to Lena. It could also be argued that both Armstid and Winterbottom felt the need to shun Lena as they felt intimidated by the strong and unashamed attributes she was showing on her journey. Faulkner has written this strong-minded and determined character into a society where she is not expected to be, and this highlights Lena as a hero as well as presenting how the perspectives and prejudices of other characters influence the heroic status of unlikely heroes. This idea presented through

Lena is true to the form of modernist novels, and wider scholarship supports this, for example Maria DiBattista in *Novel Characters: A Genealogy* describes the modernist period as "giving women their first real chance to be ambitious for themselves"¹⁵. Women in Faulkner's novels such as Lena are given this chance, which is what creates their identities as heroes in regards to my definition, they are willing to defy social expectation for their cause.

The character of Tess in Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and how her rebellious actions are perceived by the society in which she is living much parallels that of Lena. After having a child out of wedlock, Tess decides to breastfeed the child in front of onlookers in the village even though the baby should be a source of shame for her. The way the narrator describes this action is: "Tess, with a curiously stealthy yet courageous movement, and with a still rising colour, unfastened her frock and began suckling the child."

¹⁶ Hardy directly uses one of the "Great Eight" (42) to describe Tess' actions here, and the nudity which Tess shows can be seen as liberating and inspirational. Tess, much like Lena, is defying society's expectation by caring for her child rather than being ashamed. In regards to mythological characters, Tess' actions much represent Greek mythology and Helen of Troy's baring of the breast. Tess breastfeeds her baby whilst Lena walks across the country to find the father of hers, and both women are judged by society but admired by the readers for it. Tess, Lena and Helen expose, express and refuse to be ashamed of their sexuality or circumstance. Once again, the deviance of a female character in the eyes of the society which they are living is heroic in that of the reader. Lena is conquering the expectation of the patriarchy and of traditional southern family values, whilst meeting my definition of the hero.

¹⁵ Maria DiBattista, *Novel Characters: A Genealogy* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 21. Subsequent page references in text.

¹⁶ Thomas Hardy. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.), 71. Subsequent page references in text.

Campbell writes “you could be a local god, but for the people whom that local god conquered, you could be the enemy. Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative” (156). Lena and Tess both attempt to save their babies, and they make attempts at “saving a person” (63) when they are doing this. With actions such as these, Tess and Lena are turned into the enemy by those whose judgement they have conquered. Tess and Lena have both influenced my definition of the hero as they show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and their act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays.

When describing Lena’s walk, the speaker describes the scenery as

back rolling now behind her [Lena] a long monotonous succession of peaceful and undeviating changes from day to dark and dark to day again, through which she advanced in identical and anonymous and deliberate wagons as though through a succession of creak-wheeled and limp-eared avatars, like something moving forever and without progress across an urn (44).

Urns themselves often depict art work and are an admired spectacle in many cultures. By using this simile to describe Lena, Faulkner can be seen as depicting her and her heroic qualities of this resilient and inspiring journey as something to be admired. Furthermore, there is a strong reference here to John Keats’ poem *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, where the speaker admired a Grecian urn and the woman upon it as she is immortal and everlasting. Keates describes the woman on the urn as:

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

...

Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain¹⁷

The speaker is in awe of the immortality and resilient beauty of the women on the urn and how she shall always remain the same even after those who admire her die. The adoration from the speaker can be seen to be reflected in the narrator's perception of Lena due to this reference, they describe her as an urn because her actions and resilience shall be everlasting which is what makes her so beautiful. This argument can be taken further to suggest that Lena's heroic qualities are what cause this adoration. Lena's journey is described as "like something moving forever" (44) and her form is much like the never changing beauty which is on the urn. Though she is not described as making progress, she is still admired. Lena shows most of the Great Eight qualities; "smart, strong, resilient, selfless, caring....and inspiring" (42) and these attributes are reflected in the words of both the speaker in *Light In August* and in the poem. If the definition of the hero lies in being admired for your courage, achievements and qualities then the description of Lena can be seen as that of admiration due to her courageous decisions.

Not all of the women in Faulkner's novels can be identified as heroes however. The character of Dewey Dell in *As I Lay Dying* admits that she wishes to rely on a man to help her in her pregnant state. When discussing the man who could help her, Dewey Dell says "he could do so much for me if he just would. He could do everything for me"¹⁸, suggesting that she would take on the archetype of the 'damsel in distress' rather than the heroine. Both Lena and Dewey Dell are working class girls who are pregnant and not married, yet Dewey Dell and

¹⁷ John Keats. "Ode on a Grecian Urn by John Keats." Poetry Foundation. <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44477/ode-on-a-grecian-urn>> (accessed March 15, 2018.)

¹⁸ William Faulkner. *As I Lay Dying* (London: Vintage Classics, 1996), 52. Subsequent page references in text.

Lena differ in their narratives. This is the first line in this section of the book and the placement of this passage suggests that Dewey Dell feels more dependant and trapped by the patriarchy than Lena does. Both girls attempt to amend their situations yet Lena succeeds whereas Dewey Dell fails. They are young, pregnant, unmarried and poor, and journey across the country, yet their actions and perceptions are vastly different in their portrayal. I argue that Dewey Dell suffers more at the hands of the patriarchy than Lena does because she feels more trapped by it; as when Dewey attempts to take ownership of her situation she is abused.

Though women are admired for their defiance and fulfil the ideologies of the hero, some are admired for their noble qualities which they possess that fulfil their stereotype. In *Go Down, Moses*, Edmonds admires and is thankful to the African-American woman named Molly who cared for him as a child. Faulkner uses maternal and adoring language to describe the relationship between Edmonds and Molly and says that he

knew, who had raised him, fed him from her own breast as she was actually doing her own child, who had surrounded him always with care for his physical body and for his spirit too, teaching him his manners, behaviour--to be gentle with his inferiors, honourable with his equals, generous to the weak and considerate of the aged, courteous, truthful and brave to all¹⁹

Faulkner uses dialogue that suggests admiration toward Molly for how she fulfilled the maternal role expected of her and cared for Edmonds. Though arguably these duties were not expected of her as she was not his biological mother, Molly did fulfil the roles expected of her as a woman of that time as a black woman living under a racist and sexist white patriarchy. Edmonds believes that Molly cared for him both physically and spiritually and the actions of this earn adoring language from him. Edmonds remembering and practicing

¹⁹ William Faulkner. *Go Down, Moses: And Other Stories*. London: Vintage Classics, 1996). 117. Subsequent page references in text.

Molly's life lessons which she taught him does not happen, yet she is still admired for the maternal role she played in his life. It is important to recognise however that as a black woman serving the family, Molly takes on the role of a 'mammy', an older black woman in charge of caring for the house and children of the aristocratic white family which they served. This idea gives a more sinister and heart-breaking view of Molly's role as she is seen as being forced to fulfil that stereotype by the underlying threats and dangers which came as a result of slavery in the South at the time. She is fulfilling what is expected of her as a slave, but to Edmonds she is seen as a nurturing mother figure. It is interesting to ask and consider how heroic an act is when one is forced into it; Molly's demeanour toward Edmonds is expected and not chosen, and a further question can be posed as to whether Edmonds is wrong not to see this and to accept the care which Molly offers. He was a child at the time, but there is still a sense of unknowing of this situation in his adulthood. Though Molly was forced into her position, her fulfilling of the position does prove her to be a hero as she saves Edmonds with her teachings. The differing perspectives of a hero is also dependant on the race of the character in Faulkner's novels and this is further discussed in "Chapter Two: Violence, Values and the Hero". The previous passage highlights the contrast between reader and character perspective. Edmonds and the reader have differing perspectives and this is why my reader response methodology is key, and why my definition of the Faulknerian hero is solidified by the hopes and expectations of the reader.

A previous argument has been made that women in Faulkner's novels who defy the roles expected of them are heroes. Yet women being admired for roles that are expected of them can also be argued to have the same effect. Though these ideas differ, the parallel between the women and their acts is in the positive impact that their actions have and the selfless nature in which they do it. I have used the way in which these women are presented to define what a

Faulknerian hero is, and furthermore it is because of the different impacts which these women have that determine why intention is the key behind this definition. Characters such as Aunt Louisa and Mrs Habersham and many of the women in Jefferson remain loyal and do not surrender their morals or beliefs, even at the risk of being made into the enemy. Lena searches for the father of her child while Molly cares for a child that does not belong to her, all of the aforementioned women in Faulkner's novels gain their hero status by unintentionally earning adoration and admiration for their noble qualities. Whilst strength and courage are admired in the characters, it is the noble and caring intentions behind these actions which are the common denominators behind the heroine status. In regards to my definition, it is female heroes show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and this the conclusive factor for what makes a female Faulknerian hero.

Masculinity and the Hero

Just as there is a certain expectation placed upon women in society; there is also a different, yet equally destructive expectation placed upon men. Throughout the novels we see men place destructive expectations and identities upon themselves, which present their perceptions of heroism and their heroic identities in the community. These ideas are also influenced by race, and by exploring black and white masculinity, it is clear that standards for heroism and villainy in regards to masculinity is heavily influenced by race in the eyes of the community and the reader.

The attributes of a wife and a family are directly linked to Thomas Sutpen's masculinity and this is implied throughout the novel. Jason in *The Sound and the Fury* says

It always takes a man that never made much at anything to tell you how to run your business, though. Like these college professors without a whole pair of socks to his name, telling you

how to make a million in ten years, and a woman that couldn't even get a husband can always tell you how to raise a family²⁰.

From this it is implied that wealth, business and the family life are what fuels admiration and prestige, and furthermore that the lack of these is what fuels criticism. The poor men who do not own a business, the women who can't "even" (212) get a husband and others who do not achieve these things are arguably unheroic and not masculine in the eyes of those who can. It is worth recognising that Sutpen's design was "money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife"²¹ and it is these which are mentioned in the aforementioned passage. It is implied that if one does not have these things then they cannot give input on them, and therefore by defining what someone cannot talk about it could be argued that the individual in question is not worthy. There is no admiration for the lack of outstanding achievements or noble qualities in these people. The poor men, unmarried women and (those seen to be) the un-achieving members of society are the "normal people" (63) who Bloom refers to that cannot "accomplish" (63) what Sutpen can.

The use of the word "even" (212) in the previous passage suggests that getting a husband is easy for women, and that a woman should be able to do it. Once again, the definition of those who can "accomplish what a normal person cannot" (63) being what makes a hero is relevant, as not being able to accomplish what is expected of you is seen in a deviant way. Much like the aforementioned character of Lena, a woman not fulfilling the patriarchal expectation is seen as devious, and they are turned into villains and 'othered' by certain members of society. Any woman who does not want or "couldn't even get" (212) a husband and raise a family

²⁰ William Faulkner. *The Sound and the Fury*. (London: Vintage Classics, 1995), 212. Subsequent page references in text.

²¹ Faulkner, William. 1995. *Absalom, Absalom!* (London: Vintage Classics, 1955) 156. Subsequent page references in text.

does not fit into Sutpen's design or the town. It is against his norm and could arguably represent an antagonist in Sutpen's heroic quest. Sutpen's design and life is him fulfilling his designs and ambitions.

It is the values integrated into the community in which Sutpen is living which defines his status, and Riche Richardson in *Black Masculinity and the U. S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* supports this idea also. Richardson writes the "raced, classed, and gendered ideology of the southern gentleman which had emerged in the antebellum era was attainable across the range of male subjects classed as white"²². It was only white men such as Sutpen who had the opportunities to achieve the heroic attributes desired in in their society, it was more ascribed rather than achieved. Richardson goes on to say "the desire among white men to be thus categorized typically signalled a yearning for the mythical Old South. The southern gentleman, like its white feminine analogue in the southern belle, was a typology that...sustained the racial hierarchy in the South" (73). My definition of what makes a Faulknerian hero rejects these values, as it is my belief that the intentions and prejudices behind the values which make them unheroic. Sutpen shows no regard for any other character but himself, and his ambition causes fatal, unwelcome and unfortunate circumstances for other characters in his pursuit of success and white masculine ideologies.

Sutpen was married once before to Eulalia, the daughter of a sugar plantation owner. Eulalia gave birth to Charles Bon, Sutpen's estranged son who becomes friends with Henry and visits Sutpen's Hundred once Sutpen has created his new life. When they married, Sutpen believed Eulalia to be part Spanish however he finds out that she is in fact part black and this

²² Riché Richardson, *Black Masculinity and the U.S. South: From Uncle Tom To Gangsta* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 73. Subsequent page references in text.

discovery causes Sutpen to abandon both Eulalia and baby Charles. Sutpen begins to fulfil his design with Eulalia and Charles, however her race means that she does not fulfil his criteria due to the racial prejudices of southern community. Amongst the expectations and criteria for success are further expectations and rules which Sutpen is desperate to fulfil even if this means abandoning his wife and child. This also further suggests that it is the idea and status of a wife and family which Sutpen wants and not the relationship itself. Eulalia has the family unit with Sutpen and Charles yet this is taken away from her due to no fault of her own, she becomes one of the women which Jason refers to who cannot *even* get a husband and therefore lacks in prestige and status even though this is not her fault. This is a prominent factor to recognise in southern society and the novel itself as these heroes who are “resilient” (42) and have outstanding achievements also can leave behind a trail of abandonment and destruction in their pursuit of success.

The aforementioned scholarship *Masculinity, Menace, and American Mythologies of Race in Faulkner's Anti-Heroes* by Lisa K. Nelson is also relevant in this discussion. Henry follows this pattern and mind set of racial prejudice influencing the community’s view of success, heroism and masculinity. In the eyes of the white southern man, “black men are a threat to white women, the white family, white racial purity, supremacy, and ultimately, the nation” (246). It is argued that this is Henry is so opposed to his sister Judith marrying Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!*. In regards to marrying Judith, Henry is more concerned that Bon has black heritage, rather than the possibility that he could be their brother. Nelson writes that “Henry and Judith’s white bourgeois subjectivities can be effected only by othering Bon not as brother, but as nigger and thus, by white-supremacist logic, as an *ispo facto* rapist who must be killed” (246). The judgement of the characters in this novel are influenced by racial hatred and white supremacist ideologies, this is exemplified by Henry’s justification for killing

Bon, which are fuelled by a threat to his white masculinity. This is a wide spread view throughout the communities which Faulkner creates, which is another example of why intention behind a character's actions is so vital in identifying the hero.

Sutpen is often depicted as masculine, and this idea of masculinity can be directly connected to the perception of what makes a hero. In many societies, a lot of those who go to war are men, especially in the time when Faulkner was writing and the time in which his characters were living. If it is a man who is depicted as going to war, and the identity of the hero can come from war, then the link can be recognised between war and masculinity. Ideologies of masculinity can also be seen as embedded into other events in Faulkner's novels. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin is told by his father "in the South you are ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it" (65). Quentin is told this and it seems that he is learning about his own culture through the expectations of masculinity and sex. In the South-or rather Quentin's South-it is interesting that not having sex is shameful yet lying about having sex is not. There is a twisted irony in that social expectations of masculinity are of more importance than the expectations of honesty and truth. By including boys and men in this passage, the ideologies of sex and virginity seem more universal as it is something which happens amongst men of all ages. Furthermore, the use of the word "you" (65) in this passage suggests that by familial association, Quentin too is held to this standard. By including Quentin in this social expectation, it becomes more definite, as if it is a law rather than a social norm. Sutpen's design is focused around the values of family yet it seems that sexual prowess is also a commodity to be valued. If this design is one that is pursued by many of the men in southern society then arguably the idea of what makes a hero in a southern man is flawed. If Bloom's "normal person" (63) or in this case a normal man has had sex, yet boys

and men alike lie about being virgins, it seems that if one cannot “accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63), then the norm is to lie about being able to accomplish it.

A woman’s expectation is to have a husband yet a man’s is to have sex. Women in war are expected to look after the family and to build a home, and their expectations surround relationships and the family. It is men who gain their glory and admiration with physical acts such as sex and war, and it is these attributes that are seen as heroic. It is by defying society’s expectations that women are seen as showing their heroic qualities, as the previous chapter concerning women as a Faulknerian hero addresses. When women conquer society’s judgement and expectation they are admired, yet for men this admiration occurs when they fulfil their expectation. The defiance of women is usually only defiant from the perspective of men. Women defying expectations within the narrative is deviant, yet in the eyes of the reader it is heroic, men fulfilling expectations in their society is seen as heroic, yet often not so much in the eyes of the reader. If Campbell’s definition of a hero is “supporting an idea” (156), then arguably Faulkner is presenting that it is how a character supports society’s ideas of the norm which defines a hero.

In *Go Down, Moses*, masculinity is questioned when women are a factor, in the short story ‘The Fire and the Hearth’ the females are seen as the inferior gender. Lucas Beauchamp insists that because the Edmonds family are descendants of Carothers McCaslin's daughter, they are woman born and not as strong as himself who is male-born from Isaac McCaslin. Lucas implies that this is the reason he wins the fight against Zack Edmonds. Much like Sutpen, McCaslin is seen as a legend like figure and a powerful patriarch, he is a focal point in Lucas’ thoughts and stands as an important figure of legend in Lucas’ perceptions. Even being from the female side of the family tree is seen as a hindrance upon a character’s

masculinity and ability to fight. If war and violence create society's perception of a hero then the conclusion is that in the patriarchal society, women and gender have an influence on the perception of strength, and by association what creates a hero. Elizabeth M. Kerr writes in reference to Young Bayard's refusal to take the pistols with him, that his "rejection of Drusilla's male code seems a triumph of moral progress over tradition"²³. In the view of some members of society Young Bayard makes the wrong decision as he rejects the values and traditions of the South.

One could argue however that in acting passively and 'non-masculine', Young Bayard did act as a hero should, especially in regards to my definition, he simultaneously saved another and defied expectation, which could have come at a price if Redmond had decided to kill him. If we use Campbell's definition that a hero "is that of saving a people, saving a person, or supporting an idea" (156) then Young Bayard does fulfil this expectation, he saves Redmond and himself by not retaliating, so he is "saving a person" (156). He saves the people of the future Sartoris family by showing that the cycle of violence and revenge can end and he supports the idea that one can reject the male code. In terms of the "Great Eight" (42), Bayard is "inspiring" (42) as his actions do cause a new outlook upon the ideas of revenge, we can see this when Wyatt admits "maybe there has been enough killing in your family" (289). Bayard shows noble qualities in himself by staying true to his new belief in wanting to end the cycle of revenge, whether it is noble or not may differ between that of the traditional southern society and the reader. The change which the town sees does have a significant impact and we can see this in the way in which Bayard changes the opinion of Wyatt. To an extent Bayard could be seen as a "local god" (156) like Campbell identifies

²³ Elizabeth M. Kerr. *William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha: A Kind Of Keystone In The Universe*. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 180. Subsequent page references in text.

because of the impact on society which he has by making that decision in Redmond's office. Bayard's actions do not affect the entire country or region, however for the town in which he lives, his actions do make history. He breaks social norms by choosing to face Redman unarmed and risks his reputation and life doing so, he shows what Kerr calls "moral courage" (180) rather than "physical courage" (180) and for this he walks away with his life. Through this act of courage Bayard is able "accomplish what a normal person cannot" (63) as the "normal" (63) people in the town have revenge and violence integrated into their way of life and views of masculinity. Much like the southern ethos that was believed during and after the Civil War, the people of the South "might surrender but could never be vanquished" (254), and this is true for Bayard, he surrendered but was not defeated and sets this precedent in *The Unvanquished*.

Summary

In the eyes of the community in Faulkner's novels, masculinity is linked to heroism and furthermore it is white masculinity that is valued above all else. When female masculinity is presented, the community reject these ideologies as heroic, and when feminine stereotypes and expectations are rejected by female characters, the same happens also. From the novels and the surrounding scholarship this can be determined to be because these characters do not meet the ideas of the old South. When the values of the old South are not met in Faulkner's novels, the community will not value or accept the characters who represent this. This is also why race serves as such an influential factor in how the community in the novels perceive what makes a hero. By the community's standard, the characters discussed in this passage such as Sutpen represent certain standards of their hero such as the ideas of "Great Eight" (42). Faulkner is writing about "the particular society and world that shaped his vision" (73),

but this does not mean that his characters are heroic. My key analysis is that the character's intention is more valuable in defining a hero than their execution, this is because the community in the novels are influenced by gender and racial bias and stereotypes. It is my argument that action and opinions based upon racial and gender bias are not heroic, which is why the reader's experience of a character should hold the most influence upon what defines a Faulknerian hero, and why intention behind action is the most important factor.

Chapter Two: Violence, values and the hero

This chapter will examine violence, war and values within the societies in Faulkner's novels and how the characters are influenced into heroic and non-heroic acts and identities. I will then go on to examine how these actions and attributes create characters into heroes or villains in the eyes of the society in which they are living. Violence, war and conflict are interlaced in many of Faulkner's narratives and are by association also interlaced in many of his character's psyches. The intentions and catalysts for these acts of war are often the product of society's expectations and furthermore seem to reflect the ideas of masculinity and heroism. War often occurs within Faulkner's novels, be it during the American Civil War in *The Unvanquished*, or post- American Civil War and World War I such as in *Flags in the Dust*. There are other wars not necessarily on the battlefield also, as Faulkner presents war between races like that presented in *Go Down, Moses*, or in some cases more personal wars between families and even with one's self. Sometimes war even interlaces time and place, such as the novel *Absalom, Absalom!*, which through a collection of narratives presents a life pre, post and during-Civil War. War and conflict are integrated within Faulkner's literature and this is a product of the community he is writing about. Rebecca Kul provides scholarship regarding Faulkner's narratives and how the narratives of the texts are heavily influenced by war, just as the characters are also. David A. Davis is also an example of scholarship which surrounds ideas of war in Faulkner's novels and also the relationship between war and the modernist writer. In his book *World War I and Southern Modernism*, Davis argues that modernist writers held a "critical perspective on the region"²⁴ post-World War I and that modernist writers such as Faulkner focus on "perception rather than reality, suggesting that

²⁴ David A. Davis. *World War I and Southern Modernism*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2018) 3. Subsequent page references in text.

the forms of experience in a modernist context were different from those in a non-modernist context” (3). Scholarship such as this has enabled me to build my own definition of what creates a Faulknerian hero and it is also one of the reasons I have chosen to focus my contribution on how the reader perceives a hero. This is because Faulkner was writing for the modernist reader about the non-modernist context.

This chapter will focus on narrative voices and speakers, as ideas and perspectives of themes such as war differ between narrators, speakers, readers and characters. Thomas Sutpen is an example of this as I will be exploring the different perspectives there are of Sutpen, depending on who is speaking about him. Faulkner uses differing narrative voices to describe Sutpen and his life, and this is why my methodology of intention and reader perspective is key when I am defining a Faulknerian hero. Rider in *Go Down, Moses* is also an example of how perspective between speaker and reader influence the definition of hero, as the modernist context and the non-modernist context provide different impressions and opinions of Rider's crime.

War

So many of Faulkner's characters are affected by war both in childhood and adulthood. Even once their lives are over or their narratives end, they have influence over what a hero and a heroic identity is. Rebecca Kul explains this best when she describes the entire narrative of Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom* as “infected with the ghosts of the lost Civil War”²⁵. This description gives the impression that even after war is over and death has happened, the

²⁵ Rebecca, Kul. "Absalom, Absalom! Remember The Ladies." <https://tyrannyofthepetticoat.wordpress.com/2012/04/26/absalom-absalom/> (accessed 18 January 2018)

effects and influence it has still remained, much like a ghost haunting from the afterlife. It is not just in *Absalom, Absalom!* that we can see this idea of war haunting the present. Young Bayard in *Flags in the Dust* is constantly haunted by the shadow of his dead brother John, who died in the First World War, securing him with a hero's legacy and Bayard with survivors' guilt. This idea will be explored further later on in this chapter but it also can be used as a reference when examining Kul's description that in *The Unvanquished*, Civil War left the town in "the deep South dead" (4), flooded with memories and imprints like "garrulous outraged baffled ghosts, listening, having to listen, to one of the ghosts which had refused to lie still even longer than most had" (4).

The use of the word "infected" (4) creates the imagery of disease and plague, it adds a negative connotation to war and violence and the effect which it has on an individual and their lives. One could argue that any act of war and violence no matter the intention or situation is not morally right when measuring heroism as these acts are neither "strong, resilient, selfless, [or] caring" (42) no matter the intention or reasoning. The relationship between morality and war is more complex than this previous statement suggests, however, many wars and battles such as World War I and the Civil War itself occurred because one of the opposing sides was fighting in the hopes of "saving a people" (156). It is up to the individual where the justification is between morality and war and the fine line between the two. There is a theory amongst dramatists that the line between comedy and tragedy is that comedy is tragedy without a tragic outcome, for example comedy is someone falling into a river, tragedy is them drowning from the fall. The line between morality and war can arguably be smaller than this, is war moral if there is a positive outcome which "is that of saving a people, saving a person, or supporting an idea" (156). Or is the intention behind the saving what makes war moral and heroic? It is too simple to say that war infects society and

is only a representation of “man’s inhumanity to man” (4), because war can also be the cure to this inhumanity. Campbell writes “whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative” (156), and this can be used in the context of war also. Whether a war is moral and justified or is immoral and unjustified is all relative, because those who fight are either gods or monsters depending on which side you are fighting with and against.

More often than not even those who have not lost their lives are still negatively impacted by the aftermath of violence and war, “because no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools” (63). This is said by Quentin’s father in Quentin’s chapter in *The Sound and the Fury*. By stating that no battle is ever won, Quentin’s father is taking the glory and pride out of war and violence. It’s worth noting that this is Quentin’s father’s own particular attitudes and views and these are not necessarily agreed with by Quentin, however his point is still relevant to this discussion. Arguably it is these things which create the hero in their community as his victory provides the cause for his or her society to admire them for their “genius or courage” (63) or for them showing the traits of being “strong, [and] resilient” (42). Furthermore, by suggesting that no war is ever fought either, it is suggested that war victory is not earned and therefore not to be admired. This quotation also personifies the battlefield by describing it as revealing to man his own folly, not that the man discovers his own folly on the field. This interpretation suggests a life which the field has that surpasses one’s strength, leaving them more vulnerable and more of a victim than a hero.

Though the hero may be perceived as one to those whom they are saving, to Quentin’s father war itself appears to be unheroic and instead, a cause of despair and folly, with those who celebrate the victory being philosophers and fools, merely perceiving or believing an idea that

has no substance. Davis writes that “writers before the war romanticised the Old South” (3), and I argue this is true to an extent in the narratives of Faulkner’s novels also. The quotation from Quentin’s father presents the idea that now the war is over, there is a less romanticized view of war and the ‘heroes’ who fought them. Arguably, the soldiers of the wars in the South fought with the intention of “saving a people, saving a person, or supporting an idea” (156), and many of Faulkner’s characters are products of a war driven and violence approving society who admire those who save them. However, if these people are the philosophers and fools referred to in *The Sound and the Fury*, then their idolisation of their hero could be seen as false and misjudged. Faulkner’s novels are modernist, read by modern and post-modern readers who do not have this romanticized view. Because of this I argue that through my methodology of using a reader’s perspective, fighting in a war does not define a Faulknerian hero.

Thomas Sutpen

Absalom, Absalom! highlights the idea of how society’s view of an individual can create or dispute their identity of the hero. Carolyn Porter writes that “in a strange way, every character in this novel is both the villain and the hero. No story is every simply told: it is told by someone else, and thus their perceptions and memories are shaped by their own knowledge and positions”²⁶. In the narrative of a novel it is often the community who create their own heroes and villains. As the novel’s form is created by many different narratives, arguably Thomas Sutpen both meets and defies the expectations of a hero as the expectation varies between narrative voices. Stephen Kern in *The Modernist Novel: A Critical Introduction* highlights one aspect of modernist writing as having “absent protagonists” (21). Thomas

²⁶ Carolyn Porter. *William Faulkner (Lives and Legacies)*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38. Subsequent page references in text.

Sutpen is an example of this as it is a community of voices who tell his story. This is one of the reasons that the reader perspective is important in identifying my key concept of intention defining a Faulknerian hero, as the differing narrative voices often provide bias opinions, for Sutpen and other characters in Faulkner's novels.

When Sutpen arrives in town, he is described with prestige, masculinity and as a conqueror, "immobile, bearded and hand palm-lifted the horseman sat; behind him the wild blacks and the captive architect huddled quietly, carrying in bloodless paradox the shovels and picks and axes of peaceful conquest" (8). This passage has different layers, each portraying Sutpen to be a man of power and admiration; firstly, the description of him being "bearded" (8) can be seen as a powerful physical image of Sutpen's masculinity, the beard represents the man and furthermore gives one a sense of the primitive. With this physical feature not only is Sutpen displaying power, but strength also. Sutpen does not travel alone, as behind him are the "wild blacks" (8) whom he has captured. The "wild blacks" (8) referred to here are captured slaves intended to help build Sutpen's dynasty, however by describing them as "wild" (8) the speaker is animalising and dehumanising them, projecting an image much like Theseus and the Minotaur. Sutpen has defeated wild beasts rather than humans. Furthermore, by highlighting that the slaves are "behind him" (8), the narrator is physically and metaphorically placing Sutpen as higher and of more prestige as the slaves. Sutpen seems to carry some form of divinity with him which enforces the idea that he is "a local god" (156). The last part of this quotation, "peaceful conquest" (8) is interesting as it is both an ironic oxymoron and also a powerful propaganda statement. Arguably there is no such thing as a "peaceful conquest" (8), as to conquer something you must defeat it, like Campbell says; "you could be a local god, but for the people whom that local god conquered, you could be the enemy" (156). Sutpen however is described as bringing conquest peacefully. The narrator

here is admiring Sutpen and heightening his prestige even more as with this passage Sutpen is showing to be “strong, resilient” (42) as he has conquered and achieved, but also “selfless, caring” (42) as he has apparently achieved this peacefully. Though there is a sense of irony in the narrator’s words, four of the “Great Eight” are presented by Sutpen in this one phrase and with this he is meeting the community’s expectations of the hero. Though there is a sense of irony in the narrator’s words, Sutpen has still met the criteria for the hero and therefore can be seen as such to his community. Upon this, Sutpen is also meeting the definition of a hero in the eyes of the society in which he is living as through peaceful conquering he has managed to “accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63).

The use of the word “horseman” (8) in this quotation is not to be missed, and this word could arguably be an inference to the more sinister and villainous side to the Sutpen legacy. A horseman riding into town could be an inference that Sutpen represents one of the Four Horsemen of the apocalypse, bringing with him the decline and suffering of the humanity which exists within the novel. War, and Conquest being the last two of the Horsemen further suggests that this image is being reflected onto Sutpen, projecting a foreshadowing which defies the expectation of the hero. A quotation from Rosa Coldfield is a perfect example of the impact which Sutpen had on her life, and how Sutpen was an apocalypse rather than a saviour. When describing the marriage between Sutpen and her sister, Rosa says "I saw what happened to Ellen, my sister, I saw her almost a recluse, watching those two doomed children growing up whom she was helpless to save" (19). Rosa has watched Sutpen destroy her family, and her view of him is negative and is full of contempt rather than admiration. By including that Ellen was her sister -a fact already known-, Rosa is showing how the suffering which Sutpen has caused is personal to her and her family, she is making a personal connection to those whom she is telling and is ‘othering’ Sutpen in the process. By describing

the children as “doomed” (19), Rosa Coldfield is also furthering the idea that Sutpen represents The Horsemen, she is highlighting Sutpen’s power by describing the children as doomed but she is doing it in a way which makes him look more like a tyrant than a hero. Upon this, by stating that her sister is “helpless to save” (19) the children, it could be argued that she is martyring her sister Ellen and painting her as a failed hero, as she was unable to save the children from the ‘villainous’ Sutpen’s corruption.

The story of the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen is recounted and told from a range of different characters all with different views and versions of Sutpen’s life; however, as readers we are never given the story to interpret ourselves. Much like Quentin himself, the reader is forced to create an image of Sutpen from images already provided by others, these images often present different perspectives and points of view and Coldfield’s story is an example of this. From this alone it can be argued that even if Sutpen is not regarded as a hero, he is still renowned and eminent in the lives of the characters in the novel. Andre Maurois writes that “in literature, as in love, we are astonished at the choice made by other people”²⁷, and an argument could be made to suggest that it’s the story of Sutpen and not his traits as a character which makes him famous. Sutpen brings business, profit and ambition to the town and him being able to do this when the town cannot could be the catalyst for their astonishment regarding him. It is said in *Absalom, Absalom!* that “we see dimly people, the people in whose living blood and seed we ourselves lay dormant and waiting, in this shadowy attenuation of time possessing now heroic proportions, performing their acts of simple passion and simple violence” (100) and arguably it is this which causes Sutpen’s heroic status amongst the townspeople. The townspeople see Sutpen as their potential and their dreams, he

²⁷ Lee Thayer. *Doing Life A Pragmatist Manifesto*. (Indiana: Xlibris, Corp., 2012), 14.

is a figure who has achieved their wishes and they have seeded themselves into him and created his legacy, the fact that Sutpen is still being spoken about so many years later furthers this perception. One could also argue however that the members of society who dislike Sutpen do so because he has achieved the dream by unconventional means. Sutpen has made his own fortune and placed himself into a society one is usually born into. His money and status are achieved rather than ascribed and this is arguably what ‘others’ Sutpen from society. Sutpen meets the expectations of the hero and a rich southern man with his design however he breaks the norm and expectations of society by doing it. Not only is Sutpen seen as a subjective hero but he is breaking the norm by achieving his design, an attribute that may not be admired in the eyes of some members of his society, but one that is recognised in many of the aforementioned heroic narratives.

Other critics also recognise this idea of Sutpen meeting the expectations of wealth and status within society but not doing this in the conventional way of ascribed status. Dr Owen Robinson in his book *Creating Yoknapatawpha, Readers and Writers in Faulkner's Fiction* also addresses this. In Robinson's writing Sutpen is depicted as a writer himself, writing “himself into the South's aristocratic fabric”²⁸. Sutpen figuratively writes himself into Yoknapatawpha narrative and rejects the expected ideals of ascribed status by creating wealth for himself, arguably this is why his rise and fall occurs because he has placed himself into a world in which he will never truly belong. Robinson then goes on to write that Sutpen's “neighbours such as Sartoris are entrenched in their social and economic situations, Sutpen literally has to make his own from scratch” (51). Sutpen's design is his heroic quest which he achieves, yet the prejudices of the bourgeoisie in the world which he integrates himself in

²⁸ Owen Robinson. *Follow Creating Yoknapatawpha (Studies In Major Literary Authors)*. (London: Routledge, 2009), 49. Subsequent page references in text.

will never recognise him as an equal. It is interesting to recognise that working toward and striving for a goal, qualities which typically are seen as good to have, still are not accepted into the higher classes. If Yoknapatawpha's society is seen from a Marxist perspective in the sense that it is dominated by the upper classes then the ideologies of that supposedly are that hard work and determination achieve status. From the examples the readers are shown throughout the novel, the society in which Sutpen is living reflects this upper-class hierarchy but not that hard work is the way to achieve it. In the society which Sutpen is living he will never have this status even when he presents these values which are supposed to meet their ideologies. There is a certain helplessness to Sutpen if he is examined in this way, as his demise is inevitable due to him living in a place where he will never belong.

Thomas Sutpen is a key character when discussing war, revenge, violence and the identity of the hero. Sutpen's actions and life can arguably be an example of how one character can have multiple heroic identities. Patricia Tobin writes that "the characters in the fictional present are all storytellers obsessed with the figure of Thomas Sutpen which dominates them from the past"²⁹, arguably Sutpen is the hero of these "storytellers" as he is the driving force behind many of the events in it. Not only is Sutpen a character in the novel, he is a character in the stories of the other characters in the novel. He is also powerful and controversial and is the focus of their stories, and even if not all of the stories are showing him in a positive light, Sutpen is like a "local god" (156) to those who speak about him. Sutpen is present, pre, and post-Civil War, and arguably to those who see him as from a time that precludes the Civil War. Sutpen lives in a mythological and story like past that no longer exists but also is ever

²⁹ Patricia Tobin. "The Time Of Myth And History In Absalom, Absalom!". JSTOR. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2924451?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents> (accessed 18 January 2018)

present. Though the effects of war still remain in many of the lives of Faulkner's characters, some of them are victims of the war without having lived through it. If war is a bomb and post war characters are living in the debris of the explosion, then arguably those who endured the explosion directly are surrounded by admiration and curiosity because they survived.

If Sutpen is recognised as a "local god" (156) then one must think about the suffering which he has caused to become that. Though he may be showing valour and has been given heroic like admiration by the townspeople, Sutpen is the enemy of the slaves he has conquered to gain this status. My definition of the Faulknerian hero rejects that Sutpen is a hero, even though he may be to his community. It is my argument that the reader must decide what creates a hero, as they have the overview of the many different narrative voices which create the community in the novel and furthermore, they are reading without the romanticised vision of the Old South. Sutpen has caused suffering and endorsed slavery, to the slaves he is a captor rather than a hero. By conquering the slaves Sutpen is one step further in fulfilling his quest to establish his "design" which he is obsessed with, "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife. I set out to acquire these, asking no favour of any man" (212). Sutpen takes pride in his design, putting slaves, money, marriage and a family of equal significance to his success. If Sutpen's design is his "treasure/elixir"³⁰ he would be fulfilling his heroic quest and could be identified as a hero- if one were to measure a character's heroism in that regard. Sutpen achieves the American Dream by fulfilling this design as he builds his success with accomplished status rather than many of the wealthy in his society which who have their status ascribed with inherited money. Dr Robinson describes Sutpen's design as "his

³⁰ Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*. (Novato: New World Library, 2012), 44. Subsequent page references in text.

Gatsby-like attempt” (51) to achieve, another source which suggests that the design which Sutpen follows is that of the American dream, as well as this identity being both southern *and* American and that there is a difference between the two. Though he does achieve this quest one argues that there is no morality or heroism in the quest at all. Sutpen builds his legacy on the labour of slaves and the misplaced love of women “not on the rock of stern morality” (302). At face value Sutpen does achieve the heroic quest but this does not have to be a communal understanding or agreement. If any man who holds the value of human beings such as slaves, families and wives at the same standard as money than one can argue Sutpen is not a hero at all as his dream is built on materialistic value rather than morality.

Family

Sutpen’s quest is to gain himself status within society with his ’design’. This is built with family and a wife and he is using the values of marriage and family to achieve his own quest. The order of Sutpen’s design is house, plantation, slaves, family, and wife. If one reads this list as being in the order of importance these attributes have in Sutpen’s life, the impression is the family and the wife are of less value than that which gives him wealth. In *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell refers to Sutpen’s design and observes “Sutpen does not understand why a wife should be more important than a plantation since he needs both to accomplish his design” (269). Carolyn Porter describes the novel as a whole as a “disparate set of stories, turning now to one, now to another, and linking them loosely around family tales and the failed heroics of war” (38). Arguably, this is extremely relevant to the discussion of Sutpen’s view of the family and the novel as a whole. Sutpen’s life is a set of stories, all different from one another, and a lot of them do focus on the failed heroics of war, both Civil and personal.

These wars and fights which the readers are shown are often linked around family tales but furthermore family values. Henry and Bon's fight which they have at Sutpen's Hundred is about race and prejudice rather than about the incest of family and honour of their sister. There are clear conflicts between a character's values and their true intentions. Often a character's actions in Faulkner's narratives are performed with their true intentions hidden behind a mask of traditional values. Henry and Bon's fight, Sutpen's family; they are examples of this façade which characters create to fulfil their own intentions. Characters like Sutpen and Henry use family values and comply with the norm of society even though their intentions are selfish, yet the character of Lena in *Light in August* is actually fighting for her family unit and values against all odds and expectations from society.

The Tragic Hero and Tragic Flaws

One archetype of the hero is the tragic hero, whereby a hero of a narrative meets a tragic end due to an error of judgement or a tragic flaw in their persona. An infamous example of the tragic hero is the character of Oedipus, the hero of the famous Greek tragedy *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles. In *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus is cursed with the prophecy that he would murder his father and marry his mother. Despite his parents' best efforts to keep this from happening, Oedipus' prophecy comes true, and he discovers the truth about his past and blinds himself in despair. Oedipus is a tragic hero because of his innocence and ignorance to the truth about his prophecy, yet he is still identified as a hero. Cleanth Brooks makes comparisons between Sutpen and Oedipus. Brooks writes that Sutpen's "innocence resembles that of Oedipus...who, like him, had been corrupted by success and who put his confidence in his own shrewdness"³¹. The comparison which Brooks makes between Oedipus and Sutpen

³¹ Cleanth Brooks. *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*. (LSU Press; Louisiana Pbk, 1990), 297. Subsequent page references in text.

is that they are both heroic, but they are victims of their narratives which creates them into tragic heroes. If Oedipus' tragic flaw is his innocence to the prophecy, then Sutpen's tragic flaw is "a general innocence in white American society".

Brooks explains Sutpen's innocence is the "innocence of modern man" (297) at the time in history he is living. Sutpen's innocence is an "innocence that doesn't understand why it shouldn't treat people as objects" (297). The argument is it is an innocence that is flawed which "would erect its economic edifice...not on the rock of stern morality but on the shifting sands of opportunism and moral brigandage" (302). The word "brigandage" (302) is used to describe highway robbery or thievery, and this juxtaposition of "morel brigandage" (302) can suggest both ideas of Sutpen being a "god" (156) or a "monster" (156). The metaphor here suggests the theft of one's morality, by having his morality hijacked, Sutpen could arguably still be seen as a tragic hero. If the expectations of society and Sutpen's design stripped Sutpen of his morality, then it was stolen off of him and this arguably justifies his actions. Just like Oedipus, Sutpen is an admired hero who has fallen victim to his unfortunate circumstance, the circumstance in this instance being his innocence to the human wrongs that come with slavery. The "shifting sands" (302) are a metaphor for the unpredictability of these immoral actions and this suggests that the unpredictability of his situation made his demise inevitable.

Racial misunderstanding and ignorance are depicted in other Faulkner novels also. The final monologue by the deputy in 'Pantaloon in Black' from Faulkner's novel *Go Down, Moses*, is an example of this. Rider, a black man who is overcome with grief from the loss of his wife Mannie becomes drunk and kills a white man. The story ends with Rider being lynched and the deputy talking to his wife about a "crazy negro". There is no empathy or understanding

for Rider's side of the story and his only identifier is that he is an insane black man who has murdered white men. Rider cares more about his wife and the value of marriage and family than Sutpen does, his abandonment of Eulalia begs the question on if Sutpen feels love at all. Rider loves Mannie and his grief is unbearable because of how much he cares about her. To Rider, Mannie is the woman he loves and cherishes and not part of a design for a successful life. But instead of being seen as a grief-stricken widower he is nothing but a "crazy negro"³² in his community.

When considering all these different aspects of Sutpen, an image of him as the renewal of the tragic hero for modern America becomes clear. One must decide for themselves if Sutpen's ignorance to the racial discrimination in society is an excuse or an explanation for the business which Sutpen owns which depends on slavery. It could be argued that Sutpen is a product of the society in which he is living at the time, he is innocent to what as a 21st Century reader, one sees as immoral. Arguably this innocence cannot be fully understood by a reader not integrated in that society- "whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative" (156) -and this is not only true between characters but also between characters and readers. Sutpen is "a local god" (156), but to certain readers he can be seen as an upper-class white slave owner exploiting his slaves. The idea of Sutpen being a hero is in fact all relative even between the character and reader. Furthermore, in the eyes of the South, the traditional 'southern heroes' are the individuals who lost the war even though they were beaten in 'glorious defeat' they are still admired for this. The idea of subjectivity is integrated in any war, with some exceptions more often than not each side fighting will have their own reasons

³² William Faulkner. *Go Down, Moses: And Other Stories*. (London: Vintage Press, 1996), 115. Subsequent page references in this text.

and justifications for their cause, and each side believe they are the ‘good guys’, this subjective view of the hero is interlaced throughout Faulkner’s novels.

Sutpen being a god or a monster subjective to the opinions of others is also presented between characters, an example being the differing perspectives between slave owners and slaves. Whilst owning slaves fits in with Sutpen’s design and heroic quest, fulfilling the expectation of a hero in society-one would argue he is the villain in the narratives of the slaves whom he owns. When there is a riot amongst the slaves, Sutpen is described in a protector and heroic role, when the slaves riot it is said that Sutpen “put the musket down and went out and subdued” (254) the rioting slaves. The word “subdued” (254) once again animalises the slaves and humanises Sutpen due to the contrast between himself and them. By highlighting Sutpen putting down his musket, he is seen as approaching the situation unarmed and alone-emphasising his bravery in a Herculean way. It is also important to note that it is never explained exactly how Sutpen “subdued” (254) the slaves. There is subjective story telling here- as there is throughout the entirety of *Absalom, Absalom!* - as there is no violence described in the subduing of the slaves, only that one word is used to describe the events. From one perspective Sutpen is a hero who single handily subdued rioting slaves, he “could be a local god” (156). However, the contrasting perspective from that of the slaves- “for the people whom that local god conquered” he “could be the enemy” (156).

Violence

Violence and revenge are two factors embedded in many of Faulkner’s narratives. The mention of violence and weaponry is interlaced throughout many passages and a link can be made between violence, weapons and the ideas of what makes a hero. The story of ‘The Bear’ in *Go Down, Moses* represents the power dynamic between man and nature. Old Ben,

the legendary bear who is forever being hunted can be seen as a powerful, strong, almost mythical being which other males are in awe of—just like Sutpen or McCaslin. Old Ben represents a power greater than man himself and could be viewed as the monster in Campbell’s description of the fine line between god and monster. Hunting is a central motif in the narrative of ‘The Bear’ and as Isaac ages, he becomes more in control of the hunt. “The traditional myth of the Huntsman as culture”³³ is an idea discussed by Daniel Hoffman, he writes that American society have their own version of the “hunter” (232) where “the hunter demonstrates his prowess and strength” (232) in society to conform to their ideas of ‘masculinity’. The hunter is the symbol of strength and this idea of the hunt can be seen as metaphorical and literal. In ‘The Bear’ and ‘The Fire and the Hearth’ McCaslin and Beauchamp are physically hunting, and their driving force is a link to their masculinity. Isaac is first described as holding “the gun which was too big for him, [and] the breech-loader which did not even belong to him” (117) and this presents Isaac as weaker and feebler compared to the hunters whom he is with and Old Ben who he is hunting. The gun being described as “too big for him” (117) depicts Isaac as not being in control and unqualified to be using the gun. The gun itself can be seen as a symbol for the task of killing Old Ben, and the weapon being too big for Isaac therefore could suggest that just like the weapon, the task at hand is out of his league also. Much like the “woman that couldn’t even get a husband” (212), Isaac is also arguably mocked by the narrator for the attribute which he lacks. In this instance it is size, age and experience and this use of the word “even” (212) once again implies a simplicity to what is expected of Isaac. He does not even have a breech-loader

³³ Daniel Hoffman. *Form and Fable in American Fiction*. (University of Virginia Press, 1994) 232. Subsequent page references in text.

which is his own to use, this large wooden symbol of masculinity is what Isaac lacks and because of this he is not admired nor respected.

The way in which weaponry and violence are depicted in Faulkner's novels also indicates the attitudes of society and the way in which these are key when analysing the attributes of a hero. Rider killing Birdsong is focussed on his movements and motions in the killing, giving it a sense of grace and beauty. This rings true with my definition of the hero, as Rider is prepared to pay the price for his actions. The pain of Birdsong is not mentioned, just the swift and graceful movements of his killer. I argue that the narrator of this story focuses on this specifically as an attempt to firstly, present awe in Rider's strength and grace, and secondly to keep Rider in favour of the reader even when he is committing the murder.

The razor hung between his shoulder-blades from a loop of cotton string round his neck inside his shirt. The same motion of the hand which brought the razor forward over his shoulder flipped the blade open and freed it from the cord, the blade opening on until the back edge of it lay across the knuckles of his fist, his thumb pressing the handle into his closing fingers, so that in the second before the half-drawn pistol exploded he actually struck at the white man's throat not with the blade but with a sweeping blow of his fist, following through in the same motion so that not even the first jet of blood touched his hand or arm. (115)

The focus is initially on the blade; it's positioning, the way it opens, and how it looks in Rider's hands. By using the word "freed" (115) it is as if the blade is a beast, caged in Rider's shirt and waiting to be released and used. The blade is personified and arguably Rider and the blade become one which is why they are described as moving as such; "not with the blade but with a sweeping blow of his fist, following through in the same motion so that not even the first jet of blood touched his hand or arm" (115). Much like the passage from *The Sound and the Fury* - "the field only reveals to man his own folly and despair" (63) - which personifies the battlefield, this passage does the same also. When violence and conflict occur, it is the weaponry and the battlefield which come to life, it could be inferred here that when there is

conflict, the weapons and violence take control to the point where they come to life. If one of the attributes of a hero is “strength” (42) and passages like these depict that strength, then one could argue that the violent expectations and outlets of an individual sometimes can be seen as heroism.

Rider becomes a weapon when he uses his blade and kills Birdsong, the constant references to his physical strength suggests this. Rider and the weapon start “following through in the same motion” (115), he becomes connected to the blade and they move symbiotically. This further suggests the idea that violence overcomes the individual, and in that moment the identity of a hero is shared with the weapon and the conflict. This could be the reason for Quentin’s father personifying the battlefield and his perception of the battlefield and victory creating fools. Philip M. Weinstein writes “the story is keyed to Riders body, the sentences moving in mimicry of his powerful motion”³⁴, the sentences, Rider and the violence move as one and Rider’s physicality is constantly referred back to.

Rider and Race

The internal battle which Rider has in ‘Pantaloons in Black’ with his own masculinity occurs when he speaks to himself when drunk. Rider says “try me, big boy” (108) and he can be seen as saying this to his feelings. There is not a physical battle but there is an intrinsic one and Rider is personifying his feelings. Furthermore, these feelings are intimidating and strong, as Rider refers to them as “big boy” (108). The harsh ‘b’ sounds used are very abrupt and almost animalistic, even the words used are one syllable and the primal tone they have seem to make Rider more aggressive. Rider’s feelings of loss and grief overpower him, and

³⁴ Philip M. Weinstein, Albert Gelpi, et al. *Faulkner's Subject: A Cosmos No One Owns* (Cambridge Studies in American Literature & Culture). (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 59.

the battle he has with his feelings where he challenges “try me, big boy” (108) is one he loses. It is also worth noting that “big boy” (108) might well be a derogatory name thrown at Rider by racist white men in his society, “boy” is a common term used to de-masculinise black men yet Rider has repurposed this for his own use. Rider looks upon his grief as white men look upon him, and attempts to de-masculinise it. Rider was not able to save Mannie, nor is he able to save himself from his grief which overcomes him or the men who murder him. One definition of a hero is “is that of saving a people, saving a person, or supporting an idea” (156). If this is true then Rider can be seen as not being a hero because he is unable to save anyone, including himself.

Another interpretation however could be that Rider is a tragic hero; his tragic flaws being his grief and his race. Rider’s grief causes his downfall; it is the loss of Mannie which is the catalyst for him to get drunk and act out. Upon this, Rider’s race can also be seen as his tragic flaw. Rider cannot control his race, but it dominates other character’s perceptions of him and furthermore the events which happen in his narrative. As previously addressed earlier in this chapter, Rider is only identified as a violent “crazy negro” (108) by the white characters in the novel. He is demonised for his actions and for his race also. He is referred to as a “negro” (108) when the deputy is telling his story and this suggests that it his race which is what identifies him within society. Sutpen’s race acts as an excuse as he is described as innocent because he is white. Yet Rider’s race acts as a flaw, he kills a white man and is in turn killed himself for his actions. Rather than a local god, he is portrayed as the monster to the white society in which he is living, and his race seems to be the cause of this more than his actions. Just like how women and gender have an influence on the perception of what creates a hero, race and the racial conflict in the South also have an influence on the perspective of the hero. Sutpen is admired for owning slaves and using them to maintain his business, he subdues

their riots and is described in a heroic and noble manner. However, when a black man is violent toward a white man, he is the villain in society and pays with his life. *Black Masculinity and the U. S. South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* by Riche Richardson offers scholarship regarding this. Richardson explains that in the southern community, “hierarchical formulation of black masculinity unwittingly construes black male southerners as weak, flawed, and expendable” (73). Because of the racial prejudice of the community in which Rider is living, he is punished for presenting black masculinity which threatens the white, male hierarchy. Rider threatens the romanticised old south and its white supremacy, therefore in his community can never be a hero.

The reader is more sympathetic toward Rider as they follow his story and also are shown his pain, furthermore the modernist writing provides the reader with a different perspective than that of Rider’s community. Rider does present some factors of the “Great Eight” (42) which create a hero. Through the narrative we see him as “strong, resilient, selfless [and] caring” (42). Rider’s strength is referred to many times throughout the story and he is resilient through his pain as best he can be. His selfless loving and caring nature for Mannie is also presented due to how the reader is shown his emotional turmoil. Though these heroic qualities are displayed from Rider, he is not associated as a hero and his race can be seen to be the cause of this.

Strength is an attribute of the Great Eight, and often strength is a common trait of many of the heroes in Faulkner’s stories. In “The Fire and the Hearth”, Lucas Beauchamp is described much like Rider, where his body and agility are specifically pinpointed and elegantly described; “then he whirled and leaped, not toward the sound but running parallel with it, leaping with incredible agility and speed among the trees and undergrowth” (40). Once again

Faulkner is creating a dual relationship between the characters and something powerful; with Rider it is the knife and with Lucas Beauchamp it is the sound. Both men when showing physical strength are described with detail and precision, and phrases such as “same motion” (40) and “running parallel” (40) place the heroes in the same position of power and strength as forces such as weaponry and sound.

Another reading of Rider’s actions could be that Rider is taken over by his grief rather than conflict and violence. He speaks to his grief as if it were a physical being and also uses vices such as alcohol to resist it, one could argue that Rider’s efforts were not strong enough and that the grief is what Rider becomes rather than the blade itself. If Rider is the hero in this particular narrative then the grief which overcomes Rider could be seen as his tragic flaw or even his antagonist. Though he uses violence and commits murder, there is an innocence to Rider’s actions as it is the grief which overcomes and arguably controls him rather than it being his desire to kill. The decision must be made whether this creates Rider into a hero or a villain. He is both strong and resilient; attributes which are depicted in the passage of Rider killing Birdsong and that also resonate in the description of the “Great Eight” (42). Once again, the fine lines between god and monster, hero and villain are drawn and blurred.

Depending on how one views Rider influences if he is seen as a hero or a villain. To the reader Rider is a tragic hero who committed a crime as a result of grief and loss, however to the friends of Birdsong, Rider is the “monster” (156) and villain as he has killed their friend. With this in mind a comparison between Riders committing murder and the murder of Rider does need to be examined. What is worth noting is rightly or wrongly, Rider’s crime came from a feeling of hurt and he was acting out due to his grief. I hold into question whether Rider’s murderers were acting from the same place of loss that Rider was. Though the

arguable intention was to avenge Birdsong, this intention does not seem genuine and is more driven by racial prejudice. Rider is lynched, an act of murder famously known to happen to black people in America at the time in which Rider is living. It seems too coincidental that this is the cause of Rider's death, especially when he is living in a society that is still predominantly racist. I would argue that there is no doubt that Rider's race was the prominent cause of his murder, and this act was under the façade of avenging Birdsong. Once again, the readers are presented with a value being used to disguise another intention and this is where the discrepancies of what makes a hero occurs. If the definition of a hero is that of "saving a person" (156) then neither Rider nor his murderers can be defined as heroes. Rider's killers were driven by racial hatred yet Rider's crime was driven by grief and loss, and this loss can be seen as the equivalent of Sutpen's innocence. Sutpen's flaws can be justified by his social circumstance and racial innocence but Rider's genuine emotion of grief is not justified in the eyes of many of the members of society. The difference between these flaws and how they are viewed is arguably what is being highlighted in Faulkner's novels. Race influences how a character is punished but also whether a character is defined as a hero in the society in which they are living. Arguably the intention behind an un-heroic action can be justified, which could be why there is such a fine line between hero and villain. But when can one stop justifying a heroes' unheroic behaviour? Once again it is important to observe that just as the use of the word 'hero' is used in terms of the definitions provided in the introduction, the term 'unheroic' is being used to depict actions or attributes that oppose those mentioned in these definitions, with the outcome of these acts causing a negative effect upon an individual.

The Hero and the Weapon

Weaponry as a motif in Faulkner's novels is very consistent and interlaces throughout many of the narratives. Much like the aforementioned "gun which was too big" (117) and "the breech-loader" (117), in 'The Bear', the use of a man's weapon within Faulkner's narratives reflect upon the idea of masculinity and by association, the hero. Weapons are a force that are a prevailing motif within the novels and furthermore this highlights the dependence which American society has upon their heroes wielding weapons. When Sutpen subdues the rioting slaves, the specific moment of the musket being put down is shown, as previously discussed in this circumstance the lack of weapon deems Sutpen as more heroic and he is seen as showing bravery by attending the riot unarmed. In "An Odor of Verbena", the final chapter in *The Unvanquished*, Bayard enters Redmond's office unarmed, and confronts him. The town believe there will be a gun fight between the two men which will result in death, but neither men die and though Bayard is shot at, he is not shot. When Bayard enters the office, Redmond is "holding a pistol flat on the desk" (286) and this passage is worth noting as just like the musket in *Absalom, Absalom*, the positioning and actions surrounding the weapon are highlighted. Other examples where a weapon is the focal point in a character's narrative are also presented within Faulkner's novels and this provides an insight into the value of weaponry and violence in the American South at the time. McCaslin in 'The Bear' is "holding the useless gun which he knew now he would never fire (117), and during their confrontation Lucas Beauchamp orders Edmonds twice to "get your pistol" (54). The repetition and short sharp commanding of this order suggests an urgency to Beauchamp's words as if it is the only way of resolution. If every human has a fight or flight reflex; Beauchamp's is permanently on fight. These stories, separate in narrative all have the consistent dependence upon weaponry, and it can be argued that the weapons represent the old southern traditions of masculinity and violence. These are attributes previously

determined as factors which create the hero in the southern American society at the time in which these characters are living. Just as these ideas are integrated within the minds and traditions of many characters such as the Sartoris family, the weapons are integrated into the passages of the novels in which these societies live.

Young Bayard the victim?

John Sartoris and Bayard Sartoris (also known as ‘Young Bayard’) in Faulkner’s 1927 novel *Flags in the Dust* are examples of how the hero defines and measures his own heroic status. The novel begins with Young Bayard returning home from World War I without his brother who has lost his life to the war. There is a famous Spartan battle saying of “come back either with your shield or upon it”³⁵, a phrase ritually said to soldiers when going to war, it means that the soldier must come back victorious or dead, there is no alternative. Coming back alive and defeated was seen as shameful in Spartan society, and as a society, the Spartans are renowned for creating great warriors and heroes of war. Bayard in *Flags in the Dust* can be seen as punishing himself as he has failed by returning alive. Bayard’s survivors’ guilt about returning from the World War I alive and without his brother John is arguably his downfall, much like Rider’s grief it is this feeling of guilt which overcomes him and is what causes his tragic end. Furthermore, a comparison between Rider and Bayard can be made as neither character meets the definition of a hero by “saving a person” (156) as they both fail to save their loved ones.

If the soldiers of the South in the American Civil War were renowned for their ‘glorious defeat’ it is interesting to wonder where Bayard’s shame is derived from. A returning soldier from World War I, Bayard’s homecoming in *Flags in the Dust* is accompanied by guilt rather

³⁵ Plutarch. *On Sparta*. (London: Penguin Classics, 2005), 241.

than the grandeur of a 'glorious defeat'. This suggests a change in the view of those who are returning from war in between *The Unvanquished* and *Flags in the Dust*. As previously discussed, the "the traditional myth of the huntsman culture" (232) is an idea of mythology which Daniel Hoffman discusses, Hoffman writes that "American society have their own version of the Huntsman" (232) "the hunter demonstrates his prowess and strength" (232). "It is the alternative to victimization" (232) which is what Bayard in *Flags in the Dust* presents to the reader; Carl Jung writes that victimization is where a character is overcome by his role as the victim. Jung goes on to say

it is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going. Not consciously, of course – for consciously he is engaged in bewailing and cursing a faithless world that recedes further and further in the distance. Rather, it is an unconscious factor which spins the illusions that veil his world. And what is being spun is a cocoon, which in the end will completely envelop him.³⁶

It seems to be that when a protagonist is overcome by grief and emotion, it is then their identity as a hero seems less definite. Much like a hero's tragic flaw, it is these imperfections which cause a character to be chastised either by society, the reader or themselves. A reason behind this could be that as readers or even as a society, we expect a level of perfection when it comes to our hero. If a hero is someone who "can accomplish what a normal person cannot" (63) then it is not improbable to expect that person to be free of flaws which "normal" (63) people have. The reason the character of the hero is judged and falls from grace so far when they do show flaws is because with they are held to a higher standard than the rest. Characters such as Oedipus, Rider and Bayard are held to an impossible standard of

³⁶ Carl Jung. *Aion: Researches into the phenomenology of the self (The Collected works of C.G. Jung)* (Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1981), 10.

masculinity and heroism and this could arguably be the cause of the tragic hero's downfall rather than the tragic flaws themselves.

The idea of the 'other' in literature is when an individual is excluded from society due to not fitting in, this can be due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, beliefs or any factors which separate them from the norm. It is the idea of not belonging, and furthermore when an individual is 'othered', society is afraid of that individual due to the fear of the unknown. Arguably this is what Bayard does to himself in *Flags in the Dust*. In *Complex Characterization in Faulkner's Flags in the Dust*, Jerry A. Varsava discusses the characterization of Bayard and highlights his isolation from other patriarchs and masculine figures in his family tree. Varsava writes:

old John Sartoris, founding patriarch of the Yoknapatawpha Sartoris's, confronts, unarmed, his old nemesis Redlaw. The 'dark shadow of fatality and doom' that crosses his brow the evening before his murder comes to rest on all the males of his line with the exception of his son Bayard, young Bayard's grandfather. And, we are told, old John's younger brother, the first Bayard of the clan, crashes like a 'shooting star', victim of a Yankee bullet that he invites through a reckless act of bravado. Where does Bayard stand within this group of resolute men of action?³⁷

Varsava's comparison of Bayard mimics the view which Bayard makes of himself. Bayard is grown from a masculine and patriarchal family tree with each male predecessor leaving behind some form of heroic legacy often with the southern standard of a 'glorious defeat' fulfilled. Bayard is a descendant from a long line of men who are renowned as heroes of war that have accomplished and achieved things he cannot. It seems that he is the "normal person" (63) who cannot accomplish. The hero often fulfils a legacy; some form of outcome which is expected of them in the role which they play, more often than not this is a self-fulfilling prophecy which identifies the outcome of a hero's journey. In Bayard's case

³⁷ Jerry A. Varsava. "Complex Characterization in Faulkner's Flags in the Dust".
<File:///C:/Users/User/Appdata/Local/Packages/Microsoft.Microsoftedge_8Wekyb3d8bbwe/Tempstate/Downloads/13779-18487-1-PB%20(3).Pdf> (accessed 15 March, 2018).

there are two perspectives one can take, one interpretation of Bayard's tragic outcome is that the social and familial expectation of masculinity is the cause, the other is that it is his own internal insecurities that have caused him to create a tragic prophecy for himself to fulfil. These insecurities could be seen as not so much a tragic flaw but a tragic perspective. Bayard is consumed by insecurity and the opinions of the townspeople, to the point where he continues to compete with his brother John from beyond the grave. There has been much discussion about the perspective of the hero in the eyes of society, however the way in which the hero views himself is also of significance, and his own views of himself are evidence of this.

As a character, Bayard is viewed from a variety of perspectives and he fulfils many roles and archetypes in the narrative. He is described as an “existential anti-hero, the eternal adolescent, victim of a waste land culture, Don Quixote manqué, all of these and more, Bayard's air of smouldering abrupt violence can be interpreted in a variety of ways, no one of which is self-sufficient”³⁸ (March 2018). The many roles which Bayard fulfils in *Flags in the Dust* are an example of how the role of the hero can be ever changing, the perspective both of society and one's self are factors which effect this. Bayard does not admire himself, or feel he has saved anyone, nor does he see himself as accomplishing what a normal person cannot. Most of the time because the expectation of the hero is to fulfil the needs and expectations of others; how the hero views themselves is never a factor, however *Flags in the Dust* is one of the exceptions to this rule. In *Flags in the Dust* Bayard is his own protagonist and antagonist, when the hero does not meet their own expectations and hopes of what they should be then this could be what ultimately decides their downfall. Rider failed his expectations of himself and as a husband, just as Bayard fails in meeting his values of what a Sartoris man should be,

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in both instances it is the hero's values which hinder them. Maria DiBattista writes about modernist characters in *Novel Characters: A Genealogy*. She describes modernist characters as "prompted by genuine and individual instincts and dispositions, or by conditioned behaviours that adhere to social conventions" (21). Characters such as Rider are not only conditioned by social convention, but they are condemned by it.

I argue however that it is not the character who should define themselves as a hero or not, as they are also living in the community which gives them their identity due to perceptions and institutions rather than intention. For the reader, characters such as Rider meet my definition of what depicts a Faulknerian hero. This is because reader is not only able to see the characters intention, but they are also hoping that the execution of the hero's intention will be successful.

Summary

The societies which Faulkner writes his characters into are plagued by ideologies of war and violence which are directly linked to masculinity and race. The prejudice voices and ideologies in the character's community defines their actions as being heroic, but does not recognise the part which their intentions play. In my definition, the hero will show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and furthermore the act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays. In the romanticized war ideologies of the old South, this is not the case, as reputation and white supremacy are held in higher regard than human circumstance- the admiration of Thomas Sutpen's slave plantation is an example of this. I have defined that the intention behind the act is what makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. The community in which the characters are living have created the idea that execution of wars and violence are what

makes a hero, rather than intention. Because these ideas are built upon prejudice, it must ultimately be the reader who identifies the hero, as they are able understand the modernist perception which Faulkner provides.

Chapter Three: Religion, Mythology and the Hero

This chapter will focus on religion, mythology and legend and how these provide the basis for many ideas surrounding what creates a Faulknerian hero, both in regards to my definition and further scholarship. These will then be explored within the context of Faulkner's novels and how these particular aspects of the novels create or reject the character's identities as heroes. Arguably religion is one of the earliest references in how to measure what is heroic and what is not. Across many faiths, religious texts and teachings focus on good and bad, sin and virtue and how to live one's life in accordance of these. Scholarship regarding religion and mythology, particularly in regards to structure can be found from authors such as Harold Bloom and Joseph Campbell, who focus on what creates heroic quests and plots. These structure guidelines and the authors' scholarship will be compared to character's narratives in Faulkner's novels. The character of Addie in *As I Lay Dying* speaking from beyond the grave is addressed by Brian Norman in *Dead Women Talking: Figures of Injustice in American Literature* has influenced this chapter also, as his scholarship recognises the importance of this and can be linked to Campbell's idea of 'quest'. Scholarship from Sandra Lee Kleppe's *The Curse of God In Faulkner's Go Down, Moses*, also provides wider scholarship on the role religion influences a character and how they are perceived. Kleppe writes in regards to Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, describing the way in which Isaac McCaslin is influenced by religion. The narratives of certain Faulknerian characters will also be compared and contrasted to *The Holy Bible*, as there are many influences and narrative similarities between the two, which in itself contributes to my research and definition of the word hero.

Values and Heroism

Many of the characters in Faulkner's novels are influenced by religion, and many societies are run by it also, furthermore, how certain characters are viewed and treated by others is often directly derived from religious beliefs that were integrated in society at the time. Lena and her pregnancy in *Light in August* are an example of this. As an unmarried, pregnant young woman Lena is constantly the victim of voyeurism and judgement from other characters in the novel, her marital status- and lack of- makes her baby a bastard in the eyes of God and Christianity, as well as being physical proof that she has sinned by having sex without being married. Whether they overtly state this or not, the characters judgements of Lena are derived from this belief and arguably this is because religion and the state were more united in that period. The aforementioned Tess in Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is also affected by this belief about sex and pregnancy, to the point where when her baby dies, she is not allowed to be buried in the Churchyard. As the baby is dying, Tess herself attempts to baptise Sorrow in a washing-stand with an open prayer book held out in the hopes that it will be "just the same" (146) as if a priest were to do it. Tess baptising her baby is her last attempt to save the child, she is attempting the act of "saving a person" (156) with this action and it seems that God is the ultimate hero to her as that is who she turns to in her time of need, in Tess' mind, God is the last being she can seek help from and in her attempt at saving. Arguably, this example of Tess could be seen as inferring that heroism can be linked so directly to religion could be that in time of need and crisis, the hero is sought for in religious figures. 21st Century society is more secular than it was in the time which Faulkner was writing and the time in which the novels are set. However, I do recognize that societies differ and evolve at different paces and arguably this secularization may be less so in places such as rural Mississippi.

The secularized society a 21st Century reader lives in means they are more empathetic toward those who are seen as rebelling against or not following the laws of religion. For example, the previous discussions of Lena in *Light in August* have been in the favor of her being heroic, even if she is not so in the eyes of society. To readers in a more secular society where religion and state are not so connected, Faulkner's characters are sometimes seen as more heroic to the reader than to their community. Tess feeding her baby and loving him even though he is not seen as a child of God and Lena not showing shame about her pregnancy are seen as more courageous and less shameful to a reader than to the members of the society in which they are living. Many interpretations of *The Holy Bible* suggest an oppressive nature toward women and that they are of a lesser status than men. Arguably derived from the book of Genesis where Eve, the first woman, is created from the rib of Adam, the first man. She is seen as being from him and this could be the religious perspective which causes female characters in the novel to have such prejudice toward them. It is the religious influences in southern society which I am addressing in my definition of the Faulknerian hero. The hero, in this case Lena, will show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and furthermore the act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays. The price Lena pays is the prejudice which the community hold against her, yet she is willing to defy social expectation in order to fulfil her intention of saving.

Absalom

In *The Holy Bible*, motherhood is often something that is sought for by women and gifted by God; a good example of this is the story of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and Sarah are figures in *The Holy Bible* who are a married couple desperate for a child, after years of praying and devotion to God, it is written that "the LORD was gracious to Sarah...and the

LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him”³⁹. Abraham has undying faith in God throughout his life, even when tested and asked to sacrifice his own son, Abraham agrees to make this sacrifice. His faith in God is rewarded with grace and deemed righteous, and this could be interpreted that those who surrender to the higher power and follow this faith even in a time of crisis, such as Tess, are given the protection of their hero who is God.

When asked who he liked best in the Old Testament, Faulkner replied “Oh the story of Abraham. I like all of it. They were scoundrels and blackguards and doing the best they could, just like people do now”⁴⁰. This idea that individuals do the best they can even if they are imperfect much reflects the aforementioned discussion of heroes having imperfect attributes which makes them human; we must remember that the description of The Great Eight states that in terms of possessing the characteristics of The Great Eight “it’s unusual for a hero to possess all eight of these characteristics, but most heroes have a majority of them” (42). This could be why Faulkner and many other authors integrate many religious attributes into their characters narratives. When they are imperfect or have flaws that make them seem less heroic and prove them to not possess all of the “Great Eight” (42), religion and a higher power is present to bring back divinity and heroism.

Religion is prominent in Faulkner’s novels and is used in some of the titles. The name Absalom in *Absalom, Absalom!* is used in Samuel 13 in *The Holy Bible*, which depicts the

³⁹ Collins Anglicised ESV Bibles (*Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (ESV, 2012) Genesis 21: 1-7. Subsequent page references in text.

⁴⁰ Sandra Lee Kleppe. ‘The Curse of God in Faulkner’s “Go Down Moses’ *Literature and Theology*. Vol. 10, No. 4 Oxford University Press, 1996), 361. Subsequent page references in text.

story of King David's son Amnon who falls in love with Absalom's sister, Tamar. King David is Absalom's father also. Tamar is raped by Amnon and in an attempt to avenge his sister Absalom has him murdered. After fleeing the city, Absalom then returns to take King David's kingdom. This narrative very much reflects the storyline of *Absalom, Absalom!* Charles Bon becomes engaged to Judith Sutpen and they are both the children of Thomas Sutpen. The outcome of this is that Henry Sutpen, brother of Judith and son of Thomas Sutpen murders Charles Bon at Sutpen's Hundred. The parallels between the characters in this biblical story and the novel reflect one another. Charles is Amnon; a son of the patriarch who pursues his half-sister. Judith is Tamar; the daughter of the patriarch and love interest of her half-brother. Absalom is Charles; the other son of the patriarch and a vengeful brother, and finally King David is Sutpen; the patriarch of the family who has fathered these children and watches the triangle of destruction which occurs. Sutpen and David's children are born into a kingdom which the patriarch of the family has built, the interfamily relationships and conflicts which are created lead to the death of an outsider son and therefore it seems fitting that the novel be called this. There is a sense of divinity which surrounds Sutpen and King David-both men build empires and both have a sense of immortality about them, yet both fall from Grace. It is important to remember however that the divinity and heroic perception of Sutpen and King David are in the eyes of their communities, and not the reader.

Sutpen is put in a position much like that of a creator hero and is described as one; "if God Himself was to come down and ride the natural earth, that's what He would aim to look like" (282). Sutpen's divine status is amplified in this passage, as "God himself" (282) does not come down to earth Sutpen seems to be the next best thing, or rather a human's equivalent to god; a "local god" (156). One could take this passage further by suggesting that Sutpen is seen as superior to God, as the speaker says that God would "aim" (282) to look like him.

This could be one of the most praising descriptions of Sutpen the reader is given. Not only is it showing him to be able to achieve “what a normal person cannot” (63), Sutpen is also making God look like a “normal person” (63), as there are even things which God himself needs to strive for. This idea that Sutpen is created into a hero in the sense that he is God-like occurs more than once in *Absalom, Absalom!* Carolyn Porter in her article “William Faulkner: Innocence Historicized” in *William Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!* describes Faulkner’s actions as having a “ruthless pursuit of immortality”⁴¹. In Porter’s view, Sutpen is striving for a way to gain powers which only superior forces like a God would have. From the divine status which is placed upon him Sutpen can be interpreted as a hero as he is admired as he is able to “accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63) and also has the potential to save a person e.g. save himself from mortality. *Absalom, Absalom!* can also be viewed as much like *The Holy Bible* in its structure. In previous descriptions, the novel is described as a “disparate set of stories” (38), and this could be seen as similar to the Bible. Both texts tell different stories that involve violence, incest, morality and destiny, all of which surround and follow a divine figure. It is similarities such as this which highlight the direct link between religion and heroism.

It is my argument that Sutpen’s divinity and immortality prove to be false, as he does not achieve immortality and does deteriorate in status. However much like the different types of hero that can be recognised, there could also arguably be different types of God. There are different archetypes of heroes with different actions and the outcome of their narratives, for example a tragic hero or the anti-hero, and this varying in archetypes can be seen as not dissimilar to the different archetypes of God. *The Holy Bible* is filled with different

⁴¹ Carolyn Porter. “William Faulkner: Innocence Historicized” Ed. Harold Bloom. *William Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!* New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1991), 62. Subsequent page references in text.

descriptions of God; merciful, powerful, unchanging, and many others. Though he is the same, he is seen in different ways, much like the archetype of the hero and much like the character of Sutpen. God is a creator, creating and preserving life, and in his narrative Sutpen could be seen as creating a micro version of this in his design. Because of the different descriptions and perspectives surrounding Sutpen in the community, it is ultimately the reader who is key in defining what a Faulknerian hero is.

Creation

A creation myth is the story of how the world was created and how the life which lives upon it was formed. In *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell compares Sutpen's design to the creation myth and writes that the "tragic aspect of Sutpen's design illustrates the creation myth's tendency towards a sense of the doom that is continually recalling all created shapes... [they] go forth powerfully, but inevitably reach their apogee, break, and return" (269) and solidifies Sutpen's role as the "creator hero" (269). The creation myth comes in a cyclical nature according to Campbell, or at the very least, Sutpen's does. What's interesting is that much like the destiny of the tragic hero, that which Sutpen has created leads to his downfall. Charles Bon could be viewed as the "sense of doom" (269) to which Campbell refers as he is a product of Sutpen's creation which sets out to be his demise. Sutpen is seen more as a god like figure now that his design has come full circle and caused a "sense of doom" (269) from his creation and this could further reflect *The Holy Bible*, as God too created something which brought doom and this was the fallen angel Lucifer. Lucifer, the fallen angel also known as 'Satan' or 'the devil' in Christianity was one of God's angels who fell from grace and was condemned:

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore, will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I

will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (Ezekiel 28:18)

If Sutpen is the local god then it is not too far to assume that Charles Bon is Lucifer; a son whose favour falls in the eyes of his creator and seeks destruction of lives for vindication. Destruction caused from that which is created can be seen in other examples in literature, Frankenstein's monster in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley is another example on how life which a creator hero creates can lead to demise, Frankenstein's monster is literally given life by Dr Frankenstein; "the form of the monster on whom I had bestowed existence was for ever before my eye"⁴², his monster then goes on to destroy the lives of those who he loves. He is the "sense of doom" (269), much like Charles Bon and Lucifer. Campbell's quotation "whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative" (156) therefore has another interpretation in regards to examples such as these. The local gods are the ones who create the monsters, and it is the monsters which reflect upon the creator and therefore cause the fine line Campbell identifies between hero and monster. This idea gives a darker and more sinister sense to the role of the creator hero as it may be that for a creator hero to truly be one, their fate will be to create doom. Henry in *Absalom, Absalom!* also can be seen as trying his hand at playing God as he puts himself as the master of Charles Bon's life, killing him after saving him. Outcomes of the creator hero's creations aside, Faulkner does present to the reader a creator hero in Sutpen when he is examined in comparison to Christianity.

Religion and the Family

Many religious texts such as *The Holy Bible* promote the importance of the family unit and this can be seen as having links to heroism in Faulkner's novels. Attributes of a hero include "supporting an idea" (156) and if we examine the description of what makes the hero from

⁴² Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein*. (London: William Collins, 2010), 64

Joseph Campbell then this can be why certain characters are seen as heroes. The ideas of Christianity are always supported by those who follow and live by the teachings, and this is also a reason why religion can be linked to heroism. In *The Holy Bible* it is written “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12) and this could be seen as the intention behind the Bundren’s journey in *As I Lay Dying*. Addie’s children Cash, Darl, Jewel, Dewey Dell, Vardaman and her husband Anse all travel across northern Mississippi to bury her in her desired resting place in Jefferson. The Bundren family are taking a physical journey to honour their mother in *As I Lay Dying*, yes, they suffer catastrophe and trials along the way but they still continue in their pursuit which fulfils this Christian scripture. Many misfortunes happen to Addie’s body along the journey: it decomposes, is dropped in a river, is nearly burned in a fire, but the Bundren’s pursue the honouring of their mother nonetheless. Jesus himself was confronted and tempted by Satan when he wandered for forty days and nights in the desert but that does not make his journey any less noble. One characteristic depicted in the “Great Eight” (42) is “resilience” (42), and throughout the hardships of their journey the Bundrens still prevail. One could argue that the tragedies which happen during the Bundrens’ journey make it nobler. The misfortunes which the Bundren’s are faced with highlight’s their resilience, if a quest such as the Bundren’s, or a pilgrimage such as Jesus’ in Matthew 4:11 were easy and not riddled with tribulations and trials then any “normal person” (63) would be able to achieve such journeys. But what sets characters such as these apart is that they can “accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63). Cora Tull in *As I Lay Dying* says “riches is nothing in the face of the Lord, for He can see into the heart” (4), and much like riches, the failures of the Bundren’s can be seen as superficial and materialistic, as the determination in their hearts keeps them going. If Cora’s view of the Lord is true, then the heroic intentions behind the Bundren’s actions can be seen.

The attempt to burn down Gillespie's barn and the coffin which Addie's body is in is intentional as it is Darl who sets the fire. He attempts to justify his actions by saying his decision was motivated by religion, and it was God's will for Addie's body to be cremated. One interpretation is that true intention behind Darl's actions is that he is desperate for the journey to come to an end and this seems less noble than the previous exploration of the Bundren's journey. Darl in fact hides behind religion and veils his intention behind God's will. If this interpretation is accurate then the heroism of the Bundren's is not linear, nor is it completely consistent and the lesser heroic actions that are committed by the Bundren's and Darl's arson do contradict that which has previously been explored. However, the coffin is still saved, and despite his blunder Darl does continue with the family in the pursuit of burying Addie. Some may argue that Darl's act is truly heroic, rather than a blunder, as he is trying to save his mother's body from any further ignominy which has been caused by the family's misguided quest. These interpretations highlight how objective and open to interpretation heroism can be. In the novel Anse states that "nowhere in this sinful world can a honest, hard-working man profit" (98), he is referring to social class yet this passage could also be applicable to the reasoning behind Darl's actions. The Bundren's are poor, and do work hard to achieve their goal yet rather than being helped by God they do not receive a profit. Addie is dead, Dewey Dell is pregnant and frightened, Darl is taken to a mental institution, Cash breaks his leg and many other misfortunes seem to be the only rewards which the Bundren's receive for their efforts. It is my belief that the tragedies which the Bundren's are met with do not mean they are not heroes, it just means that heroes are not always rewarded. Sometimes as much as a reader or the character themselves wishes it so, the hero does not get a treasure or elixir that is worthy of their efforts, nor do they always get their 'happily ever after' they yearn for, however this does not mean they have failed and this does not make

them less heroic. It is this argument which helps define my idea of a Faulknerian hero, as in this instance it is the intention behind the act which makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. Furthermore, the execution of the hero's intention is one the reader will hope to be successful. The coffin almost getting burned and the Bundren's misfortunes could be seen as being linked to the saying "trial by fire"-, the phrase is used to describe a medieval practice of testing how strong a person is and how one acts under pressure, often this is tested by making them persist through an ordeal such as walking over fire. Darl's actions could be an example of this trial and the rest of the devastation which surrounds the Bundrens also. Somehow the family handle the pressures of the task which they have been set and despite the almost failure, they do continue to bury Addie's body. The Bundren's are tested ordeal after ordeal on their journey but still succeed, they honour their mother and withstand the trials set by them, proving them to be heroes.

Even the place where one is buried can be seen as having religious significance, we as readers can see this in the aforementioned example of Tess' baby Sorrow in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Sorrow is not allowed to be buried in the Churchyard as he is not seen as legitimate in the eyes of the Church. Being buried in the Christian faith is seen as the final resting place for a person before they enter the kingdom of heaven so it can be seen to hold important significance within Christianity. The Bundren family taking Addie's body across Jefferson and burying her with her family as she wanted can be seen as a pilgrimage of sorts, and by keeping true to their promise of fulfilling this religious motif readers can see aspects of heroism in them. The ongoing debate on how true the Bundrens' intentions are is still relevant and can act as a criticism for this point. My position in this debate is represented in

my definition of the Faulknerian hero, so it is ultimately the Bundren's intentions as individuals which define whether each character is a hero, and not their actions or quest.

By exploring Anse as an individual, there is heavy inference that he is going to Jefferson in pursuit of new teeth rather than any form of religious fulfilment or pilgrimage. Anse himself claims to not be religious, he directly says "I am not religious, I reckon" (32), however his actions do suggest otherwise. Charles Wilson in *Faulkner and Religion* suggest that Anse's "social status and aggrieved position are wrapped up in his religion"⁴³, he also refers to the passage "nowhere in this sinful world can a honest, hard-working man profit" (98) and use this as an example of how Anse is frustrated by his working class status. The previous discussion about a hero never being rewarded could be the reason that Anse distrusts the benefits of following the morality and teachings of Christianity, though he does believe in God. Like the famous phrase 'no good deed goes unpunished', Anse has a very 'what is the point?' view of religious practice and following the values that come with. One can sympathise with this, Anse feels as if he is a victim rather than a hero, and presents these feelings in this passage. Though the Bundren's as a collective have been depicted as heroes in various ways, as individuals it could be that they are the people who need saving rather than the hero who is saving the people.

Addie too in her chapter in *As I Lay Dying* shows an apprehension toward the benefits of a religious life and following attributes linking to religion. Cora Tull, the Bundren's neighbour, has an unwavering faith in God, and though her beliefs and practises are dismissed by Addie she is faithful to her beliefs. Cora visits Addie and is by her side during her final days, and says she only expects the same treatment in return. Cora says "why, for the last three weeks I

⁴³ Charles Wilson. "Faulkner and the Southern Religious Culture". *Faulkner and Religion*. ed. Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie. (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2012) 39.

have been coming over every time I could...Not that I deserve credit for it: I will expect the same for myself. But thank God it will be the faces of my loved kin, for my blood and flesh, for in my husband and children I have been more blessed than most, trials though they have been at times” (18) Cora presents many of the attributes of the ‘Great Eight, she is “resilient, selfless, [and] caring” (42) in her care for her dying friend and the only reward which she seeks is to be treated the same when it is her time. She thanks God for her family and that they will care for her just as she is caring for Addie, and though “trials though they have been at times” (18) Cora sees her family as her reward. It is Cora’s faith in religion which give her the heroic qualities described in the ‘Great Eight’. Though she is expecting a reward from her actions it is not materialistic gains which she seeks, Cora only asks for the comfort of her family. The treasure which the hero seeks does not have to be gold, money or glory, it can be that which they already have and are thankful for which are their reward. Though she is embracing the Great Eight, Cora is seeking a reward, so it could be argued that her intentions are not completely selfless. Yet the reward which she seeks does seem to have honourable intentions behind it as she values her family’s company.

Addie and Cora do not see eye to eye when it comes to religion and faith, and as previously mentioned Addie’s views on the importance of religious practices seem to reflect Anse’s. In regards to Cora’s faith Addie says “I would think how words go straight up in a thin line, quick and harmless...sin and love and fear are just sounds that people who never sinned nor loved nor feared have for what they never had and cannot have until they forget the words” (170). The more non-religious attributes such as sin and fear are inevitable to Addie, and the religious practices which involve the condemning of the words or the negative implications of them seem to be “just sounds” rather than of any importance to her. Addie blames the condemning of these acts as feelings of jealousy rather than morality. It is important to note

here the difference between religion and religious practices as it is not being implied that Addie is not religious, she just does not agree with religious practices the same as Cora does. We can see this when Addie says “because people to whom sin is just a matter of words, to them salvation is just words too” (32). From this passage it can be argued that Addie is more religious than Cora as she sees sin and salvation as more than just words. She herself accepts death willingly, as she believes that death is the price she must pay to God for her sins such as having an affair "I know my own sin. I know that I deserve my punishment. I do not begrudge it" (32). Religious beliefs and religious practices are identified as separate and individual in *As I Lay Dying* and this could very much be compared to the difference between heroic acts and heroic intentions.

Addie is speaking from beyond the grave in her chapter as the speaker in *As I Lay Dying* and as readers we do not know where exactly that is. If she were speaking from heaven, the Christian place of afterlife then surely, she would have no more doubts in religious practices, and would see more validity in Cora’s words and teachings which suggests she is not there. However, it also seems improbable that Addie is in no form of supernatural afterlife as she is a speaker from the grave for an entire chapter. Identifying where Addie is speaking from and whom she is speaking to would answer all of the questions and controversy surrounding religion but she does not do this, maybe because she herself does not understand. I recognise the novel is fiction and Faulkner would not be able to answer the question of what happens after death, but the question must be posed, if the implication in *As I Lay Dying* is not that there is life after death, why have Addie’s input at all? Though she dismisses religious practices as they seem superficial to her, there is some higher power that allows Addie to be heard by the readers. This in itself could imply that religion is a powerful force in the novel. Addie dismisses the practises of religion and the supernatural, yet some part of her is still

alive after death, this could imply the power of religion and religious values even when not paired with religious practices as it is incorporated into a characters' psyche and life even when they do not accept the faith.

Addie speaking beyond the grave is discussed in other scholarship such as *Dead Women Talking: Figures of Injustice in American Literature* by Brian Norman. In Addie's chapter she exposes to the reader her internal hatred toward her role as a mother and a wife in southern society, something she was never truly able to share whilst living. Norman writes that in Addie's chapter, she is "no longer the silent, suffering maternal figure holding together a family of not quite-right characters"⁴⁴. Norman describes the "posthumous voice"(185) given to Addie as a "posthumous justice"(185) which "seeks to restore her original, uninterrupted self, which she understands as a return of the void that Anse Bundren and each subsequent child penetrated as she became a wife and then a mother" (185). Addie being able to reveal this from beyond the grave is a symbol of the mutism women in the South have when they are living, and Faulkner's use of narrative voice can be used to example this. Addie's journey is told and dictated by a community of narrative voices, until this chapter. Norman describes this as a "cubist vision of collected reality" (185), which is accurate, the voices in *As I Lay Dying* create Addie's reality in death, just as they did in life by forcing her into a maternal role she did not want. Norman states that once Addie is dead, "she is her own again, no longer communal property" (185), and the reader can see that she finally is alone like she wanted to be. Addie's chapter is important in my exploration of what creates a Faulknerian hero as it is only through the reader's experience of the novel that we can see true intention and internal narrative.

⁴⁴ Brian Norman. *Dead Women Talking: Figures of Injustice in American Literature*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 185. Subsequent page references in text.

Go Down, Moses

Sandra Lee Kleppe in *The Curse of God In Faulkner's Go Down, Moses* focuses on the interlacing influence which religion has in *Go Down, Moses*. Kleppe writes

the main protagonist of the book, Isaac McCaslin, is caught up in a complex web of religious influences which form his world view from beyond boyhood to old age. Though he is nurtured on the spiritual primitivism of his mentor, Sam Fathers, it is nevertheless a personal form of stoicism and especially the Protestant faith of the South which will have the most pervasive influence on him and his family (361)

Stoicism is the endurance of hardship without complaint, a trait already exemplified in the Bundren family in *As I Lay Dying*. Kleppe writes that the most prominent influence upon Isaac is his faith and the faith of the South which give him this "Great Eight" (42) trait of "resilience" (42). The use of the phrase "boyhood to old age" (361) suggests that Kleppe sees *Go Down, Moses* as Isaac's bildungsroman; following him through boyhood into adulthood and seeing him grow physically and spiritually. Marta Ancarani in *The Return of the Mythical Hero* discusses "the Mentor archetype, which primitive societies usually identified with an old woman or a fairy godmother. Higher mythologies developed the role of helper in the figure of a teacher, a guide, a conductor of souls to the after world"⁴⁵. Kleppe's perspective on the prominence of religion's influence upon Isaac could be seen as acting as this figure of mentor. In his quest from boy to man. Previously discussed has been the idea that religion is used as a reference for right and wrong and also provides a guideline for heroism and villainy, this description of what the archetype of the mentor and role they hold in the hero's narrative; "the figure of a teacher, a guide, a conductor" (131) can be seen as applicable to the role of religion in Faulkner's characters. This would mean that both the intention behind and

⁴⁵ Marta Ancarani. *Herzog: The Return of the Mythical Hero*. (Saarbrücken: University of Argentina's, 2011),131.Subsequent page references in text

execution of the hero's deeds are not only influenced but aided by religion, holding it of great importance in the lives of Faulkner's characters and what defines them as heroes.

Isaac McCaslin is a carpenter, and chooses this trade because "if the Nazarene had found carpentering good for the life and ends he had assumed and elected to serve, it would be all right too for Isaac McCaslin" (309). McCaslin focuses his life around religion and maintaining religious and spiritual teachings when making decisions and this passage implies how much influence religion can have on a hero. The word used for Jesus Christ here is Nazarene, another term for the religious figure derived from Nazareth, where he is from. Jesus being referred to as Nazarene rather than his name suggests a strong link to his birth place and the society which he is from, to McCaslin that is Jesus' identifying factor. The reference here can be that with the use of this name, McCaslin sees Jesus' roots as of religious significance, Nazareth as a society holds a link to Jesus, highlighting how religious society was in the South in McCaslin's time. This interlacing of religion in and out of McCaslin's life follows him from boy to man, and arguably this is not religion itself but religion's influence on society and society's expectations which allow for this. If Jesus' identifier is the society in which he was living then there is no reason that McCaslin cannot have this link also as both are shaped by their roots.

Isaac McCaslin's hunt for the bear in 'The Bear' is spiritual in the sense that as a boy it is a coming of age tradition. Much like in the Jewish faith and its traditional 'bar mitzvah', McCaslin's mentor gives him a coming of age ceremony through his hunt for the bear; it is a spiritual and religious practice which includes some mystical and almost supernatural events. An example of this is that the bear itself is a creature of legend and almost mythical in essence as it is a being which eludes the real world and is sought by many. Coming of age

ceremonies are very common in many faiths, myths and societies around the world which date back centuries before the time in which Faulkner was writing. Apart from the previous example in Judaism, other examples include the Native American tradition where boys were hung by their chests on sharp metal hooks and were expected not to make a sound. If one were to look further back to Ancient Sparta there was a tradition where a boy was left upon a snowy mountain alone, barefoot and undressed all but for a red cloak, and expected to survive the elements and predators for several days. All examples just provided are from cultures very influenced by religion and all have practices which are intended to prove and celebrate manhood. Previous links in the chapter “Violence, Values and the Hero” to masculinity and the identity of Faulkner’s characters as heroes alongside these examples of religious and spiritual practices suggest that a lot of the associations between masculinity and heroism are derived from religion.

Go Down, Moses is interlaced with many themes of religion and spirituality and just like *Absalom, Absalom!* the title is derived from *The Holy Bible* where “the Lord said to Moses: Go to Pharaoh and tell him: Thus says the Lord: Let my people go to serve me” (Exodus 7:26). The most prominent links with religion are from the Old Testament and this could be that it’s themes in *Go Down, Moses* mostly mirror with those in the Old Testament. Both *The Holy Bible* and *Go Down, Moses* present ideas of slavery, what it is to be free, creation and also man himself and how he fits into these themes. With characters such as Rider and McCaslin these themes are explored and depicted, showing the impact that religion can have centuries later. Moses is a prominent example of the fine line between “local god” (156) and “monster” (156), his plagues upon Egypt cause suffering and the death of children and many other atrocities but he also frees a nation of slaves. The Holy Bible is filled with contrasts and contradictions about morality and heroism but so is the definition of what creates a hero.

Despite the contradictions and despite the anomalies in *The Holy Bible* it is still referred to for morality and values and especially so in the community in the novel. The links between religion and ideologies of the hero is why it has such a strong influence upon Faulkner's characters.

Religious Figures and influences

Many characters in Faulkner's novels can be seen as symbols of religious figures. Cash, for example in *As I Lay Dying* can be interpreted to be a figure much like Christ himself. Like McCaslin he is a carpenter and shows kindness and virtue throughout the novel. He very much suffers in silence, even with a broken leg that is covered in a cast of cement and pursues vigorously through the turmoil which the family endure. Cash turns himself into a martyr like figure through his stoicism as he sacrifices everything (including a limb) to fulfil his mother's wish of being in Jefferson. Much like Jesus died for the sins of humanity, Cash suffers for his family as he has to put his own suffering aside to deal with theirs, he is so preoccupied with "saving a people" (156) that he does not save himself. Cash presents many of the "Great Eight" (42) throughout the novel, he is "strong, resilient, selfless, caring" (42) and "reliable" (42) yet all of his selflessness and heroic attributes seem in vain as his mother's memory is eventually tarnished by a new Mrs Bundren when Anse remarries and the closest Cash ever gets to a graphophone is hearing one playing from the window of the house where the future Mrs Bundren is living. Throughout the novel Faulkner uses grotesque irony like this for many if not all of Cash's good deeds, for example even with a broken leg, Cash still fixes the roof of a Church. Even when repairing a holy place of worship Cash is not rewarded and suffers for his good deeds, and his broken leg causes him much pain and suffering throughout the journey. He is a clear example of Anse's idea that "nowhere in this

sinful world can a honest, hard-working man profit" (98), Cash is honest and hard-working and is rewarded in no way for his actions. He may represent a heroic figure in Christian religion and meet the expectations of a hero but Cash is not rewarded as such, for Jesus' suffering he was resurrected and granted eternity in the kingdom of heaven, yet the closest Cash gets to any form of resurrection is the resurrection of the title of Mrs Bundren in the form of Anse's new wife.

Another trait in the Great Eight is "smart" (42), and out of all of the Bundren's, Cash does seem to be the wisest and most logical. When Darl is accused of being insane and the rest of the Bundren family are held under judgement, Cash reflects "it's like it aint so much what a fellow does, but it's the way the majority of folks is looking at him when he does it" (214). Referring back to Campbell's definition of a hero and how "you could be a local god, but for the people whom that local god conquered, you could be the enemy. Whether you call someone a hero or a monster is all relative" (156) it seems that Cash also holds this view. Cash realises that it is not necessarily the actions of a person which defines them, but rather it is how the society around them views those actions which truly identifies a person. This idea of society's perspective having a significant influence upon how a person is viewed is a theme presented to the reader but not necessarily recognised by characters in many of Faulkner's novels. Cash, however, is the exception to this. This could be the reason that Cash is so silent in his suffering, he knows that it is not how he views his actions but rather how he will be viewed by society which will define his heroism. Furthermore, this idea of external judgement could arguably be Cash preparing himself for what the Christian faith believes to be judgement day, where he will stand in front of God and be judged for his time on earth.

Hightower in *Light In August* is demonised due to the suspicion surrounding his wife's death. The moment he rejects any responsibility for her demise he is described as "his teeth were tight together and his face looked like the face of Satan in the old prints" (49). Cash's good deeds and actions are focused on in *As I Lay Dying*, yet Hightower's crimes and wickedness are speculated but never confirmed, the reader is led by speculation alone. Hightower's teeth being tight together suggests a tense, and evil demeanour about Hightower, though the reader never sees Hightower's crimes like they do Cash's good deeds, it seems they are exposed nonetheless through Hightower's appearance. Hightower looking like "Satan in the old prints" (49) is another indication that the view of right and wrong and heroism and villainy are derived from religion. The moment he is accused of villainy, Hightower takes the shape of the devil, the evil force of death and destruction in *The Holy Bible*. This act of evil is directly linked to the devil through Hightower's appearance, suggesting it is this figure in the Christian faith whom evil acts are associated with. Furthermore, the image of Hightower representing "the old prints" (49) suggests how long standing and integrated into society this belief about wickedness and villainy being linked to the devil is.

In these examples, the community decide what creates a 'hero' and what creates a 'villain' due to religious views and influences. However, I argue that by meeting the standards of 'hero' in the community's religious standard does not create a heroic character. I refer again to Elizabeth Kerr writes that when Bayard avenged Granny's death he "accepted the non-Christian code and savagely wreaked vengeance on Grumby" (180). This use of the word "savagely" implies an uncultured and primal nature to Bayard's actions and furthermore by referring to the code as "non-Christian" (180), Kerr is exposing the immoral, sinful and unheroic acts that are expected of a character in a religious society. The intention behind Bayard's actions were to save, and to stop a cycle of violence, even if it is deemed as

“non-Christian” (180). He defies the community’s expectations of the hero, but meets mine as a Faulknerian hero.

Kerr says that “Bayard acted like a conventional person, following a conventional code, and lost his innocence” (180). The use of the word “conventional” (180) in this description is interesting as it mirrors Harold Bloom’s description that “one definition of a hero is a person who, through genius or courage or might, can accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63). Kerr here is stating that the normal people are those who continue the cycle of revenge like Bayard does in *The Unvanquished*. Kerr’s ideas of the “conventional code” (180) stripping Bayard of his innocence can be paired with Bloom’s ideas of heroism breaking the norm and being able to “accomplish what a normal person cannot” (63). This is because both writers see the flaws and unheroic traits of certain conventional practices in the South and both agree that just because something is the norm does mean it is right or heroic.

By not killing Redman, Kerr identifies Bayard as not only a hero but also a faithful Christian, and arguably with the time in which Bayard was living these identities could be seen as one and the same. Bayard’s decision is his “rebirth as a mature, responsible, Christian adult is delayed until he is twenty-four” (180) till he refuses to fight and kill Redman, causing what is a “triumph of Christian enlightenment” (180). Not only does religion have the power to keep a hero true to their path, but it also seems to have the power to change a character’s identity and lead them onto a heroic and moral path. Bayard changes identity and his perspective on societal codes, he is enlightened to a new path and this shows the influence religion has as it can warp and change a character’s identity as a hero. One could argue that though it has the power to be destructive, in this instance religion itself is the hero. It triumphs over toxic social norms and through its influences is “saving a people” (156) -the potential future

victims of the cycle of revenge in the Sartoris family-, and “saving a person” 156) Bayard’s innocence, morality and life. The end of this quotation is “supporting an idea” (156) and this is open to many interpretations and can cause conflict when describing the hero because it is never specified what kind of idea the hero should be supporting. There are many members of society such as Drusilla in *The Unvanquished* who support the idea of revenge and violence but I question whether in the context of this novel if revenge is heroic. Because it follows after the depiction of ‘saving’ a people or a person, it can be interpreted that ‘saving’ is the idea which the hero is supporting in this definition, and Bayard supports this idea by not taking revenge. Religion can further be seen as a hero in Faulkner’s novels as it meets this definition of Campbell’s. The intention of religion is of saving an individual’s soul and morality through its teachings, and through Bayard’s actions in the conclusion of *The Unvanquished*, readers can see this as a triumph.

The Structure of the Hero’s Journey and the Heroic Quest

If this Joseph Campbell’s three stages of ‘world’ structure is used as a template for the narratives and journeys of the characters in Faulkner’s novels, then the characters whose journeys we follow can be seen as heroes as they all fulfil and pass the stages of Campbell’s heroic quest. The Bundrens in *As I Lay Dying* are a good example of this quest, their journey to Jefferson which they undergo a physical quest as well as an emotional one. The Bundrens’ ordinary and mundane world is their home, which is disrupted once Addie’s death occurs. Addie “passes a threshold” (64) and the Bundrens enter the “special world” (64) of their journey to Jefferson with her body. This argument can be disputed however when we examine the third and final stage of the Bundrens’ journey where they are expected to return to the “ordinary world” (64) at home. In the novel, the readers do not see the Bundrens

physically returning to their home. Although they have completed their quest of burying Addie one might argue that the Bundrens' quest is not fully complete because they do not return to their ordinary world. Arguably this conclusion would suggest that the Bundrens do not meet Campbell's idea of the heroic quest.

The other interpretation however is that for the Bundrens, the "ordinary world" (64) which they are returning to is Jefferson. The journey to Jefferson itself has already been identified as the "special world" (64) therefore it can be interpreted that Jefferson is the "ordinary world" (64) for the Bundrens. This idea is also furthered by the fact that there is a new Mrs Bundren at the end of the novel. At the end of *As I Lay Dying* Anse arrives and asks his family to "meet Mrs Bundren" (240) -a new wife who he has taken the day after the late Addie has been buried. Twisted and grotesque as it may seem, this ending is a symbol of returning to the ordinary world as the Bundrens now have a Mrs Bundren to return with. The new Mrs Bundren means that the family will be as it was before they left for Jefferson. Though Darl is not with them, Jefferson and the new Mrs. Bundren combined create another ordinary world for Faulkner's characters. The "cycle, a coming and a returning" (64) at the end of a heroic quest which Campbell writes about is presented and Bundrens' journey completes Campbell's structure of the heroic quest. This interpretation would conclude that the heroic quest is complete, and the Bundrens can be identified as heroes because their 'treasure' is burying their mother which they have succeeded in and they have returned to the "ordinary world" (64). By Brian Norman's standards, Addie's death could also be seen as her completing her own quest, as in her chapter she returns to her "aloneness", which can be seen as her "normal world" if we perceive motherhood and being Anse's wife as her "special world" (64).

The Bundrens' quest is complete if we examine their quest in the same way as Campbell, however the idea that the remarriage of Anse meets the fulfilment of the heroic quest can be criticised. The Bundrens have completed their quest, however this quest can be fulfilled with unheroic acts which cause problems when defining the role of the hero in these terms. This issue of how heroic a character can be is one that can be raised when examining many famous heroes and heroic quests throughout literature and time. The famous hero Hercules for example and his heroic actions of completing his labours highlight this argument. Hercules is known as one of the most renowned heroes in literature, famously and courageously completing his twelve labours, however the reason he had to complete his heroic labours was to redeem himself for murdering his family. Hercules' entire legacy therefore is arguably built upon a selfish intention, the same way as the defining moment of the Bundrens' quest as being completed is, within the standards of Campbell's definition, created from Anse's new marriage. It is criticism such as this which is why my key concept of intention defining what creates a hero is relevant and important, as by using it the reader is able to examine and assess further into the structures created from other scholarship.

My argument here is not that the Bundrens are not heroes or that their quest is not heroic, but that as readers we are presented with ideologies and standards that defines a hero and sometimes these standards can be met even with unusual and un-heroic intentions. Faulkner's characters are dysfunctional and flawed, the hole-drilling, barn burning Bundrens are a prime example of this, but they do have moments within their quest where they do display heroism e.g. completing their mothers dying wish. The story of the Bundrens presents many dysfunctions and issues within society, issues with marriage, death, the family unit and even class. The issues with what defines a hero is no different to this, and I argue this is the reason that there are so many grey areas in what defines a hero when it comes to Faulkner's

characters, and why it is the presentation to the reader that matters. To truly define the whether a Bundren is a Faulknerian hero or not, they must be explored as individuals, with their intentions identified.

Other characters in Faulkner's novels also seem to take journeys which follow Campbell's structure of the three stages of world. Lena in *Light in August* undertakes her own heroic quest which also follows the three stages. Lena could arguably be viewed as her baby's hero, as she is on a quest to find her child's father and secure a future for them. In Campbell's terms, the baby's father is the "treasure/elixir" (64) for which the hero is searching and the journey which Lena takes to find him is her heroic quest. Lena begins her journey in the ordinary world, and the conception of her child along with her long journey can be seen as her passing of the threshold into the special world of Jefferson, Lena then finds her baby's father in Jefferson which completes her quest. Whilst I recognise that she is immediately abandoned by him, Lena has still completed her quest in finding her baby's father in the first place. The ending of the novel where Lena is travelling with Byron and her new born baby is a representation of her return to the ordinary world once again, as her story as an individual has returned to its beginning where she is travelling once more.

Lena's shows resilience and determination whilst trying to find the father for her baby and fulfilling a promise to him that she would meet him once he has secured a life for their family. Lena is evidently devoted to her baby's father and is following her own need to be reunited with him. She is defying social expectations to do this for the good of her family as their livelihood would depend on having a patriarch in the time in which the novel is set. Lena presents a strong sense of responsibility and determination to reunite baby and father, and this is similar to what we see in the quest of the Bundrens. In both instances familial

responsibility and personal gain are the drive behind a heroic quest. In regards to the “treasure/elixir” (64) Campbell writes that the treasure which a hero seeks is usually for the benefit of someone else as well as or instead of the heroes themselves. From my research, my definition of the Faulknerian hero argues this also. Lena Grove is fulfilling Campbell’s idea of what a hero is as she believes that finding Lucas Burch will benefit her baby. Though she is abandoned by Joe Brown again at the end of the novel, *Light in August* can still be seen as Lena’s quest, as she does complete her intention of finding Joe-even if he does not fulfil her expectations. It is plot structures such as this one which has influenced my definition of the Faulknerian hero, as though the execution of Lena’s plan was not perfect, her intention was still heroic in regards to my definition.

Lena is a young, unwed, pregnant girl in 1920’s Jefferson, showing attributes similar to those of a heroine. However in the eyes of the society in which she is living, her circumstance should be something which would bring her shame. How the reader perceives Lena and how the community in which she is living perceives her are two conflicting views. This idea of society’s misfit being a reader’s hero is one that can be found in other examples of literary characters, an example here being Huckleberry Finn, the protagonist and hero of Mark Twain’s 1883 novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In one of the climactic moments of this novel, young Huck must “decide, forever betwixt two things”⁴⁶, these two things being whether to save his new friend Jim, an escaped black slave who has been recaptured, or to send a letter that will keep Huck out of trouble and return Jim to his slave owner. In Huck’s view and the view of a Western Missouri society at the time, Huck attempting to save Jim is wrong, illegal and deviant-not attributes which one would apply to a hero. Despite this fact

⁴⁶ Mark, Twain. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. London: (Harper Press, 2013), 203. Subsequent page references in text.

however, Huck eventually declares “Alright then, I’ll *go* to hell-and tore it [the letter] up” (203) and decided to rescue and set free his friend Jim. To the reader, Huck displays courage, selflessness and determination by deciding to rebel against society and free Jim, however in the eyes of Huck’s society his actions are that of a delinquent, and what’s more Huck himself believes he will go to hell for the decision he has made. Huck and Lena are both examples of the society’s rebels being the reader’s hero and it could be argued that rebelling against the norm is an attribute that defines a hero for the reader. The decision then must be made on whether a hero is created in the perception of the society and community he or she is written in or in the perception of the society which he or she is read in. My argument is that it is the latter, as Huck is an example of understanding intention behind an action, and how it is the reader who understands this. By my definition and standard which I have been creating, the small act of tearing up the paper is heroic in itself, and Huck’s decision is heroic whether he had managed to save Jim or not. It is the intention behind the act is what makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. Campbell wrote that “the hero of today becomes the tyrant of tomorrow, unless he crucifies himself today” (302) but in the case of Lena and Huck and other literary heroes this statement can be taken a step further. In some circumstances the hero of today is the tyrant of his or her society yesterday, and must crucify his or herself in their time in order to become the hero of today. This is why I have included that the hero will show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves in my definition of the Faulknerian hero. I have also taken this further by arguing that the act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays. This definition I have made is appropriate for Faulkner’s modernist characters such as Lena, as they are representing the criticisms of the old south which the modernist perspective has.

Christopher Booker also has his own theory about this structure which he discusses in his book *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*. These seven plots can be found in any of Faulkner's narratives, and sometimes more than one plot can be found in the same novel. Faulkner's use of multiple narratives and flashback means that often individual characters in the same novel follow a different one of each of the seven plots. Faulkner's novel *Flags in the Dust* could arguably be seen as an example of a tragedy if we follow the story of Bayard as the reader witnesses his decline after World War I and his eventual death. Once he has returned from the war Bayard could be argued to have been a hero however his tragic flaw of his survivor's guilt could represent what becomes Bayard's undoing. The question whether a hero still a hero after a tragic decline must be posed when it comes to this observation and this idea of tragedy or a tragic flaw is one we have seen throughout many mediums of literature. The character of Oedipus in the famous Greek Tragedy *Oedipus Rex* is an example where the play begins with Oedipus as a mighty general and soldier whose tragic flaw is ignorance and as a result the play ends showing him as a disgraced murderer who committed incest and is blinded as a self-inflicted punishment. Both Bayard and Oedipus have different narratives yet they both fall into Booker's plots, suggesting that there is an interlacing theme between heroes and a tragic flaw which can be their demise. This idea brings a new dynamic to the representation of what a hero is and also the factors which prevent characters from becoming and remaining heroes in the first place. Both Oedipus and Bayard were once heroes of today that were crucified and became the "tyrant[s] of tomorrow" (302), suggesting that a hero status is not permanent and that when Faulkner's as well as other literary characters fail to meet the expectation of a hero due to their tragic flaw, the consequences are dire.

Flaws do not always result in the decline of a hero however; this is not true, and a representation of this is Vardaman. Vardaman's flaw is his youth and naivety and in a selfless

attempt to allow his deceased mother to be able to breathe whilst in her coffin, he accidentally drills holes into her corpses' face. This flaw of Vardaman's however does not lead to his tragic demise like Oedipus or Bayard-in fact it could be argued that all the Bundrens have some form of naivety about them which never puts them into any danger that ends in fatality even when in several cases it could, for example fires, floods, and desired illegal abortion. There are innocent and shamefaced flaws which determine the hero's narrative, for example Vardaman's youth and naivety are innocent flaws which he cannot prevent and therefore he does not meet a dismal end. Vardaman helps present my key concept of intention as his mistake is fueled by a naïve and kind intention. He meets my definition of a Faulknerian hero as it is the intention behind Vardaman's act makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. Bayard and Oedipus however are both war heroes and of esteem (Oedipus is royalty, even) and therefore in a sense should have more knowledge and control over their flaws of jealousy and ignorance which is why their authors give them a tragic end and we as readers are happy to accept watching this happen to the heroes. It could be argued that we see the lower classes of heroes as heroic and forgive their flaws more easily because we expect them to not know any better. We see their journey as more moral or even comedic because they have more circumstances to overcome and we are more unforgiving of the heroes that are of a higher status because a part of us feels as if they should know better and should not have these flaws that create them into tragic heroes.

It has previously been discussed in Campbell's terms, but *As I Lay Dying* is a clear example of not only "The Quest" (55) plot but also the "Voyage and Return" (55) plot. The physical and emotional journeys which the Bundrens take could be argued to earn them their hero status, and once again we are able to find some hero criteria which they meet. Whilst Lena too is evidently a fit for the plot structure of "The Quest" (55) as she searches for Lucas

Burch. Other narratives within *Light in August* fit into a different structure. Joe Christmas's abusive foster father could be identified as the monster which Joe must overcome in his "Overcoming the Monster" (55) narrative, by killing his foster father Joe in a sense becomes his own hero in the narrative of his life, he protects himself from the antagonist who threatens him and his home and runs away to start his own quest for a new life. This is another example of how reader response and character response differ. The murder of Joe's father figure can be interpreted by the reader to be a heroic act even if it is a crime in the society which Joe is living. As readers we are more forgiving of heroes when we are presented with an underdog who overcomes hardship; when Oedipus murders his father, the audience is shocked and horrified because his father was innocent. Joe's foster father however was not innocent, he was cruel and abusive toward him therefore his murder seems somewhat justified. Joe's narrative could even be interpreted as a "Rags to Riches" (55) narrative if we see his weakness against his foster father as poverty and his escape as his wealth.

The character of Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!* Also takes upon a quest in his story of looking for the legend that was Thomas Sutpen. Quentin follows Sutpen's life story throughout the narrative, and we as readers can see Quentin's journey in the present is influenced by Sutpen's actions in the past. Though one maybe would not see the character of Thomas Sutpen as a treasure or elixir, the quest Quentin takes upon to find Sutpen is one that he does complete. Because Faulkner uses various times, locations and narratives to tell Sutpen's story in *Absalom, Absalom!* as readers we are given different perceptions of him depending on whose account of events is being told. An example of this is Rosa Coldfield who despises Sutpen and blames him for destroying her family. In Rosa's narrative, Sutpen is an antagonist and a villain, yet to other townsfolk he is a legend and somewhat a hero for building his plantation and gaining his wealth in an arguably "Rags to Riches" (55) plot. We

have already discussed the different perspectives of the hero between characters and readers, but *Absalom, Absalom!* provides a new conflict which is the perspectives between characters of what makes a hero. If a hero is defined by his or her actions and how those actions affect others then surely perspective would not matter, however the assumptions and reactions which readers, characters and even authors have toward a certain character is also an influence because it is these perspectives which create the label of hero. When the narrative voice is one individual's perspective of another individual (the Bundrens' views on Addie or Lena's view of Lucas for example) then as readers the label of hero is easier to use. However, when the views of characters are also conflicting with one another as well as the readers, this is when the character in question is harder to define as a hero or not.

Bayard in the 1938 novel *The Unvanquished* is an example of the plot of "Rebirth" (56) when he is expected to avenge his father's death and continue the cycle of violence which surrounds the Sartoris' legacy, by not killing Redmond and facing him unarmed Bayard breaks this cycle and in the eye of the reader is being rebirthed away from a violent legacy. This idea of rebirth and transformation is in a sense opposite to the tragic plot as we see an ascent rather than a decline in a character-just like Huck and Lena, Bayard defies a social expectation to gain his heroic and moral status, in a war and revenge ridden society this is a difficult feat to achieve which is what makes his act so heroic for a reader.

Go Down, Moses shows multiple plots and plot structures which can be identified to be one of "The Seven Basic Plots" (55). The character of McCaslin helps his uncle to hunt and catch a slave named Turl, this could be seen as a heroic quest if Turl is thought of as the treasure for which they are looking, however in eyes of Turl his captors would be nothing close to heroic figures. Once again, we are faced with the dilemma of perspective, and another

interlacing issue which can be found when examining many of these texts is that a hero to a white character may be a villain to a black slave as many of the societies and events within Faulkner's novels surround or are influenced by slavery. Examples of this are that Sutpen's plantation is prestigious however it is existing using kidnap and slavery. The previous example of *Pantaloon in Black* in *Go Down, Moses* can be used here also as Rider is murdered in retaliation from the white members of the community for his actions, and one calls into question if it is his race or the endless cycle of revenge which society is caught in that causes this. Rider cannot change or influence his race, it is not some attribute that he can rebirth, yet he is still punished because of his race more so than the act itself as if it were his tragic flaw. If a moral or heroic act is deemed acceptable or not acceptable depending on one's colour then by creating a character with a story such as Rider's, Faulkner is presenting the injustice of how certain societies decide what makes a hero.

Summary

Religion and legend will forever be something which not only is turned to in the times when one needs a hero, but it will also be a force in which heroism is measured. It is integrated into Faulkner's societies as much as his characters are and is the driving force between many of the heroic acts and attributes presented. The characters are flawed and contradict what teachings and scriptures in the Christian faith say, but so does *The Holy Bible* itself. I argue that any character who is heroic must have flaws, and that is why no Faulknerian heroes are perfect. If Jesus died for the sins of humanity, then the discrepancies of Faulkner's characters surely should not make them seem less heroic or the ideologies behind Christianity itself has no place in southern society. Religion acts as both condemnation and salvation, it is used to judge, punish and redeem various characters in the novel such as Lena, Hightower, Old Bayard,

Isaac McCaslin, the Bundren family. Religion plays a significant role in different ways for each individual Faulknerian hero, and each have different outcomes. Religion itself is relative and objective and filled with both gods and monsters. This why it is so directly linked with ideas of the hero and how heroic characters are in relation to those in Faulkner's novels. Religion is a member of the community which Faulkner's characters are living. Through intentions which sometimes reject the ideologies of the community, Faulkner's characters prove to be heroes, even this is by the way of defying religion, and in a non-secularised state, the law. This is why the concept of intention is key both in regards to my definition of the Faulknerian hero, but also in identifying how Faulkner's characters meet and defy the expectations of the hero.

Conclusion

Characters in William Faulkner's novels meet and defy the expectations of the hero in different ways, depending on the definition and methodology they are approached from. The way in which the community defines a hero and the way the reader defines a hero are often different and contrasting, and this can be seen to be a reflection upon the non-modernist perspective of the community of the novel, and the modernist perspective of the reader.

Gender and racial inequality present the non-modernist perspectives and mind sets of the community in the novel, and therefore the women and African American characters are hindered in their pursuit of becoming the hero, as there is no place for them amongst southern white masculinity. The reader's modernist experience and perspective of a character therefore must be applied when defining a Faulknerian hero.

The Civil War and World War I have remained as heavy influences in the community of the novels, therefore so has the romanticized war ideologies of the Old South. These standards are forced upon the characters in the novels and they are expected uphold them, but they do not always do this. The influences of war and ideologies of the old South and violence effect how the community perceive what a hero is. This is usually exemplified through practices such as violence, weaponry and revenge. These physical practices lead to cycles of death and destruction, which some characters meet and others defy. Because of the heavy influence of the Old South and its expected ideologies, it is therefore important to identify intention and willingness to defy society, as certain acts of heroism and bravery are performed to uphold tradition, rather than what the modernist reader would perceive as qualities of heroism.

Much like the aforementioned wars, religion holds a heavy influence upon the community in which Faulkner's characters are living. It is the driving force behind many characters actions, and is used as a measure for their opinions and perceptions of others. My key concept of intention is important when examining this, as religions influence upon the south is often used as a measure for heroism and villainy, and this is because of the more primitive ideologies of heaven and hell. As society becomes more secular, it is important that the reader is hoping for a successful execution of the Faulknerian hero's intention, as this allows them to identify true intention and heroism, rather than a socially integrated religious view.

As explained in my introduction, I have created a definition of what creates a Faulknerian hero, and I have formed this from my chosen texts by William Faulkner, as well as the surrounding scholarship in regards to these texts specifically, and overall ideas of what creates a hero. It is my conclusion that a Faulknerian hero is a character who will attempt to save one or more beings from a fatal, unwelcome or unfortunate circumstance. The hero will show more regard for those whom they wish to save than they will for themselves, and furthermore the act of heroism may come with a price which the hero ultimately pays. The hero will be willing to defy social expectation and, in some cases, the law in an attempt to fulfil their intention of saving. The intention behind the act is what makes it heroic, not the enormity or execution of the act itself. The execution of the hero's intention is one the reader will hope to be successful.

My definition and research contribute to the scholarship surrounding my thesis discussion by means of this definition, as it provides an internal view of what creates a Faulknerian hero within the character. The southern society in which Faulkner's novels are set provide a more external impression of what creates a Faulknerian hero, yet his modernist style demands a

methodology and a reader that is not influenced by the Old South or the ideologies of it. When examining the intention of a character, the reader is provided with a less biased and prejudice view of them. It is a Faulknerian character's intentions and their internal qualities rather than their external actions or the community's perceptions and expectations which defines them as heroes. This is the key to defining them.

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