THE VALUE CONFLICT IN FAULKNER'S SNOPES TRILOGY

SENIOR HONORS THESIS

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William Faulkner's *The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion* examine the presence of evil in the world; an evil which, nevertheless, encounters opposition. Faulkner embodies this opposition in the women of the Snopes trilogy. Flem Snopes becomes the symbol of evil by his refusal to recognize any power other than his own. Gordon E. Bigelow refers to the trilogy as a "protest against the sterilization and dehumanization of man, the destruction of natural beauty by machine civilization."

In the trilogy the evil, dehumanizing forces of society, represented by Flem, must contend with the loving, humanistic forces of the land or nature. The trilogy becomes Faulkner's assertion that "pure evil" does exist; however, this element does not remain unopposed and eventually it will be eliminated.

The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate Faulkner's use of women in the Snopes trilogy as representatives of a value system antithetical to that symbolized by Flem Snopes. In the trilogy Eula Warner Snopes, in particular, represents love, warmth, compassion, or the natural world. In contrast, Flem symbolizes hate, coldness, materialism, and inhumanity, or the social world. Faulkner reconciles these opposing systems in the characteristics developed in Eula's daughter Linda Snopes Kohl as she comes to represent values similar to Eula's.
Faulkner opens his trilogy with a description of the physical characteristics and history of Frenchman's Bend and Jefferson, the scene of the trilogy. This early emphasis on land, implying fertility, or the lack of it, and the now abandoned dream of the Frenchman provides the basis for the qualities of materialism and idealism embodied in humans throughout the trilogy.

Faulkner describes Frenchman's Bend as once being "a section of rich river-bottom country lying twenty miles from Jefferson" in which "the original boundaries now existed only on faded records...and even some of the once-fertile fields had long since reverted to the cane-and-cypress jungles from which their first master had hewed them." (H., p. 3) This initial description of decaying lands sets the atmosphere for the following decline in individuals in the trilogy. It also becomes the first of several references to the land and its ability to sustain or destroy life justly.

Central to the progress of the trilogy is the daughter of the present owner of Old Frenchman's Place, a once beautiful plantation, now charred and gutted by the Civil War. The introduction of Eula Varner centers on her physical appearance which immediately suggests that she is an over-sexed creature, strangely ideal and mysteriously attractive. Faulkner depicts Eula as "a soft ample girl with definite breasts even at thirteen and eyes like cloudy hothouse grapes and a full damp mouth always slightly open, ... a kind of sullen bemusement of ripe young flesh, apparently not even having to make any effort not to listen." (H., p. 10) Although Eula is not
mentioned again until the second section of *The Hamlet*, this brief introductory statement provides the basis for the contrast developed between her and Flem; a contrast existing not only between their physical appearances, but between their innate values, motives, and purposes.

In Faulkner's first delineation of Flem's outward appearance he says "He had a broad flat face. His eyes were the color of stagnant water. He was soft in appearance like Varner himself, though a head shorter, in a soiled white shirt and cheap gray trousers." (H., p. 22) Unlike Eula, Flem is presented as one who is vigorously striving for a specific, yet undefined, goal; however, as the trilogy progresses, the static, indifferent qualities surrounding both of them make them oddly similar. A difference remains between the two in that the basis for these qualities in each stems from antithetical sources.

As the character of Flem becomes more discernible, he becomes associated with conformity, material success, and adherance to established codes proper for his position, or at least proper for the profession he is presently seeking. Flem appears as a robot-type being, able to assume various masks appropriate for his needs and goals at that time. In conforming to the codes of his new position, Flem now replaces his soiled shirt with "a brand-new white shirt!" (H., p. 51) The code becomes more rigid as he later moves his residence to town, goes to church, and wears "a tiny machine-made black bow which snapped together at the back with a metal fastener." (H., p. 58) This conformity, varying as his aims become higher, is so obsessive and obvious that he is able to manipulate others without exerting much effort. Contrary
pattern of behavior sanctified by custom and tradition. Applying this classification to Eula and Flem, Eula becomes the representative of the life-giving, stimulating forces of nature while Flem becomes the embodiment of the life-destroying, stifling forces of a conforming society.

The previous discussion of Flem may seem predominately concerned with the worldly, outward aspects of Flem; however, this is the inevitable result when considering Flem's total being. He knows no means for becoming emotionally involved with others since he directs the entirety of his energies toward material wealth and personal gain. As indicated earlier, Flem readily conforms to standards acceptable to society and conducive to his advancement. Throughout his advancement, Flem maintains a cold, impersonal attitude with everyone. His continual accuracy characterizes him as a machine-like, insensitive, inhuman creature.

In Book Two of The Hamlet the character of Eula is more fully developed providing a direct contrast to the qualities and standards emphasized in Flem. David Miller's summary of Faulkner's method of characterizing women is applicable here. Miller argues that Faulkner views feminine characters according to their fecundity and the animal attraction which it begets in men. Miller expands this generalization by stating that classification of Faulkner's women usually includes portraying them as either earthmothers or as ghosts depending on the "fertility (or lack of it) which forms their character." Faulkner's preoccupation with Eula's sexual appearance and the emotions she arouses in men immediately categorizes her as the earthmother type.
to his desires, Varner hires Flem as a clerk in his store. Trying
to explain and justify this action Varner cries: "I had to! I
had to hire him!" (H., p. 27) This is the characteristic despair
of all who unwillingly, unconsciously, yet inevitably succumb to
Flem's ambitions. The peculiarity of the economic force Flem holds
over people becomes comparable to the strangeness of Eula's
emotional force.

Flem's presence in the community, though at first a novelty,
soon becomes a threat. During his first week as clerk at the
store, most citizens, even those who have previously not traded with
Varner, make a special effort to visit the store to observe this new
creature. Flem's influence, however, becomes so complete that in a
few months people hardly notice that it is Flem who controls the
authoritative position of supervising the cotton gin. Flem achieves
the ultimate position at the store when he is seen sitting in Will
Varner's converted flour barrel chair. Gradually Flem asserts more
control over the town while the citizens become increasingly defenseless
in resisting or stopping his advances. The inability of the residents
of Frenchman's Bend to control, manipulate, or at least understand
Flem is an outgrowth of his purely economical nature. This is the
same quality which makes Flem's character antithetical to Eula's.

Olga Vickery contends that a study of *The Hamlet* is ultimately
a discussion of the two primary modes of human survival—sex/economy,
love/money. Vickery explains that "The significant difference
between man's sexual and economic activity is that the former is
necessary and eternal whereas the latter is contingent and historical.
The one is an integral part of human nature, the other simply a
pattern of behavior sanctified by custom and tradition. Applying this classification to Eula and Flem, Eula becomes the representative of the life-giving, stimulating forces of nature while Flem becomes the embodiment of the life-destroying, stifling forces of a conforming society.

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At the outset of the "Eula" section of *The Hamlet*, Faulkner intensifies Eula's early and over sexual development: "Now, though not yet thirteen years old, she was already bigger than most grown women and even her breasts were no longer the little, hard, fiercely-pointed cones of puberty or even maidenhood." (*H.*, p. 95) Eula's difference from ordinary women is manifest not only in the rate and amount of her sexual development, but also in the elevated and idolized position she occupies.

Naomi Jackson suggests that before examining Eula, the distinction between "Faulkner's Woman and his women" must be made. The Woman becomes an impersonal White Goddess--Faulkner's ideal, the Mother of All Living. Jackson contends that "Only once did Faulkner fully succeed in apotheosizing the Eternal Feminine: when from the dust of Venus, Eve, Lilith, and Helen he fashioned the bovine divinity of *The Hamlet*, Eula Varner." Eula's ascendance and detachment from the common humanity is apparent even in the most casual situations with her friends:

...she would never be at either end of anything in which blood ran. It would have but one point, like a swarm of bees, and she would be that point, that center, swarmed over and importuned yet serene and intact and apparently even oblivious, tranquilly abrogating the whole long sum of human thinking and suffering which is called knowledge, education, wisdom, at once supremely unchaste and inviolable: the queen, the matrix. (*H.*, p. 116)

Thus although Eula is inert and detached, she continues to exert a force over her surroundings with no visible effort on her part.

Like Flem, Eula's advancement through life is characterized by a lack of action: "...she was incorrigibly lazy...as though, even in infancy, she already knew there was nowhere she wanted to go...She did nothing." (*H.*, p. 95-96) Recalling the poles set up by
Vickery, which serve as a basis for the motives of Eula and Flem, an extension of the antithesis between sex/economy, love/money can be seen in the antithesis of nature and society. Flem as representative of society and Eula as representative of nature appear static in their respective spheres; however, the reason for the inaction varies greatly, each being spurred by a separate force—Eula by her unfulfilled quest for love, understanding; Flem by his insatiable desire for money, success.

Faulkner suggests additional earthmother qualities of Eula in the recounting of Jody Varner's secondary school attendance for Eula. Once again Eula appears static and indifferent, yet strangely aloof:

She just calmly and flatly refused to walk. She did not resort to tears and she did not even fight back emotionally, let alone physically. She just sat down, where, static, apparently not even thinking, she emanated an outrageous and immune perversity like a blooded and contrary filly too young yet to be particularly valuable, though which in another year or so would be, and for which reason its raging and harried owner does not dare whip it. (H., p. 98)

Eula, once again appearing as a transcendent being, knows that any effort she would exert would be futile, yet she lacks the means to convey this dilemma to others. Comparing Eula to the young filly also further relates Eula to nature and the creative force. Faulkner elaborates on this quality when Jody says: "'She's just like a dog. Soon as she passes anything in long pants she begins to give off something. You can smell it!'" (H., p. 99) Eula is not animalistic in the commonly applied sense of being savage or uncivilized; her animalism occurs in her quality of being the actual creative force which attracts and arouses the animalistic and
sexually creative desire in others. That Eula does possess this quality is evidenced by the conditions surrounding her conception:

"So there was an old woman told my mammy once that if a woman showed her belly to the full moon after she had done caught, it would be a gal. So Mrs Varner taken and laid every night with the moon on her nekid belly, until it fulled and after. I could lay my ear to her belly and hear Eula kicking and scrouging like all get-out, feeling the moon." (H., p. 312) Thus from conception Eula is endowed with unusual qualities, herself being the product of more than human components.

Attraction to Eula, which Faulkner frequently emphasizes, is illustrated when Eula's schoolteacher, Labove, tries to rape her. Eula's hypnotic effect on Labove and her classmates is immediately contradictory to the earlier impression of them:

By merely walking down the aisle between them she would transform the very wooden desks and benches themselves into a grove of Venus and fetch every male in the room, from the children just entering puberty to the grown men of nineteen and twenty, one of whom was already a husband and father, who could turn ten acres of land between sunup and sundown, springing into embattled rivalry, importunate each for precedence in immolation. (H., p. 115)

Eula, however, remains oblivious to this seductive, near hypnotizing, effect she evokes.

The degree of this uninvolved becomes startlingly manifest when she responds to Labove's attempted rape by saying: "'Stop pawing me,' she said, 'You old headless horseman Icabod Crane.'" (H., p. 122) It seems to be a mistake or oversight of human creation that a being so sexually enticing could so emotionally
transcend the lustfulness and impulsiveness of ordinary desires.
This discrepancy is explained only by the fact that emotion or desire
is not required in one who is herself the originator of these
qualities.

Although Labove is desperate in his longing for Eula, he does
not view the possession of her in permanent terms: "And he did not
want her as a wife, he just wanted her one time as man with a
gangrened hand or foot thirsts after the axe-stroke which will
leave him comparatively whole again." (H., p. 119) Here Eula's
earthmother qualities make her into a type of healing force as
Labove begins to recognize her ideal, superhuman make-up.

This entire incident suggests the basic difference between the
values of Eula and Flem. As mentioned by Jody, and later by Labove,
Eula is completely unmindful of the effect of her physical appearance:

He /Jody/ knew that she simply did not care, doubtless
did not even know it /her leg/ was exposed, and if she
had known would not have gone to the trouble to cover
it...He /Labove/ could see her, even smell her, sitting
there on the school steps, eating the potato, tranquil
and chewing and with that terrible quality of being
not only helplessly and unawares on the outside of her
clothing, but of being naked and not even knowing
it. (H., pp. 101, 117)

The nature of Eula's dress becomes irrelevant because she so
overpowers the observer with what fills the clothing. In
contrast to this, Flem concerns himself with the nature and effect
of his clothing. This is to be expected since Flem is the economical
man who must worry about conformity to standards and dressing the
part of the businessman. Eula, however, is content in her own being;
without depending on outward appearances to win her acceptance.
Labove's predictions about Eula's future husband explain the basic contrast of Eula and Flem. When he envisions Eula's husband he characterizes him as "a dwarf, a gnome, without glands or desire, who would be no more a physical factor in her life than the owner's name on the fly-leaf of a book...the crippled Vulcan to that Venus, who would not possess her but merely own her by the single strength which power gave, the dead power of money, wealth, gewgaws, baubles, as he might own, not a picture, statue: a field, say." (H., p. 119) This picture of a shrivelled, senseless man contrasts sharply with the and passion predominate in references to Eula. Both figures are developed to the extreme of becoming almost mythical caricatures; however, the basis of this rarity is attributed to two radically varying cases: non-humanity and super-humanity.

The climax of the diverse impressions and personalities established in the characters of Flem and Eula occurs with the marriage of the two. Ironical as this marriage may appear, both are suited to each other since neither can incorporate himself to the environment surrounding him. Just as Flem assumes control, unconsciously, effortlessly, of the center of the business world of Jefferson, Eula monopolizes the sexual activities of the town:

...the nucleus, the center, the centrice;...casting over them all that spell of incipient accouchement while refusing herself to be pawed at, preserving even within that aura of license and invitation in which she seemed to breathe and walk—or sit rather—a ruthless chastity impervious even to the light precarious balance, the actual overlapping, of Protestant religious and sexual excitement. (H., p. 129)

Here Faulkner again stresses the earthmother, fertile aspects of Eula which allow her to ascend effortlessly to a state idealized and adored by others.
Although Eula has many suitors passionately longing to possess her, Hoake McCarron is the only one to achieve this feat in the physical sense. Hoake's virility is excessive, yet he lacks the responsibility necessary to cope with such an ideal creature as Eula. As in Eula's earlier encounter with Labove, Eula is merely an object of desire whom the admirer craves only for the momentary pleasure and prolonged glory associated with actual possession of her. In describing Eula's numerous suitors, Faulkner again uses animalistic terminology. Faulkner says the suitors came "like a stampede of cattle, trampling ruthlessly aside the children of last summer's yesterday." (H., p. 131) Following Hoake's victory over Eula, all three men who had vied to possess her flee the state. Faulkner explains this event by saying "By fleeing too, they [the two innocent men] put in a final and despairing bid for the guilt they had not compassed, the glorious shame of the ruin they did not do." (H., p. 141) By this incident the cherished status of the one who is finally virile enough to force Eula to succumb to him becomes apparent.

These men, even the manly Hoake, lack the force and desire to permanently possess Eula. Adequate evidence is available to support Michael Millgate's suggestion that true ownership of Eula is closely linked with ownership of land. Eula's marriage seems even more ironic when Flem, who neither tills the land or practices any creative skill or craft, should come to be united with Eula, if only in the legal sense. The simultaneous ownership of Eula and land applies to Flem both literally and figuratively. Since the marriage is solely one of convenience, Will Varner gives Flem and
Eula the deed to the Old Frenchman Place as a wedding gift. Thus the marriage is not one of love, need, or even liking, but merely of convenience for the Varner name, Eula's child, and Flem's prosperity. Flem reduces the sexually attractive Eula to a concrete, economic force of ordinary proportions, manageable by society. This reduction re-emphasizes Flem's deficiency in evoking or instilling any type emotional response in himself or others.

Unsuited as the two marriage partners may seem for each other, Faulkner says of Eula's attitude toward Flem: "She knew him well. She knew him so well that she never had to look at him anymore." (H., p.147) By this statement Faulkner undoubtedly establishes Eula as a superhuman creature, since to understand Flem's coldness implies possession of extraordinary emotions, and feelings.

The possession of these sub-human characteristics although more fully developed and evident in Flem, are qualities characteristic, in some way, of all Snopes. Edmond Volpe characterizes the Snopes family collectively: "Before individuals have emerged, the new group is collectively considered immoral, unsanitary, excessively prolific, socially obnoxious, and economically unscrupulous and pushing,—in short, a menace to the community." Warren Beck applies a similar generalization to Flem specifically when he describes him as the ultimate of the amoral, insensitive, and ruthless.

In the two remaining sections of The Hamlet, "The Long Summer" and "The Peasants" Faulkner primarily discusses incidents involving various members of the motley Snopes family. Two of these incidents,
specifically applicable to Flem, support the previous generalizations. The first incident concerns Ike Snopes’ perverted love for a cow. The significance of this episode is in its description of another being who, like Eula perversely, strives for happiness in a way unacceptable to society. A greater importance evolves from its comic parallelism to the courtship of Eula. The spell which the cow casts upon Ike resembles the power Eula possessed over Labove, Hoake, and her other suitors: "He would smell her... Then he would see her; the bright thin horns of mornin’, of sun, would blow the mist away and reveal her, planted, blond, dew-pearled, standing in the parted water of the ford, blowing into the water the thick, warm, heavy, milk-laden breath..." (H., p. 168) The idealization and longing Ike feels for the cow are the same passions Eula’s suitors have experienced. Thus, Faulkner again reinforces the link between Eula and nature.

The second incident concerns Mink Snopes’ murder of Houston, an act committed not for the money involved, but to assert a primary human value, love of self. Once again a Snopes strives for perfection, or at least betterment, but is stifled because of the inherent family quality which leaves them incompetent to assimilate the ways of others. Houston demands that Mink pay the pound fee for the wintering of Mink’s cow. This demand illustrates the same dehumanizing force which Flem strives to exert. It is this attempt to control human life which angers Mink and incites his rebellion, initially against Houston and later against Flem.

Before moving to The Town, in which Flem actually moves his family to Jefferson making himself available for more material advancement and gain, discussion of one additional figure is necessary.
Although V. K. Ratliff is not a Snopes, and contributes little to the action of the novel, he provides significant comment and valuable insight into the characters of the two figures under discussion. The sewing machine agent, the continuous traveler and conveyor of gossip for Frenchman's Bend, makes the study of Snopesism his major preoccupation. It is he who casually relays the Snopes history of barn-burning to Will Varner and keeps all of Frenchman's Bend up-to-date on the latest Snopes count in the village. Ratliff is, of course, present when Flem and Eula come to Jefferson to be married:

"He saw the three of them cross the Square from the bank to the courthouse and followed them. He walked past the door to the Chancery Clerk's office and saw them inside; he could have waited and seen them go from there to the Circuit Clerk's office and he could have witnessed the marriage, but he did not. He did not need to." (H., p. 148) Ratliff's reactions are characteristic of the fore-knowledge many of the townspeople possess of the Snopes' actions, but he, like all the others, lacks any feasible method of restraining or diverting their ambitions.

Ratliff establishes the actual extent of Flem's coldness and non-humanity through his parable of the encounter of Flem with the Prince in hell. Several of Flem's idiosyncracies are reinforced in Ratliff's parable. Flem's soul is so small that it has disintegrated even in an asbestos matchbox. When the Prince suggests bribing Flem, who demands his soul, the guard says that that will not work since "He's got the law." This reflects Flem's rigid conformity to society's acceptable codes of conduct. As the ends, the Prince cries in despair:

"'Take it! Take it!'" (H., p. 155) A similar plea was uttered earlier by Will Varner in response to Flem's unnoticed and uncontrollable
assumption of power in the town. Both have experienced Flem's innate ability to force people to succumb to his will, and, thus, enhance his prosperity.

Ratliff shows his unusual foresight in Snopes matters again when Mink is waiting for Flem to come to get him out of jail: "Flem aint coming back here until that trial is over and finished." (H., p. 270) As seen later in the trilogy, Flem returns, but makes no effort to assist Mink; not because he actually hates Mink, but because Flem performs only those actions conducive to his personal advancement.

As the first novel of the trilogy ends, Eula and Flem are seen riding toward Jefferson: "...the plaid cap, the steady and deliberate jaw, the minute bow and the white shirt; the other face calm and beautiful and by its expression carven or even corpse-like looking not at them certainly and maybe not at anything they knew." (H., p. 370) Eula, still beautiful, Flem changed physically, but both still detached from each other and from any other living being.

II

A change in the structure of The Town, the second book of Faulkner's trilogy, necessitates an alteration in the method of examining the novels. Although Faulkner's employment of the multiple-narrator approach and the frequent recapitulation of events may at the outset give the novel the appearance of an unorganized jumble of thoughts, these techniques allow Faulkner to explore the characters and relationships of the figures concerned in greater depth and from a greater variety of viewpoints. In accordance with Faulkner's
structure of *The Town*, discussion of this novel will be less sequential. Instead, general patterns of action for each figure will be discussed in relation to the value conflict under consideration.

Edmond Volpe provides a valid appraisal of the multiple-narrator technique when he states its purpose as enabling the writer to point to the difficulties of making moral decisions and to reveal the complexity of personality. Volpe expands his explanation of this method by stating its usefulness when exploring the difficulties involved in approaching the truth, and the actual isolation everyone has from his fellow man. Volpe says that with this method the reader becomes more involved in the search for absolute truth and experiences the frustrations thereby incurred.

Volpe's explanation relates to *The Town* in that essentially the conflict Faulkner presents concerns individuals striving for truth and for the type actions appropriate for survival and advancement. This striving inevitably forces the individual to make many moral decisions and to learn to cope with his fellow man.

The conflict in the trilogy, which occurs at present between Eula and Flem, is a value conflict; that is a difference of opinion concerning what character traits are valuable, admirable. This confrontation necessarily entails the making of many moral decisions and the judging of acts according to their morality; that is, their conformity to what is generally accepted as being right or wrong. Eula's sexual, human values conflict with Flem's materialistic, sub-human values. Each character, therefore, necessarily becomes faced with a moral decision when deciding what values are most worthwhile to him, and whether or not they are in accordance with the condoned values of society.
In *The Town* Flem strives to acquire a more admirable, secure position in the Jefferson society. In doing this a change in his former method of manipulating people occurs. Earlier Volpe's basically derogatory characterization of the entire Snopes family was given. After studying these qualities, he concludes that Snopesism eventually condenses into Flemism. In *The Hamlet* Faulkner leaves the impression that Flem is the archetype of evil, an evil attributable to perhaps the worst crime of all, a lack of humanity, compassion for any individual. Volpe develops his case further by stating that by the end of *The Town*, Faulkner has humanized Flem, a conclusion the value of which will be dealt with by discussing what actually happens in *The Town*.

After serving at Varner's store, Flem advances to the position of superintendent of the Jefferson power plant. The unrestrainable force which Flem continues to exert upon the town is shown by the populace's reaction to the appointment: "Our outrage was primarily shock; shock not that Flem had the job, we had not got that far yet, but shock that we had not known until now that the job existed." (T., p. 9) Flem's influence becomes so predominant that positions are created to enlarge the realm of his authority, and hopefully to try to contain them in this area.

After an audit, officials find that a sizeable amount of brass is missing from the plant. Flem quietly pays the money required for the stolen brass (now in the water tank) and conveniently resigns his position, thus saving face in the community. The water tank, a symbol of Flem's attempted theft, as described by the young Charles Mallison, becomes to the Jefferson community not a "Monument" to Flem Snopes, but a "footprint" (T., p. 3) signifying his move toward more rewarding endeavors.
This episode presents Flem in a somewhat different light than that outlined in The Hamlet. While working in Varner's store, Flem becomes noted for his unfailing accuracy. Now that he has moved to Jefferson—into the world of bigger business—Flem must adjust to a new business code; one which hypocritically condones even dishonesty if beneficial to the culprit. Much of the humanization Volpe describes occurs during this episode. It is then that Flem is shown as finally succumbing to one of society's demands: pay the money, or give up and have the situation brought to the town's attention. By paying, Flem shows some weakness, fault, characteristic of all other humans.

Flem's removal or relocation of various Snopes demonstrates further the extreme nature of his ambition to better his social status in the community and supports Volpe's comment that Snopesism eventually reduces to Flemism. Ratliff describes Flem's tactics of manipulating members of his family so as to put Flem in the most beneficial position as "Farming Snopeses." (T., p. 31) Byron's embezzlement, I.O.'s stupidity, Montgomery Ward's pornographic establishment, and Mink's murder prompt Flem's removal of the respective Snopes from Jefferson since the presence of each tarnishes Flem's name, reputation, and hinders his advancement.

The degree of Flem's autotomy in Jefferson is apparent by Gavin Stevens' explanation that "when I say 'they' I mean Snopeses; when you say 'Snopeses' in Jefferson you mean Flem Snopeses...." (T., p. 33) Without realizing it, the whole community gradually concedes all positions of respect and authority to Flem, and Flem demands or accepts them regardless of the steps needed to attain them.

As Flem continues his quest for authority, Eula leads her life in an environment rarely integrated with Flem's. In fact,
Faulkner never presents Eula and Flem in conversation with each other; thus, the two continue to live their separate lives attracted only by their different, yet both unusual, qualities. Although in *The Town* Eula, like Flem, becomes a more realistic figure, even after attempts are made to integrate her with some of the ordinary citizens, the elevated position Faulkner has previously established for her remains in tact. In *The Town* the presence of Eula still elicits a picture of a volumptuous, super-human female. As in *The Hamlet*, Eula remains associated with inactivity, accepting her status in life, not knowing how to change it. Flem, on the other hand, is the center of activity in his efforts to mold his environment to benefit himself.

The excitement and awe Eula produces in the male occurs even for the young Charles Mallison: "She wasn't too big, heroic, what they call Junoesque. It was that there was just too much of what she was for any one human female package to contain, and hold: too much of white, too much of female, too much of maybe just glory..." *(T., p. 6)* While Eula continues to drive the opposite sex insane merely with her appearance, she maintains her air of coldness, oblivious to the response she instills in others: "...just moving, walking in that aura of decorum and modesty and solitariness ten times more immodest and a hundred times more disturbing than one of the bathing suits young women would begin to wear about 1920...." *(T., p. 9)*

As before, even when performing the most ordinary actions, Eula continues to be a symbol of the perfect, yet inaccessible, female.

In *The Town* Faulkner also presents a woman's view of Eula. Charles' mother comments: "Women are not interested in morals. They aren't even interested in unmorals. The ladies of Jefferson don't
care what she does. What they will never forgive is the way she looks. Not the way Jefferson gentlemen look at her." (T., p. 48)

This comment, while it reinforces the impression Eula has upon males, helps to integrate her with other females by Mrs. Mallison's general observation that not just Eula, but all females, possess a type of unconcern regarding morals.

An actual attempt to make Eula and Flem ordinary citizens occurs when they are invited to the annual Cotillion Christmas Ball. If the purpose of the invitation is to convince the town, and Eula and Flem, that Eula and Flem are no different than the other Jefferson citizens, the attempt fails. It fails because the rush on corsages before the dance, de Spain's dancing with Eula, and the fight after the dance only serve to further establish Flem's growing autotomy and Eula's persistent sexuality.

An examination of the relationship Eula cultivates with two additional males provides comment concerning Eula's value system as well as offering further contrast to Flem's value system. Eula's affairs with these men are all part of her search to find, in the life surrounding her, values complementary to hers. In The Town Eula's first extended relationship is with de Spain, a war veteran, now mayor of Jefferson. As Charles Mallison observes: "...our whole town was accessory to that cuckolding..." (T., p. 15) and participates vicariously in it to compensate for their (Eula and de Spain) own cowardice in performing such a socially-unacceptable act. Although this act is one which all of Jefferson should readily denounce, the nature of the two victims prohibits their objections: "So when we first saw Mrs. Snopes walking in the Square giving off that terrifying
impression that in another second her flesh itself would burn her garments off, leaving not even a veil of ashes between her and the light of day, it seemed to us that we were watching Fate, a fate of which both she and Mayor de Spain were victims." (T., p. 14) Eula and de Spain's actions are not to spite Flem, but to satisfy Eula's own longing for reciprocal human concern and to try to satisfy the gift for understanding and compassion she has developed. Like McCarron, de Spain obeys his impulses with no thought of actual ownership of Eula, and Flem, in turn, remains undisturbed so long as his claim to true ownership is stable.

Eula pursues another relationship with Gavin Stevens. Stevens occupies an unusual role in the remainder of the trilogy. This role is characterized by his unexplainable impulse to protect the town, and, as will be seen later, particularly Eula's daughter Linda, from submission to the evil and destructive force embodied in the Snopes, and ultimately Flem Snopes. The presence of Stevens in the trilogy provides another contrast to Flem's character. Warren Beck defines the elements of this contrast by stating that the "magnanimity of Stevens' concern for both Eula and Linda, resting in moral conviction, is the opposite pale to Snopes meanness." Beck recognizes that the basic struggle between Eula and Flem is one of values; furthermore, that Stevens' difficulty arises from his inability to comprehend the existence of a being as cold and inhuman as Flem. In addition, Stevens fails to understand the nonchalance of Eula in her attitude toward Flem and society. If he were able to perceive Eula's amorality and Flem's power, he would realize the futility of his battle. Since Eula is life, she needs no defense; likewise, society, personified in
Flem, must ultimately obey the laws of nature. Considering these statements, it is evident that Stevens’ endeavors are predestined to failure.

Charles Mallison summarizes his uncle’s vain devotion to Eula and Linda: "What he was doing was simply defending forever with his blood the principle that chastity and virtue in women shall be defended whether they exist or not." (T., p. 76) As previously stated, women are unconcerned with the problem of morals; therefore, Stevens’ attempts appear to be inappropriate. Stevens’ valiant efforts evoke a tinge of sympathy, yet he is almost disgusting in his blind idealism and gallant endeavors to liberate Eula and Linda.

An element of comedy also surrounds Stevens since his obsession with protecting the Snopes women stems purely from an inner feeling that this is his "duty." Physical attraction plays a very minor role in this relationship as verified by Stevens’ horror when Eula offers herself to him in his office: "'Do it here. In your office...Because you are unhappy.'" (T., pp. 91-93) This incident supports Paul Levine’s comment that Stevens is impotent. Stevens’ impotency is not physically as Flem’s is; nevertheless, his lack of some quality leaves him unable to cope realistically with his environment. Stevens’ deficiency stems from an extreme reliance upon idealistic attitudes; Flem’s from a reliance upon a purely materialistic outlook of life. Both figures also fail to communicate with Eula. Stevens’ struggle stems from the ideal picture he constructs of Eula, not from what she actually is. This moral rigidity is as unrelated to Eula’s natural being as Flem’s materialistic system.
This situation also provides a further comparison of the characters of Eula and Flem. Millgate suggests that in *The Town* Eula has come down to earth and become more practical. Eula tries to conduct herself in a manner which she feels will bring her satisfaction and happiness. As Faulkner states, Eula, who previously has represented life itself, now becomes "larger than life." Although Eula temporarily adopts some of the values silently condoned by society, she finds that even this fails to bring the satisfaction for which she is searching. Eula remains incapable of achieving absolute contentment since she exists in a world which she herself has helped to structure, mold; she is life, human and natural. In *The Hamlet* Faulkner states that Eula understands Flem. Now, through Ratliff's speech, Faulkner states that "The only one of the whole three of them that understood her was Flem...and she never did realize that she understood him because she didn't have no way of telling him because she didn't know herself how she done it." (T., pp. 99, 101) Here Faulkner makes it unquestionably clear that Eula, too, is unable to communicate with her environment since she embodies values, such as pure love, sincere understanding, that are never found in society. Although their conflicting value systems impose a communication barrier between them, Eula and Flem, nevertheless, experience a silent understanding stemming from their common alienation from society.

Faulkner continues to contrast the conflicting values and ways of life possessed by Flem and Eula in his descriptions of the attitudes toward and treatment of Eula's daughter Linda. Although Linda appears as a less interesting personality than Eula, she inherits the sexual
attraction so predominant in Eula. Linda, like Eula, is seldom mentioned as performing any activity since she appears primarily as a figure who has precipitated the marriage of Eula and Flem, and who must now be maneuvered to assure the greatest gains for Flem.

Stevens and his nephew Charles agree upon the effect Linda produces:

...the eyes not hard and fixed so much as intent, oblivious; fixed and unblinking on something past us, beyond us, behind us, as a young pointer will walk over you if you don't move out of its way, during the last few yards before the actual point... the young pointer bitch, the maiden bitch of course, the virgin bitch...not proved and not really oblivious; just immune in intensity and ignorance and innocence as the sleepwalker is for the moment immune from the anguishes and agonies of breath. (T., p. 132)

With this description, Faulkner establishes Linda as a figure with the same sexual interest and aloofness as Eula possessed. The comparison to the pointer also establishes a link between Linda and her nature similar to the existing bond between Eula and nature.

Eula is a Snopes only by marriage; Linda is one only by name. As Stevens becomes aware of Linda's presence in Jefferson, he abruptly realizes that "all Snopeses are male...as if 'Snopes' were some profound and incontrovertible hermaphroditic principle for the furtherance of a race, a species, the principle vested always physically in the male...." (T., p. 136) From this observation follows the inevitable result that these women must inherently be in opposition to Flem since Flem is a Snopes and Snopes is a unique breed of ambition, corruption, and trouble. Snopeses do not live with people, but merely exist; therefore, even the more human Linda must remain alienated from them. Stevens' mistake in trying to "form
Linda's mind," by giving her books of poetry, and encouraging her to enroll in an upper-class college, is his failure to realize, and this becomes evident at the close of the trilogy, that Snopes' cannot be conquered, unless they concede to victory. Blinded by his extreme idealism, which, like Snopesism is a masculine, not a feminine principle, Stevens pursues his useless efforts to rescue Linda from the evil influence of Flem. Stevens, however, is rudely shaken to his senses during his visit to the Snopes residence in an effort to persuade Eula to give her permission for Linda's pursuit of the enrichment program Stevens has outlined for her.

During Stevens' visit, the actual extent of Flem's baseness and insensitivity becomes manifest. Before Stevens visits Eula, Ratliff tries to make him realize what exactly is the goal which Flem will go to any means to achieve. Stevens hints at what this goal is when he observes that Flem "was trying to be what he—a Snopes or anyway a Flem Snopes—thought a bank vice-president was or should be." (T., p. 137) After Flem assumes this position, almost unnoticed by the Jefferson citizenry, Ratliff attempts to explain the nature of Flem's quest:

But this—here new thing he has done found out it's nice to have, is different. It's like keeping warm in winter or cool in summer or peace or being free or contentment. You can't just count it and lock it up somewhere safe and forget about it until you feel like looking at it again. You got to work at it steady, never to forget about it. It's got to be out in the open, where folks can see it, or there ain't no such thing. (T., p. 175)

This quality prompts Flem's removal of Montgomery Ward from Jefferson, his trip to Memphis to purchase furniture appropriate for his position of prominence in the community, and even drives him to blackmailing Eula.
Flem's desire for power forces him to soften his business tactics when the action assures him of greater rewards. His base and self-centered aims, however, do not weaken in his handling of Eula and Linda. As he uses Linda to further his own social position, Flem realizes that certain values, such as respectability and friendship, formerly foreign to him, must now be inculcated into his values. The importance which the trait of respectability has for Flem has previously been exemplified by his complete elimination of any undesirable Snopes elements from the society. When Flem's goal is attainable through his own efforts, he obtains it with no problems. He quickly educates himself in all the banking procedures because Flem is not ignorant: "...he didn't know the inner workings of banks not because of ignorance but simply because he had not had opportunity and time yet to teach himself." (T., p. 277) However, when Flem is in a situation which places him in contact with others, Flem demonstrates what Stevens calls innocence, or more specifically, social innocence: "He has no friends. I mean, he knew he didn't have any friends because he had never (and never would) intended to have them, be cluttered with them, be constantly vulnerable or anyway liable to the creeping sentimental parasitic importunity which his observation had shown him friendship meant." (T., p. 279) A portion of Flem's humanizing, which Volpe speaks of, occurs when Flem realizes that "...you needed friends for the simple reason that at any time a situation could—and in time would, no matter who you were—arise when you could use them; could not only use them but would have to, since nothing else save friendship,...would do." (T., p. 279) Stevens prefers to attribute Flem's deficiency to his early and long efforts to succeed; however,
from Flem's treatment of Eula and Linda it seems more plausible to contend that he is the victim of an inherent personality defect, and merely does nothing to counteract it. This fault of Flem's, which manifests itself in the form of extreme materialism, is evident by Flem's attitude toward money. The perceptive Ratliff recognizes Flem's materialistic nature when he says that Flem has more than respect for money; he has "reverence" for it. Flem values his money so dearly that he refuses to keep it in the bank of which he is vice-president since the vulnerability of the bank has been demonstrated by someone as stupid and cowardly as his cousin Byron being able to rob it.

The major factor compelling Flem to change not only his way of life, but to adopt a new code of ethics, is Eula's daughter Linda. Stevens summarizes the situation:

That was his problem. Probably except for the really incredible mischance that the bastard child he had given his name to happened to be female, he would never needed to surmount it. He may have contented himself with the drowsy dream of his revenge, himself but half awake in the long-familiar embrace of his cuckoldry as you recline in a familiar chair with a familiar book, if his wife's bastard had not been a girl. (T., p. 283)

Ratliff is the first to recognize the implications Linda's sex has for Flem and his subsequent attempt to defer her marriage:

Billy Varner made a will leaving half of his property to Miz Varner and half to Jody. When Eula was born, he made a new will leaving that same first half to Miz Varner and the other half split in two equal parts, one for Jody and one for Eula...So he don't dare risk letting that girl leave Jefferson and get married, because he knows that Eula will leave him too then. (T., pp. 227-228)

Although Flem knows of Eula's adultery, he ignores it as long as he can use and manipulate her in a fashion beneficial to him. Although
Flem hopes to benefit from the situation, the relationship also enhances Eula's and Linda's reputations; nevertheless, Eula and Linda have not the slightest gratitude for him. The question concerning Eula, Linda, and Flem seems to be: Did Eula and Linda really owe Flem anything, and if so, would Flem have known how to accept the gratitude, or whatever it was they owed him, if they had offered it? From the previous discussion of the value conflict existing between Eula and Flem, and later Linda and Flem, the obvious response is no. Gratitude, understanding, love are the feminine qualities in the novel, incomprehensible to the masculine mind. The masculine society Flem represents cannot accept, or even understand, the existence of such values. That this response is valid becomes apparent by Eula's suicide and the ensuing consequences.

The climax of false appearances and valiant attempts to make life pure and meaningful occurs with Eula's suicide. Naomi Jackson explains Eula's suicide by referring again to the "White Goddess," Helen, image Faulkner has given Eula. This Goddess must have her divinity acknowledged to exist; however, since de Spain is no Paris, the correct form of admiration is absent, thus necessitating Eula's removal from unsatisfactory surroundings. This event has implications and repercussions not only for the immediate figures involved (Flem, Eula, Linda, de Spain), but also for the entire citizenry of Jefferson. Following this event, Mayor de Spain must hypocritically conceal his grief or openly publicize his guilt. Like Hoake earlier, he solves the problem by running away. The event also affects the entire town since for the past eighteen years all of its members have silently condoned Eula's adultery with de Spain:
The town itself was divided into two camps, ... the women who hated Mrs. Snopes for having grabbed Mr. de Spain first or hated Mr. de Spain for having preferred Mrs. Snopes to them, and the men who were jealous of De Spain because they were not him or hated him for being younger than they or braver than they (they called it luckier of course); and those of both sexes--not the same sour genderless sex--who hated them both for having found or made together something which they themselves had failed to make.... (T., pp. 307-308)

Perhaps the town agrees to accept this adulterous relationship since Flem himself provides no objections to the affair. Eula's sexuality stirs no excitement in the not only completely materialistic, but impotent, Flem. As long as the town hushes the situation, Flem can allow it to continue with no danger to his coveted reputation.

Eula realizes Flem's thinking follows this pattern when she warns Stevens not to pity Flem, for that would be one thing he could not bear since he can live with his condition, having known no other.

The effect the suicide has on Linda is not completely revealed in The Town; however, certain implications are made. Flem demonstrates his influence and power over Linda when he showers her with graduation gifts and convinces her to stay in Jefferson. Linda naturally wants to love Flem like her father; therefore, when Stevens lies, telling her that Flem is really her father, she believes him. In reality Linda knows Flem is not her father; thus, she is free to side with her mother, Eula.

Eula's death provides an explanation for her actions during her life. Paul Levine calls Eula's suicide "the first real act of love in the novel." Ratliff suggests boredom as the motivating factor in Eula's suicide. The implications of these two conflicting responses, love and boredom, further illustrate Eula's estrangement from society. The love she tries to express is so pure and sincere
that the average person mistakes her final sacrifice as a symbol of her boredom with life. If Eula was bored, the boredom stems from her continual inability to arouse a satisfying response in the male world; thus, she devotes her life, in fact gives her life, for the safety and betterment of her child.

The realization of this forces Stevens to see that "She loved, had a capacity to love, for love, to give and accept love. Only she tried twice and failed twice to find somebody not just strong enough to deserve, earn it, match it, but even brave enough to accept it." (T., p. 359) Of the two lovers Eula has had, one ran off and the other meets her only in secret; thus, her daughter becomes the only recipient for the love and concern she has and must give. Faulkner describes her devotion to Linda by saying she felt it "would be better for this girl to have a mother who committed suicide than a mother who ran off with a lover."19 Possessing a capacity for love too great for any human to cope with, Eula attempts to guard Linda's reputation by trying to pacify Flem. It is not surprising that Eula's humanity is beyond Flem's scope of understanding; however, her humanity so exceeds that of ordinary beings that she herself cannot bear the continual lack of response or maltreatment of it.

The death of Eula provides Flem with the opportune moment for achieving the highest success—the bank presidency; furthermore, he has the opportunity to strengthen his role as the ideal citizen. Attempting to obtain a stronger hold over the Jefferson population and to assure Linda of her supposed parenthood, Flem erected a monument to Eula. The inscription on the monument, "A Virtuous Wife Is a Crown to Her Husband Her Children Rise and Call Her Blessed,"
obviously does not apply to this family; however, the town must accept the statement as true or publicize their guilt of condoning the sin of Eula and de Spain.

Flem has driven Eula to her death and acquired the coveted position of bank president. He moves into de Spain's abandoned mansion and ideally should be the happiest of men. At this point it would appear that Flem's system of values has been victorious, but although Flem is rid of Eula, he is opposed again in *The Mansion* by Linda.

III

In *The Mansion*, the final novel of the trilogy, Faulkner must resolve, or at least deduce some conclusion, concerning the value conflict previously developed. The conflict, introduced by the contrast between the humanistic, warm, loving values of Eula Varner Snopes and the sub-human, cold, materialistic values of Flem Snopes, now appears between Flem and his step-daughter Linda, who perpetrates the values previously inculcated in Eula. In *The Mansion* Faulkner also utilizes Mink Snopes as a link between the two opposing systems. It is through Mink's determination to revenge Flem for being the precipitating cause of his imprisonment that Flem is finally destroyed.

Mink kills Houston, not because Houston's requirement that Mink pay for the wintering of his cow is unjust, but because Houston's insistence that Mink pay an extra one dollar pound fee is an insult to Mink's pride and honor. By taking the pound fee requirement as a degradation to his character, Mink shows his Snopes quality. As seen previously, Flem, the epitome of Snopesism, concerns himself chiefly with adherence to the current dress standard; thus, assuring his impression as a respectable citizen.
In contrast to this, Mink is unconcerned with the monetary aspect of the case. This offers a direct contrast to the materialistic Flem whom Ratliff has described as having "reverence" for money. The extreme value Flem places upon money is evident even to other Snopes. Montgomery Ward Snopes, who agrees to aid Flem in a scheme to deter Mink's parole, describes Flem: "'All your life is worth to you is about five hundred, mostly in trade, on the installment plan.'" (M., p. 67) Although Montgomery Ward and Mink both possess elements of Snopesism, even they recognize Flem as completely devoid of any human sympathy or understanding.

Faulkner strengthens Mink's link between these two systems by associating Mink with the forces of the land. This association with the land, and with the natural world, is evident superficially in Mink's name. Faulkner elaborates the association between Mink and nature by describing Mink's view of the land as stronger than man, and as something which is continually trying to wear him out; nevertheless, he expresses a sense of hope and determination. This hope stems from man's being able to burn the land each year and begin anew. After working the land in the prison for a time, Mink realizes not only that his labor is worthless since it neither changes nor produces anything, but also that he does not even belong to the land now:

People of his kind never had owned even temporarily the land which they believed they had rented between one New Year's and the next one. It was the land itself which owned them...in perpetuity...the earth itself passing their doomed indigence and poverty from holding to holding of its thralldom as a family or clan does a hopelessly bankrupt tenth cousin. That was past now. He no longer belonged to the land...He belonged to the government, the state of Mississippi. (M., p. 91)
It is the realization that "it was the land itself which owned them" that brings Mink's triumph and Flem's destruction. Flem's mistake has been in trying to own the land, and in pursuing false appearances. Unlike Mink, Flem realizes too late that one must follow nature's values, not those of the material world.

Mink associates with the women by his adoption of a similar value system. This link with the women is illustrated outwardly when Mink attempts to escape from prison by disguising himself as a woman. Flem plants Montgomery Ward Snopes in the prison to convince Mink of the practicality of the plan. Since Flem realizes the plan will fail, his insistence that Montgomery Ward instigate the plan only emphasizes his lack of human sympathy and heightens the difference between the values he and Eula practice.

Since Mink's association with the land connects him with Eula, he automatically allies with Linda, the perpetrator of Eula's values, in The Mansion. Earlier Ratliff recognizes the force of life present in Eula: "Eula never done no waiting. Likely she never knewed what the word meant, like the ground, dirt, the earth, whatever it is in it that makes seed sprout at the right time don't know nor need to know what waiting means." (M., p. 120) Although Eula dies, the land, the force of life which she symbolizes, continues in the character of Linda, as in The Mansion and in Mink Snopes.

Linda possesses, although to a lesser degree, many of the awesome qualities previously associated with Eula. The reaction to Linda's mere existence is one of disbelief since the possibility of finding one worthy and virile enough to aid Eula in reproduction seems remote. Society gapes in amazement.
One couldn't help but look at Eula Varner's child with a kind of amazement, like at some minute-sized monster, since anybody, any man anyhow, that ever looked at Eula once couldn't help but believe that all that much woman in jest one simple normal-sized chunk couldn't possibly been fertilized by anything as frail and puny in comparison as jest one single man; that it would a taken that whole generation of young concentrated men to seeded them, as the feller says, splendid--no; he would a said magnificent--loins. (M., p. 114)

Recalling Eula's magnificence, much of the awe and interest formerly given to her is unconsciously transferred to Linda.

Faulkner strengthens Linda's character as he presents the attitudes of Stevens and Flem regarding Linda's going away to school. When Stevens goes to Europe to study, he leaves his nephew Charles Mallison with the "load" or "fort"--the battle to save the town from Snopes. Upon his return, he learns Linda has gone to \textit{Grenwic} Village. When Ratliff asks him why he did not marry Linda, even when Eula encourages him to do so, Stevens replies: ". . .she's got too much time left to run into something when she might need me."

(M., p. 151)

When Flem finally allows Linda to attend a school fifty miles away at Oxford, Linda's response to Flem's sudden change of attitude exemplifies the contrast existing between their value systems; a contrast parallel to the one previously evident between Eula and Flem: ". . .If you jest realized now that grandfather's money aint as important as my life, I could a told you that all the time; if you had jest told me two years ago that all you was was jest skeered, I would a eased you then...." (M., p. 144) This statement follows Linda's realization that "the only thing he loved was money."

(M., p. 143) When Linda realizes that the basis for Flem's previous
When Ratliff and Stevens go to New York for Linda's wedding, they ironically meet Hoake McCarron, Linda's true father, in a saloon. Although Linda knows he is her father, she questions Stevens about him. When Stevens repeatedly tells her that he is not her father, Linda replies that she loves Stevens "...because every time [he lies] to me I can always know [he] will stick to it."

(M., p. 175) It is this never-failing reliability and understanding that Linda comes to value and depend upon.

Stevens' nephew Chick Mallison is certain that now that Linda has returned, Stevens and she will be married. As he reflects upon this relationship, his attitudes and feelings toward Linda follow two opposing patterns of thought; these thoughts, however, merely express the expected, universal attitudes concerning the Snopes. As he ponders the relationship, which he feels will unquestionably flourish, Chick explains that:

Linda and Gavin wouldn't have that one matchless natural advantage which her mother and Manfred de Spain had, which was that aura, nimbus, condition, whatever the word is, in which Mrs. Snopes not just existed, lived, breathed, but created about herself by just existing, living, breathing...[The] little petty moral connection with a woman like Mrs. Snopes—or rather, a woman like her had no more concern with or even attention for them—than conventions about what force you use or when or how or where have to do with wars or cyclones...Linda didn't have that quality; that one was not transferable. So all that remained for her and Gavin was continence. To put it crudely, morality. (M., pp. 211-212)

Later, however, when Chick examines his reaction toward Linda and Stevens, he decides "that evidently it was transferable. I mean, whatever it was her mother had had. Gavin had seen her once when she was thirteen years old, and look what happened to him. Then Barton Kohl saw her once when she was nineteen years old,
possessed by Eula, and now Linda, is recognized. Expansion or fulfillment of this quality by Eula has already been made impossible; however, it remains to be seen how Linda ultimately copes with the capacity and the restraints placed upon her because of it.

The climax of the trilogy and resolution of the value conflict occurs with Mink's murder of Flem. There seems to be a particular significance in having this murder, which represents the triumph of the value system embodied by Eula and Linda, performed, not by Linda, but by Mink. The final conquering of the evil forces of society is a result of the unification of the forces of the women (the values they symbolize) and the land (personified in Mink).

Flem's purely materialistic value system is again questioned when Ratliff challenges the effectiveness of bribing Mink to leave Jefferson at once: "'Suppose jest money aint enough,' Ratliff said. 'Suppose he wont take jest two hundred and fifty dollars for Flem Snopes.'" (M., p. 370) As Volpe comments, Mink's motives give the novel unity because the basis for them is the outrage and indignation of the human condition; that is the prosperity of the proud, covetous, greedy, and selfish Flem. The force which prevents Mink from giving up is his belief that "Old Moster jest punishes; He dont play jokes." (M., p. 398) This is the belief that despite the injustice apparent throughout life, when the long battle ends, justice will prevail.

As Faulkner puts it; "...he will have to cope with his environment or his environment will destroy him." This is precisely what occurs. Flem persists in trying to control everything and everyone around him. Since this is not permissible, and since Flem realizes this fact too late to make any significant alterations, those who Flem has tried to control must now take control of his life by bringing it to an end.
Although it is not Linda who actively destroys Flem, Faulkner presents her as the continual advocate of freedom; thus, it is appropriate for her to be Mink's freeing agent—an act which precipitates Flem's destruction. The end of the war and the subsequent passage of the equal opportunity and fair treatment laws leaves Linda with no more ships to rivet (her occupation during the war) and momentarily with no more injustice to right. Linda, however, does not remain idle; she devotes her efforts to the freeing of Mink from jail, not because she feels Mink is suffering an injustice by his presence there (although this perhaps is a minor influence on her), but because she knows the consequence will be Flem's death; thus, she will have revenged the treatment she and her mother received from Flem. Although it is Linda who puts up the money to bribe Mink from remaining in Jefferson, she realizes all the time what Mink's actions will be, as is shown by her purchase of the Jaguar several weeks before Mink's release. By having Linda as the one who urges Mink's release from prison, who watches approvingly Flem's murder, and who aids Mink's escape from the Snopes mansion, Faulkner establishes her as the moralistic heroine of the trilogy. Although the white streak in Linda's hair resembles a collapsed plume, Linda does not lose the battle, but wins. As established earlier, Linda inherits many of her mother's warm, humanistic virtues. In addition to this, she possesses the courage and stamina to continually strive to spread these virtues, not succumbing until she triumphs.

Not only do the values of Eula, through the agents of Linda and Mink, conquer the opposing values embodied in Flem, but Flem surrenders himself by not even making the effort to escape or halt Mink's action when the gun fails the first time. Theodore Greene explains Flem's action in the following way: "Flem is Faulkner's chief symbol of predatory
success in a sensate, money-mad culture--of a success so empty that it is doomed to be ultimately self-defeating, but which until it does collapse like a pricked balloon, is irresistible in a free but demoralized society."21 Thus, with complete disregard for the feelings of others, and with the inability or desire to establish any bond with another human, Flem's life becomes meaningless and worthless even to him.

As he ends the trilogy, Faulkner again makes reference to the land as Mink describes the pull the earth exerts for everyone: "The drag of the earth was already at work on you...In fact, the ground itself never let a man forget it was there waiting pulling gently and without no hurry at him between every step...." (M., pp. 402, 434) Mink's retreat to the land for security and safety emphasizes the necessity of Flem's defeat. One cannot escape the pull the earth has on him; if he tries, he is ultimately destroyed in the attempt.

Recalling Eula's previous association with the land, further emphasized by giving the name Eula Acres to a housing division, the life-giving, life-sustaining force of the values incorporated in Eula are symbolized in the final image of the land. Flem's selection of the name Eula Acres indicates the increasing force the land has upon him. The force continues to increase until Mink, with his close attachment to the land prevails. This life force is absent in the materialism of Flem. He ignores the pull of the earth and fails in trying to conquer it.

IV

William Faulkner calls his Snopes Trilogy the "victory of man against Snopes."22 The conflict stems from Flem Snopes' ambition to
control the forces of society and nature. As explained in the body of this paper, there are elements which are naturally opposed to Flem. Faulkner initially presents Flem's opposition in the value system embodied in Eula Varner Snopes. Although Eula possesses the love, warmth, and human understanding necessary to oppose and conquer Flem, she lacks the means by which to utilize her resources. It remains for Linda, who inherits qualities corresponding to Eula's, to enlist the energies of Mink Snopes and ultimately conquer Flem. Because Mink possesses some of the values represented by Eula and Linda, he is opposed to Flem; yet, he also has enough of "Snopesism" in him to enable him to actually perform the murder. It is only when Mink's powers are freed by Linda, however, that justice prevails.

A special type of admiration is due Flem for the shrewdness and ingenuity he displays throughout the trilogy; nevertheless, he cannot be forgiven for his total lack of feeling for the remainder of humanity. The natural aspects of life will not consent to Flem's control; therefore, his defeat is inevitable. This victory does not imply the triumph of absolute good. As exemplified by Eula, totally sincere and understanding love is unable to recognize or tolerate any evil, and, therefore, must ultimately concede in despair.

Possessing the humanism of her mother, yet having the realization of evil through tragedy in her own life, Linda can direct her forces in the proper direction, secure freedom for Mink, and assure victory for the values she represents.

2 Throughout this paper, reference to thenovels will be make according to the following abbreviations:
   H. - The Hamlet (New York: Vintage, 1940)
   T. - The Town (New York: Vintage, 1957)
   M. - The Mansion (New York: Vintage, 1959)


5 Ibid., p. 4.


7 Ibid., p. 19.


11 Volpe, pp. 318-319.

12 Ibid., p. 309.

13 Beck, p. 113.


15 Millgate, p. 240.

16 Faulkner in the University, Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, editors (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 31.
17 Jackson, p. 20.

18 Levine, p. 20.

19 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 95.


22 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 34.
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