

## William Faulkner's Inverted World in *Soldiers' Pay* and *A Fable*

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Critics are not even shocked at the unusual plot in *Soldiers' Pay* where three young women, Margaret Powers, Cecily Saunders and Emmy, rival<sup>1</sup> to marry the overtly dying man, Donald Mahon, who returned from the First World War, scarred horribly on the face and unable to recognize even his father and fiancée. One reason for this oversight is that *Soldiers' Pay* has been read only as a novel of veterans' frustrations in adjusting themselves for the postwar society,<sup>2</sup> and another is that Faulkner's novels are characterized with extraordinary plots anyway. To ask why Edgar Poe wrote in the tradition of Gothism, employing the most striking plots and materials, is nonsensical, for Gothism is simply his choice of taste. Faulkner's novels, on the contrary, should be read not so much in the term of plots and characters as images and symbols, because the writer curiously defined himself not to be a novelist but a poet in 1945, while writing his last *magnum opus*, *A Fable*:

All my writing life I have been a poet without education, who possessed only instinct and a fierce conviction and belief in the worth and truth of what he was doing, and an illimitable courage for rhetoric (personal pleasure in it too: I admit it) and who knew and cared for little else.<sup>3</sup>

If one should take this seriously and believe that Faulkner meant to write poetry no matter what kind of prose form his works are in, his characters should be weighed as images, and plots be interpreted as rhetoric of poetry. Actually when Faulkner started with his first book, *The Marble Faun*, he was a poet. His illimitable courage in rhetoric certainly directed him to novels, since such forceful rhetoric as his not only fits in a novel but also prevents the fine imbuing of the theme through texture required for poetry. Assuming that Faulkner devised in *Soldiers' Pay* a schematic setting of imagery usual in poetry, one finds the unusual plot most precious, for it must be there that the author develops into rhetoric his most significant idea. If what underlies the idea is the subversiveness of a war, Faulkner's another novel on the same World War I, *A Fable*, will help a researcher to verify any hypothesis acquired.

The symbolism in the setting of *Soldiers' Pay* is simple and clear only if the reader forgets the precience that the theme of the novel is the veterans' troubles to be accepted in their homes. The satiric witticism in the conversations and the jazz-age scene of flappers, for which Dorothy Tuck blamed Faulkner as some assiduous imitations of Aldous Huxley and F. Scott Fitzgerald,<sup>4</sup> must be left out also. Then the rec-

tor's garden, to which the wounded pilot, Donald Mahon, returns, is "worth seeing" (S, 43), as the author indicates:

An avenue of roses bordered a graveled path which passed from sunlight beneath two overarching oaks. Beyond the oaks, against a wall of poplars in a restless formal row were columns of a Greek temple, yet the poplars themselves in slim, vague green were poised and vain as girls in a frieze. Against a privet hedge would soon be lilies like nuns in a cloister and blue hyacinths swung soundless bells, dreaming of Lesbos. Upon a lattice wall wistaria would soon burn in slow inverted lilac flame . . . (S, *ibid.*).

The rector who tills the garden and grows flowers is not only Jove (S, 43), but also an oak overarching the garden. Against his arm the pliant body of Cecily Saunders, Donald's fiancée, leans like a poplar (S, 58). Janiarius Jones, Latinist and orphan in the neighboring college, classifies her as a "Hamadryad, a slim jewelled one" (S, 54). In this garden of the ancient golden age even with columns of a Greek temple, protected by the fertility deity of the rector, Cecily's "delicate being was nourished by sunlight and honey" (S, 56). She was not only a dryad, chased by a faun, but a chaser, a slender but agile huntress of Atalanta (S, 55). The faun<sup>s</sup> was Donald before he left to be an airforce man, as the rector recalls (S, 48), and as his youthful picture suggests to Margaret Powers, who accompanies the wounded pilot to his home (S, 58). To Emmy the housemaid is given a much humbler role of "a small but sturdy greenness on a dunghill" (S, 84). Yet she too belongs to the innocent fertility of the garden.

These elementary beings' pastoral pleasures, the nymph and the faun's love-makings, were already in the past because of the war. Now the rector's quiet life is threatened even before Margaret appears in her widow's garb and black hair. When Janiarius Jones stops his morning walk at the church, he is caught with the childish illusion of the Gothic spire steadily falling against the clouds (S, 41). The rector tries to show the bulbs of Donald's left in his few possessions, and portentously crumbles them in his huge, awkward hand (S 48). The rector here symbolically fails in his proper role of the fertility deity, and Margaret Powers' visit is announced soon after.

The young widow of an army officer killed in action is curiously imbued with the colour of death, though Cecily's father admires her as a very level-headed woman (S, 97). Asked by a conductor in the train to tend to a wounded pilot who does not seem to realize where he is, Margaret stays overnight with him and with two other veterans in a hotel, seeing "the smug, impersonal room like an appointed tomb" (S, 32). As Donald Mahon looks "old as the world, beneath the dreadful scar" on the face (S, 22), so Margaret's lips shut like "a tired scar" (S, 193). She is completely fatigued and thoroughly responds to the total despair of Joe Gilligan's: "Rotten luck. That's exactly what it was, what everything is. Even sorrow is a fake now" (S, 31). "Can nothing at all move me again? Nothing to desire? Nothing to stir me, to move me save pity?" (S, 105), mutters she to herself. Pity without hope is the most demolishing

emotion of all as Graham Green dissects so masterfully in *The Heart of the Matter*. Carrying this perilous but sincere despair, Margaret is most fitting to bring into the ruin of the golden age the living corpse of Donald. Cecily Saunders faints, crumbling "like a stricken poplar" (S, 66), as she screams at the horrible scar of Donald.

With the ruined pilot settled in the hand of the rector, there ensues a curious suspension of actuality in the dwelling. The rector never admits his son to be blind and dying, expecting that with rest and good nourishment he will be recovered enough to marry Cecily. Nobody dares to defy the hopeful father. Margaret even advises Cecily's father to let her daughter come as often as possible to be the best medicine for Donald. The spire of the church has lost symbolically its perspective and "seemed but two dimensions of metal and cardboard" (S, 81). A void, transparent and intangible prevails slowly in the scene.

Is it not such smoothness and invincibility of void that Faulkner tried to present by the white solid lifelessness of stone in his early poems, *The Marble Faun*? Despite the series of eclogues "seeming limited and highly imitative,"<sup>6</sup> some unique images in the poems are explicitly developed in another of Faulkner's early novels, *Mosquitoes*, particularly in a set of arboreal and aquarial images and the images of the moon. In *Mosquitoes*, concerning trees and water the pristine power of nature is intently suggested, as the dawn breaks darkness at an inlet, where Patricia escapes from her aunt's ship:

Trees heavy and ancient with moss loomed out of it hugely and grayly: the mist might have been a sluggish growth between and among them. No, this mist might have been the first prehistoric morning of time itself; it might have been the very substance in which the seed of the beginning of things fecundated; and these huge and silent trees might have been the first of living things, too recently born to know either fear or astonishment, dragging their sluggish umbilical cords from out the old miasmic womb of a nothingness latent and dreadful.<sup>7</sup>

How the marble faun, the voice in Faulkner's poems, laments his bondage which disables his running in the chill wind, the pristine power of nature, and his sharing the growth and death of vegetative and watery life! Caught in the white void of marble, the voice is abominably deprived of death.<sup>8</sup> The same sense of the intangible yet steady grip of loss pervades in *Mosquitoes*, in the bathos of New Orleans artists and society women's lifeless and endless chatter. The water and trees in the inlet and the marsh can grow old at nine o'clock in the morning (M, 174). Patricia, whose element is the pristine power of water and trees, flees into the woods from the insipid, garrulous guests of her aunt's on the ship, gets exhausted in the afternoon, and clasps a tree, standing in the water (M, 210), as if seeking some reinforcement in her element. Nothing yet changes the voyagers. Their complete suspension from actuality is shown in their incredible insensibility to the stings of mosquitoes (though Patricia constantly

suffers from them), and particularly in the masterful farce of Gordon searching his own drowned body for hours (M, 215).

The moon, the other significant image common in *The Marble Faun* and *Mosquitoes*, weaves "a snare"<sup>9</sup> about the brain of the marble faun in the poem, "And with her prying fingers turns/Inside out the thicket and copse,"<sup>10</sup> suggesting that it is the very reflection of the consciousness which grips the faun in the captivity. In *Mosquitoes* the moon is more explicitly used for the reflection of the character concerned at each particular scene, almost like a parody of the symbolists' preoccupation of the planet. It looks "affable and bloodless as a successful procuress" (M, 100) when Talliaferro whispers about his plan of seducing Jenny to Fairchild; and "its [the moon's] long erstwhile disc was thumbed into the sky like a coin after too much handling" (M, 291), when Talliaferro is engaged to marry Mrs. Maurier, chill and strangely poisonous in sex.

These images although meant to be bathetic and vaguely ridiculous in *Mosquitoes* explicate successfully the suspended state of Donald in devastating nothingness left out from life and death equally. As in *The Marble Faun* and *Mosquitoes* the void detestably deathless and irresistible is contrasted with the original, vital force in nature which begins and ends following the order of creation, so in *Soldiers' Pay* the annihilated being of Donald is strikingly set out against Donald, the pristine being of the faun, running in the moonlight before the war. As Emmy recalls:

The water looked so soft in the moonlight you couldn't tell where the water was hardly, and we swam a while and then Donald hid his clothes, too, and we went on up on top of a hill. Everything was so kind of pretty and the grass felt so good to your feet, and all of a sudden Donald ran on ahead of me. I can keep up with Donald when I want to, but for some reason I didn't want to to-night, and so I sat down. I could see him running along the top of the hill, all shiny in the moonlight, then he ran back down the hill toward the creek.

The scene immediately reminds a reader of Faulkner of the dreamy night that spotted horses leap in the moon,<sup>11</sup> like the pristine life in nature itself. The moon which transfigures herself like a spectre in *Mosquitoes* and which weaves a snare of self-conscious in *The Marble Faun* simply shines here on the naked and wet body of Donald. The symbol of the water in the creek, and the complete absence of any subjective reflectedness in the figure of the moon drive home the non-existence of any estrangement in Donald from his circumstance. The young lovers here live ideally united with the order of creation, where life is born, grows and dies.

As Donald now a living corpse extends quietly his demolishing void, almost in conspiracy with Margaret's silent, kind despair, characters begin to lose their bodies and sex, as if they were all transfigured into infernal shades of Hades. Margaret's lips under her black tress resemble the blossoms of pomegranates, the fruits of Greek

underworld which Persephone ate and disabled herself to return to life (S, 111). Whenever this sibyl of death goes, veterans all sit in a row like "lost souls to get into hell" (S, 136), and girls are made all boys (S, *ibid.*). Jones' yellow, goat-like stare is now "bodiless" (S, 152) as he chases Emmy in "a chaste Platonic nympholepsy" (S, 156). Cecily, still like a tree, no longer seems to be a supple Atalanta but "Atthis," the Lesbian friend of Sappho (S, 157). Born to the pristine power of water and trees, but deprived of them now, she is completely lost, flapping like a fish out of water in Joe Gilligan's opinion (S, 173). She leaves her suitor, George Farr, sporadically in despair, even after her body "prone and narrow as a pool dividing" in his embrace (S, 180), flirts with the sexless, bodiless Jones, who is now compared to Cerberus, the dog of hell (S, 173). The whole place is filled with frogs like Aristophanes' underworld, when Cecily rushes in to break her engagement. Margaret apparently has waited for this opportunity and weds the dying man, pallid and unhappy (S, 193). Because the order of creation is entirely upside down, she is going to be absorbed into the void that takes in all flesh.<sup>12</sup> This is the only possible interpretation of her falling in love with what is not even a shadow of the once attractive faun. Her despair unfortunately responds to Donald's ruin. In the garden "the wistaria inverted its cool lilac flame" (S, 197), revealing the inverted situation of the garden. Such crisis has been predicted in the novel even before Margaret's appearance.<sup>13</sup>

The liberation for these characters comes quite unexpectedly. The medical expert Margaret has invited from Atlanta bemuses her by asking, "What is he waiting for?" (S, 107). Donald in his opinion has been dead for these three months unless he expects something to turn up that he must finish. His negro nurse totters into the garden, crying and praising, "Bless the Lawd, one sont you back ter yo' mammy. Yes Jesus! Ev'y day I prayed, and de Lawd heard me" (S, 118). When she is gone, Donald asks Joe Gilligan, "When am I going to get out?" "I've got to go home, Joe" (S, *ibid.*), he adds enigmatically. Soon after the marriage the time of the departure comes. The rector nodding in the dusk hears Donald calling. The lost innocence of the golden age flashes again briefly when "the evening star bloomed miraculously at the poplar's tip and the slender tree was a leafed and passionate Atalanta, poisoning her golden apple" (S, 202). Actually Donald regains the vision he was enjoying right before he was wounbed high up in the air. Since the miracle is mentioned in Faulkner's image of the evening star, to what should this sudden turnout be attributed except the negro nurse's prayers?

Back in his last flight, "The sun was getting overhead" (S, 203) in the proper order of the yet uninverted world. Donald knew exactly where he was by the shadow on the control column. He was passing from the dark time he had lived before into "a day that . . . had already been spent" (S, *ibid.*), flying in other words into timeless in triumph, when the enemies' shells burst at the basis of his skull. "That's how it happened" (S, 204), Donald reports to his father and dies. The suspension is broken: the void is pulled down. The end releases Donald from the inhuman, abstract deathlessness. Faulkner writes emphatically what he believes to be the human condition :

SEX AND DEATH: the front door and the back door of the world. How indissolubly are they associated in us! In youth they lift us out of the flesh, in old age they reduce again to the flesh; one to fatten us, the other to flay us, for the worm. When are sexual compulsions more readily answered than in war or famine or flood or fire? (S, *ibid.*)

Sex and death are not merely the authentic but the only beginning and the ending of life in the order of creation. Damnation in Faulkner's sense does not exist in the natural course of sex and death but in the alienation from them.

Flesh is set against these healthy facts in life with quiet hostility of Faulkner. It is flesh, the inverted corruption of sex, that reduces life to the meaningless void, so sure but so desperately imperceptible that no intelligence, no sincerity can control. Sex is the very culmination of life's reproducing power, but unfortunately it can be inverted, debased into destructiveness of flesh. Death that should be the precious opportunity to "flay flesh for worms" can be caught into this void of flesh. It is this subtle and metaphysical power called flesh or evil that inverts the order of creation. Caught in this void as a victim, Donald attracts other characters simultaneously, even townspeople whose voices are written in the form of a chorus, with powerful gravitation into his ruin like the awful blackhole in space. Such is the power of evil, untangible, incomprehensible and incredibly greedy. Attracted to this void, Margaret Powers succumbed to her sexless marriage with all her good will and brain. Cecily Saunders for the same reason recoils and reacts meaninglessly in her resistance and ruins her marriage with George Farr. Even Emmy angers and despairs. Faulkner declares that calamities such as war, famine, flood or fire never create flesh and void. They only increase the impulse of sex, that is, the impulse of life. Donald engaged in the war is uplifted above flesh, the inverting power, right before the power seizes him treacherously and quietly in the void. When Donald is brought back to the dignity of life, death comes as a salvation, reclaiming him to the right order.

At Donald's death or liberation, sex and life are back to normal (S, 219). Emmy accepted Jones. The ritual of the dead is not intermixed only for irony with his love-making in Faulkner's passage: ". . . she turned in a passion of weeping, clinging to him. (I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord . . . [*sic.*])" (S, 206). Jones' once bodiless, sexless orgy is retroverted and resurrected into a simple and therefore proper love. Margaret is gone. Joe Gilligan, unsuccessful in overtaking her, returns to the rectory, where at the gate the rector is listening to the singing at the neighboring negro church, ". . . making thicker the imminence of sex after harsh labor along the mooned land; and from it welled the crooning submerged passion of the dark race" (S, 221). Negroes are freer from the danger of the metaphysical power of flesh and void than whites, for they are nearer to the order of creation. "God is circumstance, Joe" (S, 220), concludes the rector, suggesting the author's idea that subversiveness of flesh slips in at man's willful estrangement away from his circumstance, away from the pristine power of nature symbolized in this novel with

trees, water and the moonlight with no subjective association.

This very subversiveness of flesh and void, so well hidden from the human sight, and the liberation therefrom are the themes of *Soldiers' Pay*. Unfortunately Faulkner fails to drive it home to the reader. The invisible, intangible metaphysical power, which Dostoevsky and Hawthorne struggled with, is the most ambitious one to pick up for a theme. One reason of his failure is that he does not disentangle the subversiveness of the power of flesh from the war itself clearly enough to convince his readers. War is merely one symptom of the destructiveness of flesh, one opportunity for flesh to send forth the transparent void to circumstances. War drags Margaret to the inertia and void, reduces Joe Gilligan to a harmless vagrant, but elevates Donald above flesh even briefly. Technically another difficulty for Faulkner is that Donald, the most important motif of the subversion, should not be made an active character. To create in Donald an explicit agent of the inverting power is impossible, for the greatest significance of the power is its evasiveness.<sup>14</sup> Faulkner here has to meet with the insurmountable technical difficulty at which, being a beginner, he is naturally unsuccessful. Particularly such metaphysical power cannot be easily linked with the psychology of characters. Cecily for instance is the most serious victim of Donald's ruin, for it is suggested that she will lose her husband, too. Like Patricia in *Mosquitoes*, whose elements are trees and water, who flames like fire and swims as a fish,<sup>15</sup> Cecily is constantly compared to a poplar, to a fish whose element is the pristine power of water. Cecily is shaken all the more at Donald's ruin, for she has to stand everything that her proper quality of pristine elements repels without realizing it. It is true that she is immature, selfish and impulsive, also. Yet Faulkner should have done better than making her appear merely a "provocative, vain and epicene"<sup>16</sup> woman. Later in *Light in August* Faulkner did a much better job in presenting Joe Christmas to be simultaneously a genuine victim of racism and an agent of the death of Joanna Burden.

Twenty-eight years later, in his *magnum opus*, *A Fable*, Faulkner successfully points out the source of the subversive power much more clearly by painting a far greater canvas of the western front in the First World War. The setting of *A Fable* is an important city of Chaulnesmont in the western front in 1918 over a week in spring like the passion week before the Easter. A French regiment led by General Gragnon suddenly mutinies and refuses to attack the Germans at his command. Germans also choose not to avail themselves of this best opportunity to beat the French. A squad of twelve soldiers led by a Corporal has worked out the mutiny in the trenches of both French and German fronts. The Marshal of the French Army, called "the old general" then, strives to get the war started again in conspiracy with a German general, executes the Corporal who is his own illegitimate son. Here in the obvious parallelism with Christ's sacrifice, the agent of destruction is most explicitly singled out in one person of the old general, who dramatically struggles against Faulkner's idea of Christ in this novel, "some movement of mankind which wished to stop the war forever."<sup>17</sup>

As the dramatic antagonist is clear, so is the contrast of the antagonist and the

protagonist, the inverting power and the retroverting power. In the prologue-like scene, where the crowd anxious and worrying at the mutiny of the French regiment overfloods the plaza of Chaulnesmont, a tall man in the blue uniform gives a loaf of bread to a girl who has fainted for hunger. A terror seizes a sergeant on guard:

. . . a kind of terror that it was himself who was the alien and not just alien but obsolete; that on that day twenty years ago, in return for the right and the chance to wear on the battle-soiled breast of his coat the battlegrimmed symbolical candy-stripes of valour and endurance and fidelity and physical anguish and sacrifice he had sold his birthright in the race of man.<sup>18</sup>

Blue, the colour of the tall man's uniform stands for honour and truth in the novel (F, 10). Thirteen soldiers who lead the mutiny wears the uniforms "in horizon blue, even battle-stained" (F. 64). Blue soldiers are also seen in the headquarter of *Amis Myriades et Anonymes à la France de Tout le Monde* (F, 182). Like Jesus in his Second Coming, blue soldiers are simultaneously in different places (Matthew, xxiv, 27). The Second Coming is not only suggested by the communion image of giving a loaf of bread at the plaza, but also with the sergeant's immediate perception that his own military profession is challenged, that in his own world valour, endurance, fidelity, physical anguish and sacrifice have been treacherously inverted and betrayed into a ridiculous fake of "candy-stripes," that his military glory is the matter of past now a new world is here. The flow of people on the contrary represents the new retroverting power, for "it seemed to him that the whole ring of quiet and attentive faces was stained with a faint ineradicable, reflected horizon-blue" (F, 14). The crowd are all for peace, coming out for fear that the mutinied regiment should be shut for their crime.

Thus the invertedness of the world in war where brother is ordered to kill brother is too evidently seen once human nature stands against it and points out fearlessly the way to retroverting it. Milton wrote the coming of the Prince of Peace in the heavenly language,

Attended with ten thousand thousand Saints,  
He onward came, far off his coming shone,  
And twenty thousand (I their number heard)  
Chariots of God, half on each hand were seen:  
He on the wings of Cherub rode sublime  
On the Crystalline Sky, in Sapphire Thron'd  
(*Paradise Lost*, VI, 766-772).

Faulkner, on the contrary, describes the Second Coming in the genuinely earthly term of the fear and confusion on the part of the inverting power. At the sudden suspension of the war, "that much peace and silence, falling without warning" (F, 16) are



intolerable for the human race. Generals standing to receive the greeting shouts of regiments look like plagues (F, 19). The unhappy priest who helps the old general to tempt the Corporal into his scheme can not even live so long as one like the Corporal stands between him and his safety (F, 331). Through man's fear and anger against peace, the destructive element is actually perceived, as the willful hostility of man against himself. These are Faulkner's equivalents of the Gospel in the New Testament. With a British runner, one of the major characters, the author finds a fitting term for the biblical phrase, "*In Christ is death at end*" (F, 78):

[lo, I have committed fornication.]  
But that was in another country; and besides,  
the wench is dead  
(F, 66 & 78).<sup>19</sup>

Too remote and far-fetched as Faulkner's earthly term for atonement, the quotation is literally true with the old general who left the mother of the Corporal to her miserable death at the childbirth. Even this old general will be forgiven if he accepts the peace with humility. One triumph of Faulkner in *A Fable* is that events after events can reveal so persistently man's obstinacy to remain in the inverted order and the easiness with which the retroverting power overturns the petty resistance.

The inverting will is most successfully portrayed in the old general. His daring challenge against the order of creation is climactic when he puts his illegitimate son to death for the sake of his military glory,<sup>20</sup> even as God the Father sent His Son to the sacrifice of the cross for the redemption of man and the divine glory. This "dark, splendid, fallen angel"<sup>21</sup> of Faulkner watches alone at night the whole inverted world belonging to him, how each system of earthly powers supporting democratic and seemingly authentic institutions is so naturally attributed to his single desire:

. . . all that powerful terror-inspiring representation which running all democracy's affairs in peace, comes indeed into its own in war, finding its true apotheosis then, in iron conclave now decreeing for half the earth a design vast in its intention to demolish a frontier, and vaster still in its furious intent to obliterate a people; all in conclave so single that the old grey inscrutable supreme general with the face of one who long ago had won the right to believe in nothing whatever save man's deathless folly didn't need to vote at all but simply to preside . . . (F, 210).

With the marvellous satire in the word "conclave," which however means here not the election of a pope but any private cabal for worshiping success, Faulkner points out the very secret of the evil in the worldly power: the will to preside man's folly.<sup>22</sup> So successfully this power to invert the proper order is established on earth that the Corporal who retroverts things to their right order is called by Olga Vickery "a

rebel."<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless here is the very source of the inverting power, joining in a centripetal force to Satan himself, retracing back the process that the power usually takes in pervading, corrupting every moment of time, making everything a fake, even sorrow as Joe Gilligan laments (S, 31). Here in the midst of the original creation, the inverted world stands completely upside down like the inverted cone with its top underneath in which Dante's Satan standing on his head at the lowest stratum of *Inferno*.<sup>24</sup>

Not only *A Fable* culminates Faulkner's search of the inverting power which started with *Soldiers' Pay*, but also it develops the characters in *Soldiers' Pay* further into a new situation the Second Coming has brought out and vindicates their truncated courses. Julian Lowe, a flying cadet, whose war ended even before he joined the action, is lightly dismissed by Margaret Powers and then by the author in *Soldiers' Pay*. In *A Fable* he is recreated into Levine, a British airforce man who frets and angers in his adolescent thirst for military fame at the sudden recess of the war. Then he is seriously upset at discovering that his flying commander contrived a dummy fire in his machine-gun so that the commander can secretly receive a German general in the French air-base, while pretending the warfare in the sky. Levine's suicide is a clearer statement of Faulkner's about an immature idealist of Julian Lowe's kind twenty-eight years later. Joe Gilligan, called "innocent"<sup>25</sup> (S, 32), is recast to be a British officer, who successfully demoted himself to a private and runner for the hate of the officer's power to enforce the obedience of soldiers (F, 58). For such resourcefulness he is still as calm and observant as Joe Gilligan. Perceiving the suspension of the war will be broken soon, he tries to persuade a private called "the sentry" all through the novel, a very influential man who runs an association of loan among soldiers. What the runner wishes for is to set off another mutiny with the British and Germans together. The mutiny is almost coming when the runner is suddenly caught by a crossfire not of the British nor of the Germans but of "us," the old general's (F, 294), to break the recess of the war. In the sense that the runner never gives up the cause of the Corporal, he must be the only innocent man in the Passion drama of *A Fable*. Even Donald and his running on the moonlit hill is vastly extended to a long story of a three-legged horse,<sup>26</sup> protected secretly from the search of the owner by the sentry and a negro preacher, taken all over the hills in the Mississippi Valley, winning everywhere in local races. The singing negroes at church in *Soldiers' Pay*, humbly accepting sex and death, find their equivalent in the patient crowd, which flows in the "passive and invincible humility" (F, 10) like water, the pristine element of life. According to Levine's corps commander, the crowd is the very enemy of the military spirit, being "the vast seething moiling spiritless mass" (F, 31). Yet however hard the army tries to beat it into a cohered shape, the crowd has "relinquished, dis-cohered, faster and faster" (F, *ibid*) like water. It is the honour of the mutinied regiment that they are turned in "a shapeless mass" (F, 203), out of the barracks pent up by "the glinting pristine wire" (F, 120). The reader is particularly consoled to see the serious soul, Margaret Powers, reappears, this time as Marthe, the half sister of the Corporal with "her tender and un pitying smile" (F, 382). She is a figure in which

the Virgin, Mary and Martha sisters in the New Testament are joined together. Like the Virgin she brought up the Corporal born in a stable, married a French farmer for giving him home, visits the old general and forgives him for deserting their mother as he plans secretly the death of the son. Like Mary in the Gospels she buries the executed body of the Corporal and witnesses the disappearance of the body.

Yet the most significant development of *Soldiers' Pay* to *A Fable* is the culmination in mystery. Faulkner wrote to Malcolm Cowley that he told the same story over again, "which is myself and the world."<sup>27</sup> In Faulkner's notion a good work should include the whole world he knows, and even one sentence must tell all "between one Cap and one period."<sup>28</sup> The whole world must necessarily include mysteries, for a mystery simply means the view of human condition covering time and timeless together. The conflict between the inverting power of evil and the retroverting power of redemption should be written out for a novel to be a whole. *Soldiers' Pay* contains both as studied already. Probably for this reason Faulkner said he would have rewritten this étude, whereas he would not work upon *Mosquitoes* again.<sup>29</sup> The latter presents no solution for the subversiveness, though the sense of the metaphysical void overshadows the novel intently. In *A Fable*, as the secret of evil is thoroughly exposed, as its dynamic power is made miraculously clear, so is revealed the unmistakable power of redemption, which seizes the otherwise evasive evil as nothing else can.

Irving Howe's skepticism about Faulkner's faith<sup>30</sup> notwithstanding, one cannot doubt that Faulkner succeeded in describing in *A Fable* the perennial victory of redemption. With what ease the Corporal stops the war, and with how many inhuman and ridiculous tricks the French and German army authorities have to overthrow the achievement! The dummy gun fire Levine found and despaired is just one example. The unhappy airforce man has to witness the German general shoot his pilot when his plane lands at the French air base (F, 101). The German general is invited by the French for the conspiracy of re-opening the war and he does not like any testifier. The Quartermaster General, who has trusted the old general as a saviour of France, sends in his resignation when the latter orders the barrages for killing all the British and the German soldiers who are almost uprising for the second mutiny (F, 289). When Gragnon, the division commander of the mutinied regiment, is killed secretly in the basement, the executing soldiers are ordered to shoot in the face that the body may look as if shot while leading a valient attack to the enemies. Yet since Gragnon wrings his body so fiercely as to receive the bullet from behind, the executioners have to use wax to fill in the hole (F, 342). The more successful they are in such tricks, the further they lose their humanity. The reader senses acutely enough that they are enemies to themselves, so unnatural that their victories must be frail and uncertain.

On the contrary, the Corporal shows the invincible sureness of man as the lord of creation in his confrontation with the old general. When the general tries to persuade the Corporal to choose the worldly power and advices his son,

Take my car and freedom, and I will give you Polchek [a Judas in the Corporal's squad]. Take the highest of all the ecstasies:

compassion, pity: the orgasm of forgiving him who barely escaped doing you a mortal hurt—that glue, that catalyst which your philosophers have trained you to believe hold the earth together. Take the earth (F, 312),

he is tempting the corporal with the latter's love of humanity. To such subtlety, comparable only with the argument of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor in *Brothers Karamazov*, the Corporal keeps answering briefly, "There are still that ten [of his comrades he can not betray]" (F, *ibid.*). In the simplicity and readiness to reject the inverting power so entirely, Faulkner succeeds in communicating to the reader the sense that so sure and so naturally the uninverted human nature fits in the uninverted creation that it must certainly prevail however often the archenemy upsets the order. This pristine human nature, like Lena Grove and Byron Bunch in *Light in August*, will pass through safely the inverted madness of hell, racism and murder.

*A Fable* is of course a culmination of Faulkner's life-long works, as the author termed, "what I found in my lifetime of truth."<sup>31</sup> All through the Yoknapatawpha novels, the pattern apparent in *Soldiers' Pay* and *A Fable* is constantly repeated: an agent of the subversive power which victimizes and gets victimized, together with a mysterious liberation. In *The Sound and the Fury*, it is time that is sacrificed. Time is Jesus walking "down the long and lonely light-rays,"<sup>32</sup> crucified on April 6, the Good Friday, by Jason Compson's mindless exploitation; dead and buried in Benjie's "tale /Told by an idiot,"<sup>33</sup> for it seemingly signifies nothing, on Saturday, April 7; resurrected as Dilsey sees the first and the last of the creation at her Easter Service.<sup>34</sup> In a much later novel, *Intruder in the Dust*, time cycles backward constantly,<sup>35</sup> capturing the townfolks in their self-justification and denial of their communal sin which is racism. The time scheme in the novel always returns backward since the very beginning in the consciousness of Chip, from the Sunday morning after Lucas' alleged murder is known, to Chip's having eaten a dinner at Lucas' house four years ago, for instance. Here again townfolks are enslaved sneakily by the abominable void of untruth. The most significant technique in the novel is that the backward motion of time stops suddenly when Chip, Aleck Sander and Miss Habersham decide to open the grave of Vinson Gowrie, in order to prove the innocence of Lucas. Faulkner calls the adventure of the night "a communion"<sup>36</sup> in the novel, and *Intruder in the Dust* "a mystery."<sup>37</sup> Yet in the sense that his major stories all include more or less some suggestion of redemption, should one not assume that such mystery is a major preoccupation of Faulkner's ?

## NOTES

1. Cecily Saunders, fiancée to Donald Mahon, fainted when she met Donald, wounded and changed completely in the features as he returned. Nevertheless, she was jealous of Margalet Powers who took Donald to his home. After much of Margaret's persuasion and Cecily's father's she visited Donald again and reported to her mother, "That black, ugly woman finally condescended to let me see him a few minutes. In her presence, of course." *Soldiers' Pay* (New York: The New American Library of World Litera-

- ture, 1951), p.97. Cited hereafter as "S" in parentheses with the page number.
2. Not only the early reviews but also other critics never suspect of any other contents in this novel. See "*Soldiers' Pay*, which deals with post-war people in a Southern town, is superior to John Dos Passos' *Soldiers Three*, that much-talked-about war book, because it digs deeper into human nature." Donald Davidson, *Tennessean*, 11 April, 1926. *William Faulkner: The Critical Heritage*, ed. John Bassett (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p.53. ". . . his portraits of spiritually maimed veterans, living corpses, in *Soldiers' Pay* and *Sartoris* were based on anything but direct experience." Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962* (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), p.72.
  3. Joseph Blotner ed., *Selected Letters of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1977), p.188.
  4. See Dorothy Tuck, *Crowell's Handbook of Faulkner* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1964), p.127.
  5. Richard P. Adams already discovered this faun image and Cecily's "arboreal quality" in *Faulkner, Myth and Motion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp.36 f, but did not develop the importance of these seemingly casual images.
  6. Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (2 vols.; New York: Random House, 1974), I, 241.
  7. *Mosquitoes: A Novel* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 1927), p.169. Cited hereafter as "M" with the page number in parentheses.
  8. *The Marble Faun and Green Bough*, 1924 & 1933, rpt. (New York: Random House, [n.d.]), p.31.
  9. *Ibid.*, p.33.
  10. *Ibid.*, p.42.
  11. See "Spotted Horses," "*The Faulkner Reader: Selections from the Works of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House, 1946), pp.462-465.
  12. Dorothy Tuck interprets her marriage to Donald as "an act of expiation for her first marriage into which she entered in much the same way as Cecily entered her engagement to Mahon—a meaningless, impersonal relationship springing out of the cult of the War Hero." Tuck, p.127. This will be adequate unless Margaret repeatedly confesses that she loves him violently. One can not fall in love for expiation.
  13. See the quotation from *Soldiers' Pay*, p.43 in p.2 of this paper.
  14. Prof. Kensaburo Ohashi's study of *Soldiers' Pay* included in フォークナー研究 ("A Study of Faulkner"; Tokyo: Naundo, 1977) is the most elaborate and careful work about the novel I have seen. His association of Donald and the voice in *The Marble Faun* coincides with mine, though in a different way, and so does his view that Donald makes a curious center in the actions of the characters. However, I do not share his view that Donald symbolizes the awareness of sin on the part of the character. The trouble with evil is that it avoids so slipperily man's awareness. See Ohashi, p.111.
  15. Not only can Patricia swim and mounts on Fairchild in the water like half-horse, half-alligator, but also on the day of her departure from the ship "little tongues of water kissed her face happy against her lips" (M, 165). Nausikaa, the ship, is certainly her symbol as the virgin who received Odysseus. David, her young and innocent Odysseus, accompanies her in the adventure. She is a "flame among stale ashes" (M, 187) and "their unseen fire darted" upon David (M, 205) as he carried the tired girl.
  16. Tuck, p.126.
  17. *Selected Letters*, p.180.
  18. *A Fable* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1969), p.15. Cited hereafter as "F" with the page number in parentheses.

19. A slightly different form in quoting from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. The first line exists only in p. 66. T. S. Eliot quotes the lines as "Thou hast committed Fornication: /but that was in another country, /And besides, the wench is dead," in the epigraph to "Portrait of a Lady." *Collected Poems, 1909-1935* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1936), p. 18.
20. In the University of Virginia, when Faulkner was asked why Satan imitates God the Father here, Faulkner answers, "That was a part of Satan's fearsomeness, that he could usurp the legend of God." *Faulkner in the University*, Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph Blotner, ed. (U. S. A.: The University Press of Virginia, 1959), p. 63.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
22. Note the dialogue between the old general and the Corporal: "Because man and his folly—," says the general. "Will endure," the Corporal continues. "They will do more," the old general concludes, "They will prevail—" (F, 318). This is evidently a parody of Faulkner's own Nobel Prize Address: "I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail." "The Stockholm Address," *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, Fredrick J. Hoffman & Olga W. Vickery, ed., 1960; rpt. (U. S. A.: Michigan State University Press, 1965), p. 348. If Faulkner's statement in the Stockholm Address is his most serious message, he made the most horrifying reversal in the old general's choice of presiding human follies.
23. *The Novels of William Faulkner* (U. S. A.: Louisiana University Press, 1961), p. 193.
24. XXXIV, 88-90.
25. Recalling that Shreve in *Absalom! Absalom!* calls Sutpen "innocent," one should be careful in Faulkner's use of the word. Gilligan, however, is "innocent" in the sense that he never participates in anything destructive in the course of the events in the novel.
26. Though Faulkner denies any allegorical meaning for the horse, Joseph Gold finds in the three legged horse a parable of trinity. See *Faulkner in the University*, p. 63, and Gold, *William Faulkner: A Study in Humanism from Metaphor to Discourse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), p. 129. I agree best with Walter Brylow-ski's view that the horse represents "a kind of mana." *Faulkners' Olympian Laugh* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), p. 188.
27. *The Faulkner-Cowley File*, p. 14.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Faulkner in the University*, pp. 60-61 and p. 257.
30. "For to imagine a Second Coming which is essentially a repetition of the original agony . . . all this implies a vision of despair . . ." *William Faulkner, A Critical Study* (2d ed.; New York: Vintage Books, 1962), pp. 280-281. Yet why should we expect an apocalyptic downfall of evil? Is it not enough that the defeat of evil is suggested in future at the end of heaven and earth? Christ will be crucified in any kind of society, yet only by him evil is revealed visible to human eye together with its frailty.
31. *Faulkner at Nagano*, Robert A. Jelliffe, ed. (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1956), p. 47.
32. *The Sound and the Fury & As I Lay Dying* (New York: The Random House, 1946), p. 96.
33. *Macbeth*, V, vi, 26-27.
34. *The Sound and the Fury & As I Lay Dying*, p. 313.
35. *Intruder in the Dust* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. 194-195.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
37. "As it is now, it is a mystery story plus a little sociology and psychology." Letter to Harold Ober, 27 April, 1948. *Selected Letters*, p. 267

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## William Faulkner's Inverted World in *Soldiers' Pay* and *A Fable*

Akiko Miyake

In *Soldiers' Pay* (1926) Faulkner develops an unusual plot that three young women rival to marry a dying airforce man, Donald Mahon, wounded in the First World War. The plot can be the major rhetoric to suggest his theme: that the subversiveness of the war worked out such a ruin in Donald that the characters surrounding him not only lose their good sense but also their reality and sex. Donald Mahon extends around him so destructive a void that the Mahons' garden stands "inverted."

This inverted world is retroverted when Donald regains the vision of timeless he enjoyed right before being wounded. As Donald dies, the characters recover their reality and sex, for sex and death are the only proper entrance and exit in the order of creation. For the cause of this redemption, the prayers of Donald's black nurse are obliquely hinted.

The same inverting power is fully studied in *A Fable* (1945). In the First World War a corporal causes a mutiny in his regiment with his twelve followers and suspends the war. The French Marshal tempts the corporal, his illegitimate son, with fame, but finally executes him in order to conspire with Germans to resume the war. Here in the obvious fable of Christ, the inverting power is tracked down to the source, man's desire to preside human follies. The mystery of redemption is elaborated too in a fable of Christ's temptation of the wilderness. In the material of the First World War and the theme of evil and redemption, *A Fable* can be a culmination of *Soldiers' Pay*. Since the theme is so prevalent in Faulkner's other novels too, should one not conclude that to create a mystery of inverting power and of redemption is a preoccupation of Faulkner's?