INFORMATION TO USERS

This material was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again — beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from “photographs” if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of “photographs” may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

5. PLEASE NOTE: Some pages may have indistinct print. Filmed as received.

University Microfilms International
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 USA
St. John's Road, Tyler's Green
High Wycombe, Bucks, England HP10 8HR
ROMIG, EVELYN MATTHEWS
WOMEN AS VICTIMS IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES
DICKENS AND WILLIAM FAULKNER.

RICE UNIVERSITY, PH.D., 1978
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART I: BEGINNINGS

Chapter 1: Basis and Limits of Comparison  

## PART II: THE DOMESTIC FRONT

Chapter 2: Marriages Awry  

Chapter 3: Children as Victims  

## PART III: THE LARGER FRONT - VICTIMIZATION AND SURVIVAL IN TIME AND THE WORLD

Chapter 4: Self-Willed Victims: Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa Coldfield  

Chapter 5: The Fuller Picture: Novels with Worlds of Victims  

Conclusion: Inexhaustible Voices

## BIBLIOGRAPHY
PART I: BEGINNINGS

Chapter 1: Basis and Limits of Comparison

"They must be a soft sex - a very soft sex, indeed - if they let themselves be gammoned by such fellers as him."
Tony Weller, The Pickwick Papers
(Chapter 33)

"Women know more about words than men ever will. And they know how little they can ever possibly mean."
Margaret Powers, Soldier's Pay
(Chapter 7)

For all their humor and vitality, the fictional worlds of Charles Dickens and William Faulkner are filled with misery and victimization. In misguided efforts to survive and get ahead in the world, people exploit one another, parents abuse their children, and individuals imprison and cripple themselves with pride, hatred, and narrow-mindedness. The centrality of this theme to the canons of novelists pre-eminent in their respective eras helps bridge the distances (and differences) between the Victorian and the modern American novel.

On the surface, Dickens and Faulkner seem to present few opportunities for comparison. Dickens was Victorian, urban in lifestyle and in the settings for his novels, immensely popular from his second publication, The Pickwick Papers, and eventually very successful financially. Faulkner's roots were in the agrarian South, his home and fictional landscape was a small Mississippi town, and although he won
the Nobel prize late in his career, few of his novels were widely popu-
lar and even fewer financially rewarding for him. In terms of person-
ality, contrasts again are striking: Dickens was extroverted and
amazingly energetic and involved in social events, from directing and
acting in amateur theatricals to vigorous crusading on behalf of
charitable reforms; Faulkner was a much more softspoken and obviously
solitary man, avoiding interviews and public appearances and retreating
frequently into private worlds, either fictional or alcoholic. In
their approach to fictional materials, however, the two novelists
display significant similarities - techniques and attitudes that con-
tribute to their positions as outstanding artists of their ages and of
all time.

Like many authors, Dickens and Faulkner were centrally concerned
with the individual: how one comes to define and understand himself,
how the human will is developed and balanced between egocentric domi-
nance and utter passivity, and how each person learns to interact with
others and survive in a potentially hostile world. Characteristically,
both Dickens and Faulkner create male protagonists whose journey through
life is actually a progress toward discovery of self. Figures like
David Copperfield, Pip, Quentin Compson, Thomas Sutpen, and Joe Christ-
mas must learn (or fail) to make sense of the past and how it has
determined their place in the world, and must evolve a design for en-
during if not triumphing in society. From Joe Christmas' realization
that the pattern of his life is a circle from which there is no escape
to Pip's discovery of the true source and scope of his "great
expectations," these central characters are involved in processes of creating (or discovering) order and meaning and truth in the world around them and within themselves.

What makes Faulkner's and Dickens' novels of self-discovery different from other literature with the same concern is the essentially dramatic rather than introspective nature of the works. The individual in Dickens and Faulkner comes to know himself, not by looking inward, but by learning to interact successfully outside himself in a world that is complex and confusing, where the individual is easily lost or trampled. Resolution within the self is useless unless coupled with action outside the self. That is why Faulknerian and Dickensian protagonists are usually such active people - one thinks of Pip bustling off to work abroad, Joe Christmas running through Mississippi, David Copperfield writing novels, and Thomas Sutpen building a great plantation. This emphasis on motion and activity also shows in the amount of traveling in the novels: the length and breadth of England and Mississippi are traversed, and few stories occur in a single locale.

Dickensian and Faulknerian characters are also characteristically involved in the telling as well as the acting out of their own stories. The storyteller is a figure who emerges in a variety of ways in almost all the works, giving the novels an oral complexion that is reflected in the importance of speech patterns and structures to both novelists. The reader is so very aware of the voice in the works of Dickens and Faulkner, not just the background voice of the narrator/novelist (though it is always strong) but the voices of the individual characters,
sorting through their experiences and re-creating their personal discoveries of meaning as they recount them to someone else. Who the "someone else" is may vary. Pip, for instance, speaks to the reader (as do Esther Summerson and David Copperfield) but Pip also participates in incredibly immediate and lifelike dialogue with Miss Havisham. The magnificent hysteria of Rosa Coldfield is directed not only at Quentin but at the reader, the world, and even the shadows of the dead. Even Quentin himself, the most introspective protagonist, devotes most of his long interior monologue in The Sound and the Fury to the recollection and repetition of crucial past conversations.

Self-discovery being a dramatic and vocal rather than simply personal event helps explain the important role of community for Dickens and Faulkner. The community is not just a structural backdrop for the action, but an integral part of a character's life: it is the repository of past knowledge, the provider of both heritage and present social niche; it is an adversary to be conquered or changed; it is a commentator on a character's progress. Whole novels are centered around an alien's search for a place in his community, from Oliver Twist seeking a home to Thomas Sutpen trying to mold the community to his personal design. Cleanth Brooks says of Faulkner:

The community is at once the field for man's action and the norm by which his action is judged and regulated. It sometimes seems that the sense of an organic community has all but disappeared from modern fiction, and the disappearance accounts for the terrifying self-consciousness and subjectivity of a great deal of modern writing. That Faulkner has some sense of an organic community still behind him was among his most important resources as a writer.
It is a tribute to Dickens that he anticipated modern awareness of the importance of self in a traditional framework as well as to Faulkner that he retained this same balance of individual and community in an increasingly unbalanced literary tradition.

If one agrees, then, with Albert J. Guerard's assessment of Dickens and Faulkner as "creators of varied and quantitatively rich worlds" - worlds that are coherent and fully developed in both dramatic complexity and structural detail - it is a plausible conclusion that too much critical attention is usually given to the male protagonists as sole embodiments of self-realization. Just as the two artists carefully balanced introspection and outer action, they also balanced masculine and feminine participation in their fictional worlds. Dickens, who has been much maligned as creating few important or lifelike women, in fact increasingly develops female protagonists and major characters in his later novels: the distance between the supporting females in The Pickwick Papers (1836) and a character like Bella Wilfer is an immense one. In Bleak House (1852), for instance, Esther Summerson shares equally in the storytelling with the third-person narrator, then Little Dorrit lends her name to a novel (1855) as well as becoming its heroine, Bella Wilfer and Lizzie Hexam serve as centers of attention in Our Mutual Friend (1864), and even though Great Expectations (1860) marks a return to the traditional young male protagonist, figures like Estella and Miss Havisham are carefully drawn and vital to the story. Faulkner has no corresponding increase in interest in female characters, for from his earliest novels women share (and sometimes overwhelm) the masculine
stage of action and narration: Margaret Powers is as central to Soldier's Pay as the wounded Donald Mahon, Drusilla and Rosa Millard are as unvanquished as their men in the novel by that name, the figure of Caddy dominates the emotions of the Compson men in The Sound and the Fury, and Miss Rosa Coldfield equals Thomas Sutpen himself in grim fury and determination.

I have chosen to examine female victims, however, instead of female protagonists for reasons pertaining to the nature of women, the nature of the fictional worlds, and the structure of the works. To begin with, there are no actual female protagonists in the traditional sense of the word because of the limited sphere of action allowed a woman, limitations that are both blessing and curse. A woman in Victorian England or the pre-Depression South could not initiate a romance, excel in a profession, or travel independently; her realm was primarily the domestic one, and her influence on the outside world an indirect one. Faulkner realized that ideally such limitations were strengths, that the feminine self was basically defined by biological roles of mother and nurturer, and that the woman was thus freed from having to prove or earn her sense of self-worth through achieving specific goals. Dickens felt, as novels like Dombey and Son and Bleak House illustrate, that harmony and order in the domestic world were central to the well-being of the larger world and that the greatest feminine fulfillment came from home and family. But the novels of the two men are filled not with realized ideals, but with vivid portraits of those who fall short of fulfillment: sour romances, frustrated spinsters, unhappy
wives, incompetent mothers, mistreated children, and tormented old women. Figures like Caddy Compson, Esther Summerson, Dora Copperfield, and Rosa Coldfield are interesting not as types but as examples of how individual women cope in a difficult world, battle against their limitations, fail but endure and somehow transcend those limits. And in a very real sense, these women are victims: of systems and behaviors that do not work in real life, of the cruelty or selfishness of those they must live with, and of their own prejudices and misinterpretations of life.

Victimization is not solely a feminine condition, either; women just have the more obvious burdens that institutionalized domination by lovers, husbands, and fathers brings. In worlds where individuals have no clear concepts of identity or purpose, wills that are undefined or ill-balanced must clash and destroy and crumble. Greed, aggression, and villainy are the natural products of unsure personalities who are, in Detective Bucket's words, "crying off from being held accountable" or busy asserting the absolute power of "Number One." (Bleak House, Chapter 57) It is significant that both Dickens and Faulkner are fundamentally Christian moralists and that their characters (male and female) find and understand themselves when they learn to relinquish excessive claims for and too-absorbing interest in self. It is in their care for others rather than in personal achievement that figures like Dilsey, Caddy, Esther, and Little Dorrit triumph; they do not escape, rather they transcend, their status as victims by changing what they can and submitting to what is unchangeable.
Hillis Miller, writing about *Little Dorrit*, speaks of self-conscious submission in this way: "The will, for Dickens, must always act in accordance with the nature of things as they already are." Clear echoes of this statement are heard in Cleanth Brooks' chapter on "Faulkner as Nature Poet," where he remarks both Faulkner's "sense of the importance of the human will" and his Wordworthian sense of man's need to live "in accordance with nature" and to use it wisely, learning temperance and endurance from nature's unchangeability. This similarity of views also embodies a fundamental difference: for Faulkner the "nature of things" is literally nature - the land itself that is passed from generation to generation in unending cycles of planting and harvest. Accordingly, Faulkner's stance is predominantly backward-looking, for characters tied to generations-long loyalty to the land are also tied to past traditions and ways of seeing the world. Faulkner's work, like nature itself, is cyclical: the results of present actions hearken back to their beginnings, and few important actions have their roots in the modern South. Cataclysmic events like the Civil War change not the land but man's relationship to it, and characters like Quentin Compson and Joanna Burden must forty years later come to grips personally with the implications of such change.

For Dickens, though, the "nature of things" in an urban industrial world that is constantly changing is the nature of men and human society. Man is his constant rather than nature itself: in Dickens, the conflicts of self-interest and selflessness, the human impulses toward good and evil are unchanging, while the face of his world is continually
transfigured by the coming of the railroads or the fall of landmarks like the Marshalsea Prison. There is no certainty for Dickens in the past — personal, political, or physical — and though he acknowledges the molding influence of past events on his characters, Dickens stresses that men must be primarily present-oriented and forward-looking if they are to make sense of the world. These inclinations of Faulkner and Dickens, however, are precisely that — inclinations rather than fixed positions — for no temporal distinctions can be concrete, and both artists are too masterful not to recognize the claims of both past and present, nature and society, on the individual.

The divisions of my study work much the same way: characters are discussed together according to their dominant actions and personalities, and many could be discussed under more than one heading. But strong structural and dramatic patterns do emerge and are repeated from novel to novel and character to character, and the illumination of such patterns is meant to enhance rather than circumscribe or oversimplify the life of a character. In the early novels, discussed later in this chapter, the most basic patterns of feminine characterization begin to appear, for each author changed significantly in many attitudes and techniques as he matured. Novels like The Pickwick Papers, Oliver Twist, Soldier's Pay, Mosquitoes, and Sartoris introduce types of women and situations that will reappear in increasingly complex and varied forms: characters like Mrs. Weller the religious zealot, Rose Maylie the illegitimate child, Cecily the adolescent temptress, and Margaret Powers the motherly, worldly-wise woman.
Chapter Two deals with women as victims in a situation where they meet and clash with men as equals: courtship and marriage. Neither can be fruitful and harmonious when the woman exerts her will to dominate, like Merry Pecksniff or Joanna Burden, or where she subjects her will too utterly to the domination of the male or is content to be his plaything, like Faulkner's farm wives or Dora Copperfield. Structurally, Dickens and Faulkner build on the traditions of romance in novels like Light in August, As I Lay Dying, Our Mutual Friend, and David Copperfield, but they transform the idealistic quests for a mate into dead-end streets or mutual enslavement, bleak but more realistic renderings of sexual relationships.

The third chapter shows the woman as victim in an unequal contest of wills - the relationship of the child to parents and to the world outside the family. Here the dominant pattern is reversal: the structural reversal of the fairy tale (an appropriate form for childhood) where the young hero is traditionally triumphant, and the dramatic reversal of girls fulfilling motherly roles, like Caddy Compson or Little Nell or Florence Dombey, while parents abdicate responsibility by becoming selfish, manipulative, or destructively childish.

The fourth chapter shows the other side of the coin: feminine victims as old women, victimization through wills that are too dominant rather than too passive, failed fairy-tale ideals converted to obsessive myths. In the two principal characters, Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa Coldfield, storytelling is very pronounced, for it is the means of myth-making - of the individual molding the world to personal
Chapter Five incorporates the personality types and narrative structures of previous chapters in its examination of the most comprehensive novels of Dickens and Faulkner: *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and the Snopes trilogy (*The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*). Here youth and age, romance and fairytale and myth, meet and blend as a variety of characters interact and move toward self-knowledge or self-delusion. These novels and their characters represent, if not the greatest (and many critics say they are), certainly the most complex and intricately drawn worlds of Dickens and Faulkner, worlds that encompass whole cities and communities and societies, mirroring the uniqueness and the multiplicity of patterns of meaning in life itself.

Complexity is not to be found just in the mature works, though. Dickens' first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, is an ambitiously full picture of life and an important introduction to his views of women, for in the loosely-woven narrative he presents a wide range of models of women that he will return to and elaborate more fully in later novels. The twenty-six females that appear during Mr. Pickwick's travels or in the interpolated stories serve as narrative sketches - flat or one-dimensional characters in themselves, but interesting outlines of types that will continually appear: willful villains, complaining wives, sentimental and romantic maidens, and social pretenders.

Steven Marcus, in his careful analysis of *Pickwick*, comments
on the number of villainous women that Pickwick encounters or hears about, and surmises that the ideals of the novel are basically masculine.

Throughout its pages men are persecuted by women. Tony is hounded by his wife and all the widows in Southern England. Mr. Pickwick is hauled before Nupkins by a hysterical spinster, and is further entangled with the law by the absurd Mrs. Bardell. Mrs. Potts harasses and finally deserts the editor of the Eatonswill Gazette, Mrs. Leo Hunter has made her husband her errand boy, Mrs. Nupkins devotes her life to intimidating her gorgeous windbag of a husband, and Mrs. Raddle to making life miserable for her timid, inarticulate partner.  

Marcus fails to note that none of these women finds much satisfaction in her unpleasant behavior and that they are probably as unhappy as their mates, but he does point out that the dichotomy of masculine goodness versus feminine villainy is not altogether clear-cut; in fact, he comments that Pickwick himself is in many ways the embodiment of traditional feminine virtues - a loving heart, a patient nature, and a giving, nurturing spirit. Furthermore, there is much sweetness and goodness in many of the younger women, like Arabella Winkle.

Marcus also neglects to mention two important instances that raise the level of Dickens' art, even in comic settings, out of the realm of caricature or simply good versus bad characters. For one thing, his female villains do not always succeed, and frequently end by ensnaring themselves in the bad deeds they planned for others. Mrs. Bardell is the prime example: by disregarding her true benevolent nature and by
allowing herself to be drawn into the "sharp" practices of Dodson and Fogg, she ends as the loser. Not only is she not closer to marriage, she has also lost a reliable boarder, and even ends up as a victim of the punishment she engineered for Pickwick - a prisoner in the Fleet because she cannot pay the costs of her sharp attorneys. Tony Waller's wife uses her evangelical energies (a comic rendition of the evils of Puritan extremism to be made devastatingly serious in Mrs. Snagsby and Mrs. Clennam) to make Tony's life miserable, but realizes that she was "gammoned" in the end, and dies regretting the separation that has come between her and her husband. The lady in curl papers exposes Mr. Pickwick as her bedroom intruder at the risk of losing her own intended, and Mrs. Nupkins taunts her husband with the excellences of Alfred Jingle only to learn that she has befriended a fraud. In Pickwick's world villainy, even the trivial feminine domestic kind, does not go unpunished.

Marcus also dwells little on the significance of characters in the interpolated stories. Though the stories themselves are frequently unsuccessful or dramatically incomplete, there are important motifs that will reappear in other less comic novels in fuller forms. The stories are full of maligned, deprived, and mistreated women: John Edmund's mother, abused by her husband and abandoned by her son; the madman's wife who is sold into a loveless marriage and then nearly murdered; the Queer Client's wife who is deserted by her father and allowed to starve to death in prison with her child; and the miserable wife of the dying clown, hysterically accused by her delirious husband of
surviving great deprivation only to haunt him. There is a fairytale
touch to Tom Smart's marriage to the innkeeper lady, but even he must
rescue her from possible marriage to a bigamist. The somber strain
through these interpolated tales is too consistent to be accidental:
there is a darker vision of life's misery, however absurd, that tempers
Pickwickian gaiety and anticipates the lives of Jonas Chuzzlewit, Little
Dorrit, and many others.

Of course, it is not the darker prison pictures of The Pickwick
Papers that we remember best. The overall tone of the novel is too
boisterous and comic for that. We remember, instead, such perils of
marriage and women as are conjured up in Tony Weller's famous warning
to Sam:

If ever you gets up'ards o' fifty,
and feels disposed to go a marryin' anybody —
no matter who — jist you shut yourself up
in your own room, if you've got one, and
pison yourself offhand.
(The Pickwick Papers, Chapter 23)

But Dickens has established a precedent, a contrast between the senti-
mental romances like Arabella Winkle's and the darker side of domestic
life, that he will put to use in his second novel, Oliver Twist, and
increasingly turn to in later works.

*Oliver Twist* is a novel constructed around the contrasting pictures
of two worlds, and the emblems of those worlds are two young women, Rose
Maylie and Nancy. On the surface, the two girls are vastly different —
one the sheltered companion of a rich widow, the other a prostitute and
thief's moll — but Dickens reconciles such surface differences in the
common denominator of their kindness and concern for the orphan Oliver Twist. They are alike in other ways as well, for Nancy's life has been "squandered in the streets" (Chapter 40), and Rose Maylie's "blighted" by her mistaken identity as an illegitimate child. Rose uses her shame at her "identity" to deny herself the true love that Harry Maylie offers her, in a groundless self-denial that Dickens will repeatedly deplore in Rosa Dartle, Esther Summerson, Miss Wade, and others. Nancy, too, is a victim not only of her rough life but of her own self-evaluation that is reflected in her irrational loyalty and servitude to Bill Sikes.

I must go back. Whether it is God's wrath for the wrong I have done, I do not know; but I am drawn back to him through every suffering and ill usage; and I should be, I believe, if I knew that I was to die by his hand at last. (Chapter 40)

Nancy and Rose are positive influences in the novel because they turn this sense of themselves as outcast and unwanted by society into love and motherly solicitude for Oliver, the more obvious alien in the story's two worlds. Nancy protects Oliver, though she cannot explain why even to herself, at considerable risk of danger and harm to herself. Rose has Oliver nursed in her home, even though he is a housebreaker that she has never seen. Dickens stresses time and again "the care and solicitude of a woman" (Chapter 28) that is so necessary for Oliver's survival, and provides it for him through womanly intervention in each of the places he inhabits. During the writing of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens wrote to his friend Forster, "I hope to do great things with Nancy" — presumably, he meant the dramatic impact he intended her murder to have.
But he did another great thing as well: he demonstrated in convincing ways the humanity common to a street-weary prostitute and a young lady, their similar self-concepts and positive transformation of them into the same unselfish kindness - something new and surprisingly realistic and perceptive in a Victorian novelist's view of life on the streets.

As with his detailed portrait of Nancy and her life, Dickens uses other unfortunate women to illustrate the larger themes of the novel. The drunken old crones of the workhouse are as lifelike as they are pathetic, and the squalor of street life is rendered particularly touching through descriptions of its women.

And women: some with the last lingering tinge of their early freshness almost fading as you looked; others with every mark and stamp of their sex utterly beaten out, and presenting but one loathsome blank of profligacy and crime; some mere girls, others but young women, and none past the prime of life; formed the darkest and saddest portion of this dreary picture.

(Chapter 26)

Furthermore, Dickens has not abandoned but has refined the motif of villainous women turned victims that he began in The Pickwick Papers: the workhouse matron Mrs. Corney is a splendid example of a romantic mask (in the comic mode) hiding a callous and greedy nature. But Mrs. Corney is twice-betrayed: her suitor, the Beadle Mr. Bumble, also conceals material desire behind romantic behavior, and their mutual greed results in her ending as a victim of the very system she exploited.

Mr. and Mrs. Bumble...finally became paupers in the very same workhouse in which they had once lorded it over others. Mr. Bumble has been heard to say, that in this reverse and degradation, he has not even the spirit to be thankful for being separated from his wife. (Chapter 53)
Faulkner, like Dickens, experiments in his first novels with feminine character types that he will develop more fully in later works. Unlike Dickens, Faulkner is not very sympathetic to the women in the early novels; where Dickens moves from overly-sentimental or comic sympathizing to more balanced judgments, Faulkner grows from youthful cynicism and distance to a more compassionate treatment of his characters. 

_Soldier's Pay_ and _Mosquitoes_, both rather awkwardly crafted and not very interesting novels, do show the tension between two féminine types that reflect Faulkner's basic fictional attitudes: the sexually attractive but selfish or self-deluded young woman (like Cecily, Temple Drake, Narcissa Benbow) and older, wiser motherly women (like Dilsey, Rosa Millard, or Miss Jenny).

The three women in _Soldier's Pay_ fall within these ranges of characterization. There is Cecily, the intended fiancée of the dying Donald Mahon - virginal, almost childlike, but also a self-assured sexual temptress. We see Cecily primarily in physical descriptions: "Her body, which was no body...Not for maternity, not even for love: a thing for the eye and the mind." (Chapter 6) A woman not built for maternity, to Faulkner's thinking, is lacking in a basic component of identity or self-worth, and this visual beauty of Cecily, aesthetically appealing but yielding no fulfillment of her sexual promise, is a source of frustration and deception in the novel. People who take her literally at "face" value assume that her love and loyalty to Donald are sincere; only another woman, like Margaret Powers, or a man like Joe Gilligan who looks beyond Cecily's appearance, realizes the extent of her selfishness and fickle-
ness that culminate in her elopement with George Pharr.

Margaret Powers is an interesting character—she too is a young woman, but one with a peculiarly adult and responsible point of view. Margaret is the nurturer in the novel; it is she who finally marries Donald, and she who makes the decisions about care for him by which even the doctors are awed. She is the center of action in the novel as a figure of authority and not just as a love object for the various men. This centrality gives her more depth than a character like Cecily, but Faulkner fails artistically with Margaret by providing no credible explanation for her precocious wisdom. We are led to believe that her feelings of guilt at having let her husband die thinking that she loved him have sobered her and made her wise, but we know from the marriage itself that only a year before she was an impulsive canteen worker who recklessly and unthinkingly committed herself to a departing soldier whom she scarcely knew. Like the rector and the other men in the novel, the reader is expected to take Margaret's authority on faith—intuitively, as Joe Gilligan and the doctor do. For the reader, though, the same mothering impulses and quiet air of command are far more acceptable in later characters like Dilsey and Miss Jenny, whose wisdom is rooted in their extensive experience of life and grief.

Finally, there is Emmy, a sketchily-drawn young girl who has been Donald's lover and who now has a marginally familial status in the rector's household. Emmy presents another dimension of victimization in the mating game that is at the center of the novel: she is a simple girl ("You could imagine her developing like a small but sturdy greenness on a
dunghill. Not a flower. But not dung, either." — Ch. 3) who is easily
and permanently hurt by Donald's abandonment of her. Not having the inner
strength of Margaret to rise above her guilt and feelings of rejection,
Emmy is further victimized and degraded by falling prey to the advances
of the slimy Januarius Jones. As Sally Page notes, the focus of the
novel is finally on the mating urge of the male, but it also importantly
emphasizes the destructive effects of those urges on the women of the
story: Emmy's subjugation, Cecily's adoption of a mask of sexual excite-
ment to hide an inner emotional void, and Margaret's final avoidance of
any fulfilling sexual commitment. And, because none of the sexual pursuits
end in fruitful union, the ultimate image of the story and its women is
one of sterility and frustration, a motif to be repeated in Faulkner's
second novel, Mosquitoes.

In Mosquitoes, even sexual pursuit is thwarted and is as motionless
as the stranded yacht on which most of the story takes place. Again,
there are nubile young girls, attractive and tempting in an adolescent
way, who deliver none of the promises of their multiple flirtations.
There is also the sexual sterility and loneliness of the older woman,
Mrs. Maurier, who seeks to fill her loveless life by cultivating intel-
lectual and artistic companions, themselves as ultimately vapid and
sterile as she. As art in the novel is the epitome but finally the
mockery of life, so the women in the novel are both the dreams of men
and the mockery of those dreams. Like the yacht that goes nowhere,
impulses of love and sexuality in Mosquitoes are perpetually unfulfilled.
In the unresolvable tension, Faulkner resorts to satire as a method of
dealing with his characters, and the result is comedy without fun and criticism without change or redemption. In the end even Jenny, the pretty but dull young girl who has been pursued by the Prufrock-like Taliaferro, becomes his victimizer. Not content with simply jilting him, the hitherto passive Jenny stages his public embarrassment on the dance floor. The result of the last scene, and of the story as a whole, is that both characters are rendered pathetic – Jenny left with a bully on the dance floor, Taliaferro at home analyzing his failure with women and determining to be more assertive ("Bully them") when the occasion arises. Which, of course, it never will.

_Sartoris_ is Faulkner's third novel, and with it comes the end of his "apprentice" novels, the beginning of his development of Yoknapatawpha material, and a more complex rendering of characters and action. Miss Jenny, an older Margaret Powers in her common sense and intuitively correct appraisals of situations and people, is far more reliable than Margaret; she is the constant of the Sartoris household – she provides perpetual nurture and advice for the Sartoris men, survives and forgives their disasters, and keeps their legend of family honor and bravado alive through her function as storyteller. Miss Jenny is also like Margaret in her surrogate position in the family: just as Margaret is not Donald's "real" wife, so Miss Jenny is not Bayard's "real" mother, but she fully enacts the role with love and concern.

Narcissa Benbow, too, displays traits of earlier characters like Cecily or Patricia Robyn – virginal shyness that turns out to be coldness, an inability to love the man she is involved with – but Narcissa is far
more complicated than the other girls. Her coldness comes from true shyness, a fear of men and their active, destructive world; she has a hidden current of sexual passion and curiosity that is only discovered in later stories; and her lack of responsiveness to Bayard is not due so much to his shortcomings as to her failure to come to grips with the natures of passion and masculinity that frighten and confuse her.

In Cleanth Brooks' analysis of *Sartoris*, he stresses the success of the masculine-feminine tension as the center of the novel, tension that Faulkner had attempted and only partially approached in his first two novels.

Except for *Sanctuary*, no Faulkner novel brings the war between the sexes more clearly into the open or stresses more sharply what Faulkner conceives of as the basically different attitudes of men and women. As elsewhere in Faulkner, the men are romantic, obsessed with their foolish codes, quixotic schemes, and violent follies. It is the women who are practical, concerned with the concrete actualities and committed undeviatingly to first principles.8

It is the women, though, who suffer most when the men's "quixotic schemes" fail, for women's principles, however practical, are powerless to bring them comfort in the face of the bereavement and grief (like Miss Jenny's) caused by masculine "violent follies." Men die or live to scheme again - it is the surviving women, whose "first principles" are their lives with their men, who are truly victimized.

In their earlier novels, then, Dickens and Faulkner seem to follow several opposing strains of characterization. They begin from different perspectives of sexuality, their early women are more rooted in the
temporal immediacy of the novels than later ones will be, and neither has begun to give the precedence to self-realization over role-playing that will be characteristic of later novels. But concerns with sexual conflict and masculine-feminine identity problems are already apparent as recurring and primary motifs. In succeeding chapters, I hope to show various dimensions of these concerns and how the maturing talents of the two novelists add to the depth and complexity of their illumination of the problems of sexuality and the individual will in family and social life. The next chapter begins at the most obvious point of intersection of sexuality and the will — marriage and its implications.
NOTES


4 Brooks, p.58.


8 Brooks, p.107.
PART II: THE DOMESTIC FRONT

Chapter 2: Marriages Awry

"But she did what they all do - took a husband. And he did what they all do - made her wretched."
Aunt Betsey Trotwood
(David Copperfield, Chapter 14)

Just as the family is the basic component of all social units, so the relationship of man and woman is the foundation of all personal interactions. Ideal mating is the meeting of two individual wills on equal terms, each supplying the needs and strengthening the deficiencies of the other. But mating, like other human relationships, seldom proceeds ideally, and the novels of romance in Dickens and Faulkner are stories of clashing wills, unmet needs, and dead-end quests for happiness. From Clara Copperfield and Mr. Murdstone and Merry Pecksniff and Jonas Chuzzlewit to Addie and Anse Burden and Lena Grove and Lucas Burch, domestic life is marred with unhappy, unsuitable and unwisely-made matches and marriages. And the predominance of these wretched unions is surprising - for every happy couple, there seem to be a dozen miserable ones.

At first glance, the reasons behind such poor marriages and the conditions that fostered them would seem to differ greatly from Dickens'
time to Faulkner's. In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, a wife's position was not a desirable one from legal and economic standpoints. The wealthy wife had no control over her own resources once she married, was unable to sign contracts or enter into legal agreements, and did not have legal custody of her children in case of separation. The working class wife's position was as bad, and not until 1847 was there legislation limiting the working hours of women. Both women and children worked long hours at difficult and dangerous jobs, making the family life of the working household a travesty of the Victorian ideal of the havenlike home. 1857 brought women the first rights to sue for divorce for such basic reasons as desertion, neglect, and adultery. And the first association for female suffrage was not formed until 1866, three years before Mill published *The Subjection of Women*. The Married Women's Property Act that in some ways rectified the injustices of a wife's economic status was not passed until 1870, the year of Dickens' death.¹

The twentieth-century American women that Faulkner wrote about were in a much better position. They could vote and theoretically could hold office (though few did). A spinster like Joanna Burden could not only manage her own economic affairs, she could serve as an officer and trustee for Negro colleges and educational funds. Even the most rural wives like Cora Tull and Mrs. MacEachern had their own small sources of spending money from the eggs they sold or the cakes they baked. Divorce, though unlikely, was not impossible even in Yoknapatawpha County.

Beyond the legal changes in women's status, however, little of the basic social structure of marriage and the family had changed. Both
Victorian and Southern American families were distinctly patriarchal. The husband and father was the head and center of the family unit. The wife and mother was both idolized as the heart of the household and subservient to the dictates of her husband. Women in both societies were expected to play distinctly different roles between courtship and marriage, and the resulting hypocrisy of the mating game is vividly illustrated, both comically and seriously, by Faulkner and Dickens. We see the change from the Barkis who "is willin'" in his courtship of David Copperfield's nurse Peggotty to the Barkis who is "a little near" after he marries her, keeping his money in a box of "old clothes" under the bed and doling it out with the greatest reluctance. The same is true of Lucas Burch, "a big hand for laughing and frolicking and playing jokes on folks," who leaves Lena to deal with the consequences of his "frolicking" with her and who deserts her when confronted with an unwanted wife and baby. There is little wonder that Dora Spenlow, trained only to be attractive by playing the guitar and painting flowers on china, is unsuited to keep the well-regulated household that David Copperfield expects his wife to maintain. It takes the sternest stuff of a Ruby Goodwin to change from the frivolous Memphis prostitute to the cook and helpmate of poverty-ridden Goodwin and his bootlegging friends. (Sanctuary, Chapter 7)

These discrepancies between pre- and post-marital roles and expectations—a strong similarity in the works of Faulkner and Dickens—lead us to examine Victorian and Southern ideals of women and marriage, which in turn lead us to the myths that play significant parts in the
structure of both artists' work. F. R. Leavis speaks of David Copperfield as "representing Victorian innocent ideals of marriage" — the ideals of the woman as ornament to a man's home, of romance ("the first impulse of an undisciplined heart") as a basis for a permanently happy marriage — ideals that Dickens penetrates and in large measure refutes in Martin Chuzzlewit, Our Mutual Friend, and especially David Copperfield. Faulkner, too, is busy refuting the ideal of Southern white womanhood's need for protection when he makes Joanna Burden actually the paramour of her murderer and the agent of her own murder when she tries to mold Joe Christmas to her expectations. Temple Drake, the adolescent innocent, the "pure" college girl, is also exposed by Faulkner as a perversion of the ideal virgin; taunting men and then retreating to the excuse "My father's a judge," Temple has no inner purity to be corrupted, and her rape is therefore no real violation at all.

Though Dickens and Faulkner can (and do) skillfully deflate conventional societal ideals of love and marriage, they cannot escape their own artistic — and possibly personal — commitments to larger ideals, or myths, of harmonious love and fruitful union of men and women. In her book Relative Creatures: Victorian Women in Society and the Novel, 3 Francoise Basch deals at length with Dickens in a chapter called "Myth in the Novel." She emphasizes that "the novels of Dickens are full of the mythic wife—mother, portrayed either in complete achievement or its opposite." The function of such a character, Basch continues, is basically a mythical one, and through it we get such characters as Rose
Maylie and Agnes Wickfield as incarnate good, Lady Dedlock and Edith Dombey as potential good destroyed, and Mrs. Skewton and Mrs. Brown (Dombey and Son) as incarnate evil and corrupt femininity. Agnes Wickfield is not only presented in David Copperfield as filling the emptiness in David's heart by becoming his "refuge and best friend" (Chapter 34); she is spoken of even more frequently in religious terms. David's love for her is "founded on a rock," she "guides" him ever, "pointing upward" (Chapters 62 and 64), she is his "Better Angel" (Chapter 25), and his first sight of Agnes forever links her in his memory with the muted light of the stained glass window behind her. (Chapter 15) And though Agnes' motherhood is secondary and only mentioned in the retrospect of the final chapters, it is significant that she not only brings harmony and order to David Copperfield's home, but that she fills it with happy, love-giving children, even producing the second Betsey Trotwood that Aunt Betsey has longed for since the opening chapter of the novel.

More classical and less specifically related to Christian myth is Faulkner's use of myth relating to the women of his novels. Frequently his allusion to myth is directly classical - Miss Rosa Coldfield in Absalom, Absalom! is described as "Cassandra-like," Sutpen's wife Ellen is a "Niobe without tears" (Chapter 1), and Lena Grove becomes a modified version of Keats' "unravished bride of quietness" travelling across Alabama "like something moving forever and without progress across an urn." (Chapter 1) Her serenity comes from her motherhood, an unspoken, even unthought, fulfillment of what Faulkner and Gail Hightower recog-
nized as her destiny.

It was her destiny to have a husband and children and she knew it, and so she went out and attended to it without asking help from anyone. She was the captain of her soul.

William Faulkner in an interview

That will be her life, her destiny...peopling in tranquil obedience to it the good earth; from these hearty loins without hurry or haste descending mother and daughter.

(Gail Hightower in Light in August, Chapter 17)

This fulfillment of motherhood is related in Faulkner's works to the renewing strength of nature itself; woman's acceptance of her reproductive destiny is in harmony with the laws of the earth and the needs of society. Trouble results when these natural urgings are perverted or unfulfilled. In her book Women in Faulkner, Sally Page notes that the limited and imperfect women of Faulkner's novels symbolize through "the self-giving love of the mother the most ideal way in which man can adjust to the limitations of the human condition."

A second mythical ideal of femininity that Dickens and Faulkner share is that of the virgin. In Dickens, this ideal is frequently embodied in a sister, or an innocent adolescent girl in a sisterlike relationship. Found in works as early as Oliver Twist's Rose Maylie and as late as Our Mutual Friend's Lizzie Hexam (who is both actual sister to Charlie and virgin wife of invalid Eugene Mayburn), these girls are frequently Dickens' most problematical and unsatisfactory characterizations because he tends to resort to sentimentality in dealing with their relationships with others. Also, because of the fragility of their relations with the none-too-perfect world, these
girls die before maturity and possible loss of innocence overtakes them — Little Nell and Dora Copperfield, for instance. If Dickens' virgins do marry, like Lizzie Hexam, Esther Summerson, and Agnes Wickfield, it is usually at the resolution of the novel, and little of their actual domestic existence is examined. In his conclusions, Dickens sometimes reminds us that the sisterly-heroines marry and become mother-ideals, in the way that Agnes does when she finally marries David.

Faulkner's virginal girls differ from Dickens' primarily in that they are often sexual rather than spiritual ideals. The difference is related to Faulkner's reliance on classical as well as Christian myth; girls like Cecily in *Soldier's Pay* and Temple Drake are spoken of in earthy terms, as wood nymphs, or as directly related to the earth. Cecily is like "a flower stalk or a young tree," "a poplar...nourished by sunlight," (*Soldier's Pay*, Chapter 2, Part 2) and the same descriptions reappear with each of his virgin types — Lena Grove's name carries suggestions of this earthy yet ethereal beauty. Yet Faulkner's girls, for all their sexuality, are as troublesome in the working out of their stories as Dickens' sisterly-ideals are. If the girls fulfill their sexual promise, as Temple Drake does, they are corrupted; if they pass through adolescence and into a virginal womanhood, they become frustrated and barren like the spinster Joanna Burden. In only two characters, who will be discussed later at some length, does Faulkner sidestep the dilemma: Lena Grove, who though spiritually "the unravished bride of quietness," is physically decidedly unvirginal and is returned from the realm of myth to humanity, and Addie Bundren, who remains
spiritually virginal and unviolated throughout her marriage, fulfills the surface requirements of wifehood and motherhood, and dies. There is a remarkable element of changelessness in both women, though both travel through their stories, and it is perhaps through this stasis in movement that Faulkner can combine mythical allusiveness and flesh-and-blood realism.

Just as classical and Christian myth inform the thematic levels of Dickens' and Faulkner's "domestic" novels, so traditional romance provides a structural foundation to be modified, parodied, or commented upon. David Copperfield, for instance, experiments with at least four variations of the hero-woos-and-weds-heroine plot: David himself is immersed in a hearts-and-flowers romance that culminates in a decidedly unblissful marriage, and the real romantic resolution of the novel is his union with Agnes, whose primary relationship with David has been sisterly and pragmatic. The elopement of Emily and Steerforth ends not in fairytale wealth and happiness, but in her abandonment and exile and indirectly in his death; Steerforth's quasi-romance with his mother's companion also fails to achieve any but destructive results. And for all Dickens' guidance of the reader toward believing that Annie Strong's marriage to the old doctor is a wise and harmonious one, there are still strong undercurrents of guilt, thwarted sexuality, and unsuitability in their union.

Martin Chuzzlewit bitterly satirizes the traditions of courtship, revealing the vindictiveness of Jonas Chuzzlewit and the will to dominate of Merry Pecksniff that are masked behind the petty lovers' tests and
spats that erupt into serious hostilities after marriage. Sanctuary, too, shows the unhappy results of playing at the behaviors of courtship: the sexual teasing of Temple Drake, like that of Merry Pecksniff, erodes civilized behaviors and leaves the girls defenseless against the consequences of their actions. And in neither novel does the traditional rescuing hero appear: Jonas and Popeye, however grotesque, are real-life villains whose evil cannot be ignored or willed away.

Finally, the traditions of courtly love and happy endings are exposed and deflated in novels like As I Lay Dying, Light in August, and Our Mutual Friend. Lena Grove's quest for Lucas Burch is futile, her faith in him unfounded, and Byron Bunch as courtly lover is as laughable as he is believable. Joanna Burden's attempts to achieve transcendent emotions, even transcendentally damning ones, end in frustration, then forced efforts, then violence and murder. The happy ending of marriage in As I Lay Dying mocks rather than affirms Anse Burden's stance as courtly lover, the man willing to risk and endure anything to keep a promise to his beloved. Poor Addie Bundren has been betrayed, even in death, by all accepted romantic expectations: fulfillment through a child, dark passion with a fallen preacher, the very words of the marriage vow that "go up in the air" and mean nothing. And in Our Mutual Friend, even the happy union of Bella and John Harmon involves a coming to terms with the miseries of existence and refuting the "doll's house" vision of domestic relationships. To be sure, John and Bella still reap rewards of worldly goods, but material prosperity does not affect the importance of their realization that happiness must be worked at in the midst of suffering.
A final preliminary consideration before comparing specific aspects of marriage in the two authors' works is the importance of the family in the worlds of Dickens and Faulkner. For both, the family was a basic economic as well as a social unit. For the urban Dickens, families might be wealthy merchants like Dombey who needed an heir to continue the business, or, at the other end of the spectrum, river dragers like Gaffer Hexam who depended on his daughter to row the boat. For Faulkner, the rural setting meant that most families were those of farmers, and children meant extra hands to contribute to the family's prosperity. Marriage, therefore, in both Victorian and American worlds, was the formation of an important team — cooperation insured actual as well as spiritual and emotional survival. Domestic life is the very center of all social relationships in the novels — as the family goes, so goes society. And at the center of domestic life is the marriage. My examination deals with how the marriages in Dickens and Faulkner are made, why they do not work, and why they do not work in such similar ways. If we have accepted Tolstoy's dictum that "each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (Anna Karenina, Part I), the similarities are even more surprising.
One way to begin a comparison of unhappy partnerships is to examine the poor motives that make for poor marriages. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a chronicle of selfishness, displays the courting game at its self-seeking and mercenary worst. Pecksniff is delighted to have the wealthy Jonas Chuzzlewit as a suitor to either of his daughters — in fact, Jonas appears at first to be courting Cherry when he actually intends to propose to Merry. Merry accepts for at least two reasons, both related to the petty victories of the courting game: she bests her sister for conquest of a suitor, and, as she says when she accepts Jonas, "If I ever brought myself to say so [yes], it should only be that I might hate and tease you all my life." (Chapter 20) In spite of the warnings of old Martin Chuzzlewit, Merry obstinately marries Jonas, who as a fiancé has been her willing slave. But after the marriage, the tables turn on the master-slave relationship. Jonas, it seems, views his marriage as "a pack upon my back...for the pleasure of treading on it whenever I choose." (Chapter 28) He makes his attitude toward their future relations painfully clear:

You made me bear your pretty humours once, and ecod I'll make you bear mine now. I always promised myself I would. I married you that I might. I'll know who's master and who's slave! (Chapter 28)

The effervescent and willful Merry is overcome by Jonas' violent hatred and contempt. On her return from the wedding trip she "don't look much like a merry one" according to Mrs. Camp, she quickly becomes obedient to Jonas' tyranny ("Much more so that I ever thought to be!") and is finally reduced to a shell of her former self in a bitter and hollow marriage. (Chapter 28)
Comic relief with the same theme is provided by sister Cherry's pursuance of the young boarder at Todger's who is hopelessly in love with Merry. Mr. Muddle, desolate with the loss of Merry to "Another," sees Cherry as a comfort to his misery, and "weeping abundantly," "plights his dismal troth" to her. (Chapter 32) Cherry, quick to take advantage of the situation, has Mr. Muddle out shopping immediately to outfit their future home. But Cherry's designs (and her gloating over her sister's wretched state) are thwarted; Mr. Muddle, on the eve of his wedding, emigrates to Van Dieman's land, leaving Cherry the assurance that he "loves another. She is another's," and that he is "unalterably, never yours." True to selfish form, Cherry faints, not from grief, but from mortification that she should be shamed before her bridesmaids. (Chapter 54)

Steven Marcus speaks of Jonas Chuzzlewit's marriage to Merry in terms of compulsion:

Just as he had experienced his own position with his father...she has teased and taunted and repulsed him capriciously, and he marries her out of hatred and revenge, for the sole purpose of enslaving her, himself as master, herself as chattel.6

The same sense of compulsion surrounds Popeye's rape and abduction of Temple Drake in Sanctuary. The impotent Popeye's rape of Temple with a corn cob is an act of power, of aggression rather than lust. Sexually, he is a voyeur rather than a participant ("hanging over the bed, moaning and slobbering" "you had to bring in a real man to --") (Chapter 24).
Both Popeye and Jonas Chuzzlewit are pictured as victimizers—unpleasant, even cruel-looking, things rather than men. Popeye, for instance, is first seen by Horace Benbow as "having the vicious depthless quality of stamped tin," with eyes like "two knobs of soft black rubber" and a face of a wax doll set too near a hot fire and forgotten." Popeye doesn't even smell human—"he smells like that black stuff that ran out of Bovary's mouth...when they raised her head." (Sanctuary, Chapter 1) Jonas also has a metallic quality, but rather than a melted face, Jonas' features are like his father's, "so sharpened by the wariness and cunning of his life that it seemed to cut him a passage through the crowded room." (Martin Chuzzlewit, Chapter 4) And their victims, Temple Drake and Merry Pecksniff, are also presented similarly, as virginal yet not virtuous, pretty yet artfully deliberate, and using their appearance of innocence to further their own purposes.

Miss Pecksniff sat upon a stool because of her simplicity and innocence, which were very great—very great. Miss Pecksniff sat upon a stool because she was all girlishness, and playfulness, and wildness, and kittenish buoyancy. She was the most arch and at the same time the most artless creature, was the youngest Miss Pecksniff, that you can possibly imagine. It was her great charm. She was too fresh and guileless and too full of childlike vivacity...to wear combs in her hair...or to braid it...Moderately buxom was her shape and quite womanly, too, but sometimes—yes, sometimes—she even wore a pinafore, and how charming that was! (Martin Chuzzlewit, Chapter 2)

Temple...with her high delicate head and her bold painted mouth and soft chin, her eyes blankly right and left looking, cool, predatory and discreet...she looked quite small, her very attitude an outrage to muscle and
tissue of more than seventeen and more compatible with eight or ten...she sat in an attitude at once detached and cringing, her gaze fixed on something at the back of the room. Her face was quite pale, the two spots of rouge like paper discs pasted on her cheekbones...

(Sanctuary, Chapters 4,8,28)

Temple is not married to Popeye, but neither is Merry and Jonas Chuzzlewit's a marriage in any true sense. Both are conquests, power plays in which victims and victimizers exchange places before a final resolution of control. As we have noted, Merry Pecksniff is the initial winner in the sexual battle - she orders Jonas through a variety of trivial tasks and pledges of love primarily to pain her rejected sister. She answers Martin Chuzzlewit's query of whether she knows married life with Jonas may be miserable with "Married people always quarrel, I believe...But I mean to have the best of it myself. I always do now." (Martin Chuzzlewit, Chapter 24) Temple Drake enters the sexual contest at the old Franchman's Place with the same frivolous attitude; she has always been able to flirt and tease men and avoid confrontation with her famous line "My father's a judge," and she does not realize her helplessness and lack of control until the moment of rape. Even then, she is barely articulate, and can only say "Something is happening to me!" (Chapter 13)

After Popeye's assertion of power, Temple becomes his captive - literally his prisoner in the "sanctuary" of Miss Reba's brothel, unable to leave or to see other men except under Popeye's direction. Unlike Merry, though, who submits totally and permanently to Jonas' bullying, Temple continues to rebel by dating Red and taunting Popeye with his impotence, but his mastery of her is complete enough that she willingly
perjures herself and brings about the death of an innocent man.

Like Cherry Pecksniff's and Mr. Maddle's courtship, there is a comic relief element to the sexual oppressiveness of Sanctuary, in the form of Miss Reba's brothel. From the warring pair of dogs Miss Reba and Mr. Binford, to the farcical sojourn of the Snopes brothers in a brothel they mistook for a hotel, the air of the novel is occasionally lightened and the tension of constant sexual conflict and violence is temporarily relieved.

Temple Drake and Merry Pecksniff are part of a larger class of women that appear in Faulkner and Dickens - child-women, playing at life, like the "child-wife" Dora Copperfield professes herself to be and the "doll in the doll's house" that Bella Wilfer fights against becoming. Merry Pecksniff is a woman posing in childish clothes and expressions, using innocence as a mask for her selfishness. Temple Drake acts the part of a woman, using her childish body for adult temptation, playing at lust with only an adolescent's grasp of its consequences in a primitive world. Ruby Goodwin calls her "a doll-faced slut," "a poor little gutless fool." When threatened by the presence of the bootleggers, Temple resorts to baby talk: "if bad mans hurts Temple, us'll tell the governor's soldiers, won't us?" (Sanctuary, Chapter 7) Throughout the novel, Temple moves
from adult to childish poses as it suits the situation: she is childishly modest when examined by the Memphis doctor, calculatedly adult bartering with Miss Reba's maid for gin, sexually the child calling Red and Popeye "Daddy" when she wants favors and the woman accusing Popeye of not being "a real man." The last we see of Temple, she is still playing dual roles, facing the courtroom as a violated college girl, then coldly lying to save Popeye her violator and captor's neck.

Rosa Dartle in David Copperfield also alternates between "dolls" and women's roles, but not willingly. Young yet already a spinster because of the scar deforming her lips, Rosa is toughly sarcastic and cutting to Steerforth, but her youth and love for him render her sometimes vulnerable. Under his charm, her acid temper temporarily changes and she plays the harp and sings for him, yet she rages and even strikes him when she realizes how she has been manipulated. At his death, Rosa speaks of her humiliating (and, indeed, physically scarring) love for Steerforth, of how she "descended into a doll" for him. (David Copperfield, Chapter 56) With Steerforth dead, the blighted and barren spinsterhood presaged in her youth becomes permanent, and our final glimpse of Rosa is that of a bitter companion to Steerforth's broken mother.

Dewey Dell Bundren's personality is as ambiguous as Rosa Dartle's. Dewey Dell moves through the journey of As I Lay Dying with a woman's body and woman's problem of unwanted pregnancy, but with little more than a child's conception of what she has done and how to solve her problem. Sexual intercourse itself is a game for Dewey Dell: "I said if
the sack (of cotton) is full when we get to the woods...And so it was full when we came to the end of the row and I could not help it." (As I Lay Dying, page 26) Securing an abortion is a dilemma for her, and she persistently tries to follow Lafe's instructions ("He told me I could get something at the drugstore. I got the money to pay you." (As I Lay Dying, page 191), but when that fails, she complacently rejoins the family, tranquil in the knowledge that her pregnancy is no great tragedy after all, and we see her at last serenely eating bananas on the wagon with her younger brother Vardaman.

Our Mutual Friend is a novel that combines both patterns I have discussed - the story is built around marriages made or not made on the basis of poor motives, primarily mercenary ones, and the story is also one of victimized or spoiled child-women and their alternatives for growth in a complex, and often false, world. The central mystery of the novel pertains to marriage; old Harmon's will must be acted upon, the real John Harmon found and his supposed murder solved, if Bella Wilfer is to marry him and he to claim his rightful inheritance. From the first, the reader is thus encouraged to view Bella as a pawn in the mystery, a living clause of the will to be probated and delivered like the rest of old Harmon's fortune. The secondary plot also revolves
around the mystery of a marriage choice — whether Lizzie Hexam will choose the persistent Bradley Headstone or the flighty Eugene Wrayburn.

We first meet Lizzie Hexam in a domestic setting. Lizzie acts as partner to her father Gaffer Hexam in his river-dragging business, and is more a mother than a sister to her young brother Charlie. She encourages him to educate himself, soothes the anger of his unforgiving father, and cares for the household of both men with cheerful unselfishness. Lizzie combines the woman in her assumption of familial responsibilities and the child in her fanciful imaginings as she looks at the fire; early in the story, though, she also becomes a marriage candidate, an object of veiled but distinctly sexual pursuit by the potential suitors. In Eugene Wrayburn's case, the chase is primarily sexual, for class differences between himself and Lizzie make her an unlikely wife. The class concerns are particularly important in Lizzie's courtship; if she accepts the schoolmaster Bradley Headstone, she will be advancing her position in the world (as her brother Charlie points out) but not beyond the limits of propriety, for Headstone is poor and self-taught. On the other hand, if she accepts the advances of Eugene, whom she loves, she will have to compromise herself, for Eugene is a gentleman, a professional man who would stand to lose much by making a river-dragger's daughter his wife. Lizzie avoids the unpleasant choices by running to a rural Jewish community, an atmosphere free from sexual threat or temptation, but her problems follow her there. There is little question that she will deny Headstone, because she does not love him, but in Eugene's case, true love is a question only on his side — whether Lizzie loves him
is of little consequence in terms of marriage possibilities. Dickens finally defeats these false considerations of class, for Eugene does marry Lizzie, but it takes a near-murderous assault and lingering illness to convince him. And the gentleman that Lizzie wins for a husband is somewhat damaged; their story closes with Eugene still weak and convalescent.

The Wilfer family is also a study of the effect on marriage of class and monetary considerations. In describing the Wilfers, Dickens speaks of "the principle which matrimonially unites contrasts" - Mrs. Wilfer is "majestic" in contrast to the "cherubic" Mr. Wilfer, she is dissatisfied with their lot and is a perpetual complainer while he accepts that "what might have been is not what is." (Book 1, Chapter 4) Characteristically, Mrs. Wilfer always has a toothache on her wedding anniversary. She is all appearances: she appears to bear bravely their financial misfortune, but continually refers to the trials of her children; she appears to "devote herself to the general good," but spoils the family party with her stiffness and bad humor; she speaks of Wilfer as "master at his own table," but so bullies him with her stiffness that he only "hints meekly" that she is not enjoying herself and does not dare endeavor to try and cheer her further. (Book 3, Chapter 4)

Money and marital happiness are inextricably linked on all levels of the society of Our Mutual Friend. In the upper classes, mismatches are even worse for the hypocrisy and social pretending that go on. The Lammles are the best example. Introduced by their "bran'-new" friends,
the Veneerings, whom neither really knows anything about, each marries for money on the sole basis of hints of the great wealth of the other. The Lammles indeed enter a marriage "contract," and one that has been founded on false appearances. Such a union is shaky at best, but when the Lammles discover their mutual deception (and mutual lack of funds), the result is disastrous. Dickens' brilliant description of the honey-mooning couple is of the footprints they have left as they walk along the beach:

One may see by their footprints that they have not walked arm in arm, and that they have not walked on a straight track, and that they have walked in a moody humor; for the lady has prodded spirting holes in the damp sand before her with her parasol, and the gentleman has trailed his stick after him. As if he were of the Mephistopheles family indeed, and had walked with a drooping tail. (Book 1, Chapter 10)

After a violent quarrel and bitter reproaches, the real contract of the Lammles' marriage is agreed upon - "We agree to keep our own secret, and to work together in furtherance of our own schemes." The tone of the scene's ending is acidly satirical: "So the happy pair, with this hopeful marriage contract thus signed, sealed, and delivered, reappear homeward." (Book 1, Chapter 10)

One of the child-women of the novel, Georgiana Podsnap, falls prey to the financial and matrimonial scheming of the Lammles. Georgiana is "undersized" and timid ("seemed to take occasional frosty peeps out of childhood into womanhood, and to shrink back again"), easily responsive to Sophronia Lammle's friendly advances, the first Georgiana has ever known. Her judgment is so poor that she is "particularly charmed...with
the happiness of her friend's married life." Georgiana never learns better; only Sophronia's speaking out for her through pity saves her from "being sold into wretchedness for life." (Book 2, Chapter 16) Jenny Wren, another child-woman or rather a womanly child, provides a striking contrast. Crippled and saddled with a drunken father, Jenny not only manages to find her way through the streets of London and make a small living as a doll's dressmaker, she also sustains her own romantic image of a suitor who will marry her in spite of her crippled body and who will let her order him into hundreds of labors of love. In contrast to Georgiana, Jenny is the shrewdest appraiser of human nature in the book. She correctly interprets the motives of Bradley Headstone, the selfishness of Eugene Wrayburn, and the true feelings of Lizzie. Only once does she blunder and suspect the good Jew Riah of being cruel in business, but she corrects her mistake by besting the horrible Fascination Fledgeby who controls Riah's money lending. Jenny's good heart and capacity for survival are rewarded in the end, by the appearance of a suitor - the comic Sloppy, the mangle operator, not a prince charming but an admiring companion for the little doll's dressmaker.

Bella Wilfer, of course, is the center of the stage; in her are blended the themes of rising in society, the value of money, and the feminine will in love and marriage. Bella is alternately victim and tormentor. She is also, many critics agree, the most realistic heroine in Dickens because of her capacity for both good and evil. Bella is, in one sense, a pawn, a clause in an old man's will that marries her to a man she has never seen. But the pawn was chosen to be "left to him
in a will, like a dozen of spoons, with everything cut and dried beforehand" (Book 1, Chapter 4) because of a remarkably human display of temper to her father when she was a toddler. The old man deemed her worthy to be his son John's wife either because he wanted to torment the boy when he was gone; or, more likely, because he liked the spirit and individuality of the fiery little girl.

Bella is spoiled and also an opportunist. She readily accepts the Boffins' offer to give her a home and thinks not at all of her family's position or her sister's feelings of hurt and jealousy. She initially rejects John Rokesmith, not so much because she does not like him, as because of her determination to be wealthy. The beautifully sketched lunch with her father at Greenwich reflects both Bella's impulses - she generously outfits her Pa in a complete set of new clothes, cheers and entertains him as the rest of the family never does, yet firmly expresses her "avaricious" designs:

I have made up my mind that I must have money, Pa. I feel that I can't beg it, borrow it, or steal it; and so I have resolved that I must marry it.  

(Book 2, Chapter 8)

Bella has considerable insight into her own desires - "It's not that I care for money to keep as money, but I do care so much for what it will buy!" She also understands the traps that are possible in marriage, and sympathizes with her Pa when he compares his marriage to trying to dance to the "nuptial altar to the tune of the Dead March in Saul."  

(Book 2, Chapter 8)

It is this capacity for self-understanding and sympathy with others that gives Bella the potential to grow and mature. She sees that money
is the root of, and not the solution to, much evil without losing her natural appreciation for fine things, and learns to love and accept John Harmon, her appointed husband, in his role as the poor secretary John Rokesmith. Unlike the "deus ex machina" progress of the Boffins, unhappy misers one minute transformed to benevolent guardians the next, Bella's growth is natural and traceable to her better impulses that have been part of her from the first.

At one point, John Rokesmith asks Bella, "Do you know yourself?" The story of Bella's change is one of a change in her self-evaluation, from "a mercenary little wretch" to a happy "mendicant's bride." Bella's and John's marriage is one of the few "marriage duets" in Dickens that is truly believable as well as harmonious.

In *Charles Dickens: Radical Moralist*, Joseph Gold writes, "To achieve a true union requires whole individuals first, unconstrained by external pressures for union." In Bella's own words, "I want to be something so much worthier than the doll in the doll's house." (Book 4, Chapter 5) And by abandoning the claims of class, of money, and of fine establishment, Bella becomes more than a doll — a true partner in fortune and misfortune, a wife fulfilled by motherhood, the center of a happy home. Dickens' sentimentality restores Bella to fortune, too, so she has the best of both worlds, but the reader is left with little doubt that to the mature Bella, fortune and establishment are but additions to an already whole and happy life.
In Dickens at Work, John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson speak of "shadows cast on scenes of domestic happiness" in David Copperfield. Beginning with the plan of Number VI, characters are mentioned who will threaten the happy domestic arrangements in the novel. In this number plan alone, Dickens deals with such names as Jack Maldon, the cousin who lurks on the fringes of young Annie Strong's marriage to the old doctor; Uriah Heep, the usurper of Mr. Wickfield's law practice and slimy suitor for Agnes; and, in the chapter called "Somebody turns up," "the man who frightens my aunt," mentioned to David by Mr. Dick and later revealed as Aunt Betsey's worthless husband. Already we have encountered the Murdstones, who with their black eyes and grim appearances cast a permanent shadow on the happiness of the Copperfields' Blunderstone Rookery, and the theme reappears when Steerforth joins the engagement party of Little Emily and Ham Peggotty, whose marriage plans he will destroy. And Dickens cannot seem to banish all the shadows, because some threatening figure is always "turning up" to endanger domestic bliss - he sends Emily to Australia to keep her from further corruption, but she remains a rather sad young spinster; he has Annie Strong reject Jack Maldon, but at the price of committing herself to what seems a rather dreary and sexless marriage to an old man; and the Murdstones continue success-
fully at the end of the book, victimizing yet another young and defenseless widow.

Shadows are a prevalent motif in Faulkner's treatment of families, too. Frequently the shadows are not as tangible as Dickens' threatening figures like Steerforth and Murdstone, but are ghosts of the past or events outside the family life that create an aura or fill a whole community with oppression or gloom. Consider the murder of Joanna Burden in *Light in August*. Byron tries to keep the scandal from Lena because of her advanced pregnancy, but also because of the involvement of her child's father Lucas Burch in his pursuit of the reward money. It is the news of the murder and the capture of a "white nigger" that propels Doc and Mrs. Hines to begin their bizarre journey, he to lynch and she to reclaim a grandson. Gail Hightower, the preacher, lives under two shadows: the current dilemmas of the murder and his involvement with Byron and the pregnant Lena, and the larger shadow of the past. For Hightower's past is multiply the remote vision of his grandfather's Civil War gallantry that has motivated his life, his profession and his expulsion from the church, and the past of his marriage and the personal shadow of his wife's suicide. Hightower's wife becomes the victim of his obsession with the past, just as she was the tool of his call to Jefferson so he could live in the past more completely — and Hightower at the end recognizes that he has been her victimizer and the cause of her death:

Perhaps in the moment when I revealed to her not only the depth of my hunger but the fact that never and never would she have any part
in the assauging of it; perhaps at that moment
I became her seducer and her murderer, author
and instrument of her shame and death.
(Light in August, Chapter 20)

Behind Joe Christmas’ involvement with all women lurks the shadow of
his Negro blood; imagined or real, the shadow cast is awesome, from his
beating of a prostitute who was not horrified at sleeping with a Negro
to Joanna Burden’s frenzied cries of "Negro, Negro" when she makes love
to him. As with Dickens, the shadows are not banished from the novel at
its end; the death of Joe Christmas heightens rather than relieves the
tension, and the atmosphere clears only when the scene moves from Jeff-
son onto the road with Lena and Byron and the comic relief of their final
scenes together.

Sanctuary, too, is full of the shadow cast by a murder, though there
is little domestic "happiness" to interrupt. Tommy’s murder, and Horace
Benbow’s involvement with Goodwin’s defense, shatters Horace’s fragile
familial ties: he is alienated from his sister Narcissa because of her
contempt for the trashy Ruby Goodwin he protects, and he is forced to
admit the sterility and unhappiness of his marriage to Belle in the face
of this burst of activity in Jefferson. Goodwin, his wife Ruby, and their
child are all under the shadow of his imprisonment and trial for Tommy’s
murder. The greatest shadow on the story, though, is the black figure
of Popeye – murderer, captor and corrupter of Temple Drake, instrument
of her perjury at the trial, and instigator of the murder of Temple’s
boyfriend Red. And the threat of Popeye remains as the novel ends, for
he is still powerful, evil, and uncaught by the rather helpless forces
of order and justice at work in the dark world of the novel.
The few domestic situations in Dickens and Faulkner that are happy or at least serene are seldom marriages. More often, they are non-marital but stable households conducted by couples who are kin or are not obvious candidates for marriage and its sexual implications. Ruth and Tom Pinch in *Martin Chuzzlewit* are a particularly good comic example. They are the picture of poor but blissful domesticity in Mr. Wadgett's London flat, Ruth donning ruffled aprons and making steak pies and Tom keeping careful record of the household accounts. There is no suspicion about the set-up – Dickens carefully provides Ruth with a true romantic love, and even Tom loves another, though she is beyond his reach. But the rapturous rhetoric with which Dickens describes Ruth's actual courtship by John Westlock varies little in intent or intensity from that with which he chronicles the Pinches' happy household:

In all simplicity and innocence and purity of heart, yet with a timid, graceful, half-determined hesitation, she set a little rosy seal upon the vow, whose colour was reflected in her face and flashed up to the braiding of her dark brown hair.  

(Martin Chuzzlewit, Chapter 53)

...During the whole of these preparations, she looked demurely every now and then at Tom from under her dark eye-lashes, as if they were all a part of the pudding and indispensable to its composition.  

(Martin Chuzzlewit, Chapter 39)
When Ruth marries John, the domestic circle is only widened to include her husband and her brother as well.

The Peggotty household is another, and rather peculiar, example of a non-traditional family. Daniel Peggotty is the obvious and undisputed head and father-figure. But there are two alternating mother-types: Clara Peggotty, in between and after her sojourns with the Copperfields and Mr. Barkis, and Mrs. Gummidge, who is initially a dependent rather than a contributor to domestic happiness, but who becomes in time of crisis the pillar and support of the troubled home. Ham and Emily are the adoptive children of the home, but their obvious brother-sister relationship assumes almost uncomfortably incestuous overtones when they become engaged. And it is this improper engagement - improper because Emily rather naturally regards Ham more as a brother than a lover - that splits the household permanently, making a reconciliation and return to normal impossible after Emily's elopement with Steerforth. The Peggotty family circle is strong through love, but confusing kinship and romantic interrelationships render it vulnerable to threats from those outside the world of the houseboat - itself a visible symbol of a basic confusion of roles within. Neither a real houseboat that can survive a sea journey nor a traditional house, the Peggotty's home is an anomaly - unique, interesting, even comfortable, but not an integral part of the land or the sea.

The relationship between Ruby Goodwin and Horace Benbow in Sanctuary is also a domestic one. The same Horace who has rebelled against carrying shrimp from the train station for his wife Belle, now carries milk
bottles into his home (and later delivers them to the hotel) for Ruby Goodwin's child. His concern is for the comfort of both Ruby and the baby - he even offers to hire a nurse to make things easier. The empty Benbow house momentarily becomes a home.

Lying there together, they lent to the room a quality of transience...the smug paradox of the made bed in a room otherwise redolent of long unoccupation. It was as though femininity were a current running through a wire along which a certain number of identical bulbs were hung. (Sanctuary, Chapter 16)

The sanctuary of the Benbow home, like all other places of sanctuary in the novel, is eventually violated by Narcissa Benbow's forcing of Ruby into the hotel and finally to the ignominy of a Negro woman's home. Yet Horace's protective feelings toward the woman and child remain, even through the ordeal of Goodwin's lynching.

Faulkner's most famous non-married domestic couple are, of course, Lena Grove and Byron Bunch in Light in August. Their relationship begins much like Horace's and Ruby Goodwin's, with Byron aiding a strange woman in trouble. Byron's mistake, at least as Gail Hightower sees it, is in falling in love with Lena, who is both pregnant and ostensibly still in love with the father of her child. The obvious focus of their story is Byron's rather futile pursuit of the perennially elusive Lena, even to the final scenes on the road. But close reading reveals that Lena has ties, which to Byron make her more than just a grateful recipient of his aid. After the baby arrives, Lena tells Byron that she would refuse to marry Lucas Burch (Chapter 17) - presumably she is becoming attached to Byron. When she does meet Lucas, the whole point of
her journey, she quietly watches him "with her sober eyes in which there was nothing at all - joy, surprise, reproach, love." (Chapter 18) It is this lack of commitment in Lena that allows Lucas' departure through the cabin window to be so comic, for she has already freed herself of attachment to him in her new attachment to Byron. Even at the end of the novel, on the road, Lena and Byron are seen as a couple, sexually skirmishing but not really battling. We never know whether they actually become man and wife - but we do know that there is a permanent affection and understanding between them, and that is sufficient.

"I done come too far now," he says. "I be dog if I'm going to quit now." And her looking at him like she had known all the time what he was going to do before he even knew himself that he was going to, and that whatever he done, he wasn't going to mean it. "Ain't nobody never said for you to quit," she says.  

(Light in August, Chapter 21)
On the other end of the spectrum from unconventional but serene domestic pairings are the frustrated matches, mutually destructive couples whose passion is both dangerous and damaging. Sally Page describes Joe Christmas and Joanna Burden in these terms: "Their sexual relationship is abnormal and perverse because they are devoted not to fostering life but to destroying it." Joe and Joanna's affair begins as a battle (and ends, of course, with a murder). Joe feels a "necessity to despoil" Joanna, and his seduction-rape of her is a "fight up to the final instant." "It was as if he struggled physically with another man for an object of no actual value to either, and for which they struggled on principle alone." Joe wants to "teach" Joanna to hate him, and in a vivid scene, he rejects even basic domesticity by hurling against the wall the dishes of food she has prepared. (Chapter 11) As for Joanna, she is "completely corrupted" by Christmas - "the New England glacier" becoming "imperious and fierce urgency." Joanna even shocks Christmas with her "avidity for forbidden word symbols," "her panting," "her wild hands and her breathing," her "formally erotic attitudes and gestures" that become "the wild throes of nymphomania." (Chapter 12) Joanna realizes the full extent of her corruption, but clings to it as her only feeling of life and passion; she knows that her feeling for Christmas
is like "something growing in a swamp," but prays "Dear God, let me be
dammed a little longer, a little while." (Chapter 12) Out of this cor-
rupt affair, Joanna struggles to bring life and domesticity; she an-
nounces an unlikely pregnancy and makes plans for Joe to marry her and
take over her business affairs. But her affair with Christmas is des-
tined to be as violent and barren as its beginning, and Joe finally re-
bels against her efforts to save them and kills her.

The relations of Dickensian characters like Rosa Dartle and James
Steerforth in David Copperfield are necessarily more sexually muted but
only slightly less violent and destructive. As a child, Rosa is the
victim of James' violent temper - he throws a hammer at her that scars
her face for life. The action does not destroy her love for him but
perverts it into a cynical, self-reproaching affection. Rosa's emotions
alternate drastically between compliance with Steerforth's wishes and
violent outbreaks of rebellion against him. She plays the harp and
sings "out of the passion within her," but at Steerforth's affectionate
touch, "she struck him, and [threw] him off with the fury of a wild cat,
and burst out of the room." (Chapter 29) Her most violent rages are ex-
ploded, not upon Steerforth, but upon Emily - even after Steerforth
abandons her - and the entire Peggotty family. David is astonished by
her passion against poor old Daniel Peggotty: "Such a concentration of
rage and scorn as darkened her face, and flashed in her jet-black eyes,
I could not have thought compressible even into that face." She speaks
of violent punishment for them all for daring to despoil Steerforth:
"I would trample on them all...I would have her branded on the face" -
a curiously Freudian slip, for she herself wears a branded face for hav-
ing loved James Steerforth. (Chapter 32) At the end, Rosa Dartle's hatred
and bitterness descend upon everyone, and especially herself, for in the
anguish of her loss of Steerforth, only the pain and humiliation of her
love for him are left for her to remember. We see her in painfully vio-
rent scenes: unleashing the full force of her fury against the fallen and
miserable Emily, scorning the grief of Steerforth's mother and blaming
her motherly pride for his death, and finally reproaching even herself with
having "descended into a doll for him." Dickens produces a final picture
of a quieter but still embittered spinster in the last pages of the novel
when David meets Rosa and Mrs. Steerforth in the park.

She [Mrs. Steerforth] is in a garden; and near her
stands a sharp, dark, withered woman with a white
scar on her lip. Rosa...by turns caresses her, and
quarrels with her; now fiercely telling her, "I
loved him better than you ever did!" - now soothing
her to sleep on her breast, like a sick child.
(David Copperfield, Chapter 44)

Finally, I want to discuss at length David Copperfield and As I Lay
Dying, for each novel contains a particularly complete treatment of court-
ship and married life. The two stories are also alike in that their cen-
tral figures, David Copperfield and Addie Bundren, represent idealistic
approaches to love and marriage that render them at odds with the realistic worlds of their novels. Both conceive of marriage as the ideal instrument to end their isolation from others, to fill needs in their souls for close companionship - and when marriage does not measure up to these expectations, they find themselves more isolated than ever.

Butt and Tillotson notice that the problems of marriage are going to be critical in David Copperfield even in Dickens' early plans for Chapter 1. In this first number plan, Dickens sketches David's "young mother - Tendency to weakness and vanity," Miss Betsey's "old wrongs," the "progress of his mother's second courtship," and he even begins a description of Murdstone "with his damned black eyes." In many ways, the novel will become a series of echoing events. David's mother is called a "wax doll" by Aunt Betsey, a phrase she will later apply to Dora. David remembers his mother as "proud of being so pretty," a "childish widow...and a childish mother," descriptions suitable to curly-haired Dora who will later call herself a "child-wife." Aunt Betsey's trip to the Rookery in Chapter 1 is a search for a second Betsey Trotwood who will not make the marital mistakes that the first Betsey did - "There will be no trifling with the new Betsey's affections." (Chapter 1) The deceptive courtship of Mrs. Copperfield by Mr. Murdstone, whom David despises, in some ways mirrors, on a less cruel scale, David's courtship of Dora, for both men romance pretty, frivolous women whom they try to "mold" into efficient, sensible housekeepers after marriage. Clara Copperfield succumbs completely - she worries that her attractive flightiness makes Murdstone "hate me for it now," and once she loses the
housekeeping keys to sister Jane Murdstone, David "never knew my mother to give an opinion afterwards." (Chapter 3) Dora as a wife has the same fears ("You must be sorry that you married me!") but she never, to her ultimate credit, surrenders her personality to David's attempts at molding. She persists in using the cookbook for Jip to do tricks on, and the important household keys are little more than an ornament to jingle at her waist.

Dora knows herself and the limitations of her marriage with a thoroughness that David never seems to have.

When you are going to be angry with me, say to yourself, "it's only my child-wife!" When I am disappointing, say, "I knew a long time ago, that she would make but a child-wife!" When you miss what I should like to be, and I think can never be, say, "still my foolish child-wife loves me!" For indeed I do.

(Chapter 44)

I am afraid it would have been better, if we had only loved each other as a boy and girl, and forgotten it. I have begun to think I was not fit to be a wife.

(Chapter 53)

David, on the other hand, is frequently "blind, blind, blind" (as Aunt Betsey calls him) in his assessments of himself and Dora and marriage. David wants in marriage a "centre of myself, the circle of my life," someone to "come into the vacancy in my heart," yet he chooses "a thing of light, airiness, and joy" with "the gayest little laugh, the pleas-antest and most fascinating little ways." (Chapters 53 and 26)

David's idealism is disturbing even prior to his marriage to Dora, for the reader senses the exhorbitant expectations that he has of marriage.
From the beginning of their courtship Dora, in fact, is more the object of his infatuation and the center of his romantic scenarios than an actual candidate for a wife. The rhetoric of the first courtship chapter, "I fall into captivity" (Chapter 26) reveals both David's infatuated state ("I dined off Dora") and the discrepancy between his and Dora's more realistic sensibilities.

I hazarded a bold flight, and said (not without stammering) that it was very bright to me then, though it had been very dark to me a minute before.

"Do you mean a compliment?" said Dora, "or that the weather has really changed?"

(Chapter 26)

Instead of learning from his experience of the world, David uses the cases that come before him as a law clerk only "to wonder, in the matrimonial cases (remembering Dora) how it was that married people could ever be otherwise than happy." (Chapter 26) How much more honest is Dora, who tells David plainly to quit talking about being happy with well-earned "crusts" when "Jip must have a mutton-chop every day at twelve, or he'll die." (Chapter 37) In the end, of course, it is David who realizes that he, not Dora, must change: "It remained for me to adapt myself to Dora." (Chapter 48) And the change is for the better — it allows Dora to be free to be herself — the "Little Blossom" who brings joy and gaiety to her home. David, too, becomes more tolerant of the trivial snarls of daily life and more understanding that the "slight shadow" between himself and his wife cannot be willed or taught or "molded" away. The "old unhappiness" is still there, but new tolerance "made my second year much happier than my first; and what was better still, made
Dora's life all sunshine." (Chapter 48)

That David's marriage is made on less than sound principles is not surprising, for there are few truly mature and prosperous marriages in the novel for him to use as examples. Aunt Betsey's husband reappears only to distress her and beg from her; Annie Strong is more a daughter and companion than a true wife to the old doctor; the Micawbers survive precariously from crisis to crisis, pledging never to desert one another but doing each other little good. Traddles and his Sophie are happy, of course, but after waiting for years to be married they are nearly smothered by her numerous live-in sisters. Even Mr. Wickfield, long a widower, is so consumed by the grief of losing his wife that he turns to drink and endangers his own and his daughter's prospects for happiness.

Why do so many marriages in Dickens seem to be mutual liabilities rather than partnerships? F.R. Leavis notes that frequently in Dickensian marriages "the possibility of happiness has eventually turned into the realization that it is in fact a sentence of imprisonment for life."¹² Perhaps Dickens is referring to personal experience; there is considerable biographical evidence, including his separation from his wife in 1858, that his own marriage was very unhappy. Dora and Catherine Dickens were in several ways alike - impractical and poor intellectual companions for a brilliant young author. Agnes, too, may have had a model in the Dickens household; Catherine's sister Georgina Hogarth lived with the family for years, cared for the numerous children, and was primarily responsible for running the household.

Yet David Copperfield is much more than a personal chronicle of the
woes of marriage, for it examines many marriages, and many reasons why they are unhappy. Usually, the reason lies with the wife: her roles, her expectations, and the limits of her ability to act as an individual. In this, Dickens is examining Victorian ideals as well as his own personal ones. When marriage is a marketplace, a measure of economic status, there will be Aunt Betseys, wanted only for their money, and Sophies, forced to wait for years until a proper "establishment" can be set up and they allowed to leave the parents' nest. When visions of marriage go no further than romance, courtship, and the wedding, there will be Doras, victims of the "impulses of an undisciplined heart," perfect sweethearts that are unable to be to their husbands the companions, the sharers of burdens that sustain a marriage. When the husband is the patriarch of the household, the wife will be childlike, dependent, and unlikely to make her own decisions. Jenni Calder, in her study Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction, says both that "Love in Dickens flourishes in situations of weakness and incapability" and that "Dickens exposes savagely the Victorian marriage that preserved a polished shell of conformity but within was rotten."¹³ Contradictory as these statements sound, both are true impulses in Dickens' fiction; like David Copperfield, he clings to the ideal of romantic love, "the airy dreams of youth that are incapable of realization," (Chapter 48) where childlike girls are wooed by boys in a "party-supper-table kind of life." (Chapter 35) Unlike David, though, Dickens realizes the more sober obligations and ties that are marriage and how marital vows can be traps if there are not more than the "impulses of undisciplined hearts" to make marriages work; and where
he exposes the problems beneath "the polished shells," as he does in David Copperfield, he does so primarily to teach and to heal.

The uniqueness of As I Lay Dying lies in its structure; the disjointed perceptions of several viewers of a burial journey that are unified through the central person they perceive and try to understand — Addie Bundren. The ostensible foci of the perceptions are specifically Addie's death and funeral, but almost all of the observers record some comment about her marriage to Anse Bundren. These, too, are disjointed, but each illumines some small part of the marriage at the center of the novel and the Bundren family.

Cora Tull is the first to speak. A neighbor, Cora seems anxious to justify the differentness of Addie's life from hers in terms other than sin and temptation, with which she had accused Addie when she lived: "Just because you have been a faithful wife is no sign that there is no sin in your heart." (page 159) Now that Addie is dead, Cora speaks of faithfulness not as hypocrisy but as the quality that "let her put up with Anse Bundren when Mr. Tull said she ought to poisoned him." (page 21) Cora's words, like other characters', tell more about Cora than about Addie, for it is Cora who sees marriage, and life, in terms of heavenly punishments and rewards: "She has her reward in being free of Anse Bundren." (page 86)

Actually, as we learn from Addie's monologue, she has been free of Anse since their marriage; she has possessed an aloofness that could not be violated "not even by Anse in the nights." (page 164) Anse is related in Addie's speech to words and symbols, both finally meaningless in terms of real life. Words, for Addie, "go straight up in a thin line, quick and
harmless," but she has been tricked in bearing Darl "by words older than Anse, or love, and...the same words had tricked Anse too." (pages 164-65) Addie expects too much of both words and marriage - she expects them, as David Copperfield does, to fill her inner emptiness, to make her more alive by merging her with the "secret and selfish life" (page 162) of another.

Anse, of course, is completely unequal to Addie's expectations. For him, marriage is creature comfort and "somebody you was young with and you growed old in her and she growed old in you." (page 224) His expectations are utterly traditional, and so for Addie he "is dead." (page 163) Anse, too, is alone and unviolated, although he isn't sensitive enough to know it, and, thus, we are amused and even secretly pleased when he takes the second Mrs. Bundren, with her entertaining gramophone, to wife.

Aloneness, and marriage and sexuality as a solution to it, are the concern of Dewey Dell as well as Addie, and, in his own way, Anse. But where childbirth for Addie is an answer, though temporary, to individual loneliness, for Dewey Dell it is no solution. Dewey Dell feels that "the process of coming unalone is terrible" (page 58) and that her pregnancy is a punishment: "God gave women a sign when something has happened bad." (page 56) But through her obtuseness Dewey Dell remains as inviolable as Addie does in her knowledge; when her pregnancy doesn't go away, Dewey Dell simply gets rid of the only witness who might tell (Darl) and dismisses the problem for the present. Pregnancy becomes merely a sign and a word, and like so many other words in the novel, is finally without much immediate power or meaning.
When she writes of *As I Lay Dying* in *Faulkner's Women*, Sally Page speaks of Addie's "endurance of Anse," her fulfillment of her duty to him," and Addie's life representing to her neighbors "woman's normal fulfillment of the role of wife and mother with its accompanying hardships." These concepts are close to those that Dickens explores and often deplores. Faulkner, too, shows how empty the "polished shell" of marriage can be, using the correspondence of empty lives and hollow words. Addie has none of the tools for adapting that David Copperfield does, though. She has no career to turn to, and even her children fail to fill her emptiness. As Page goes on to explain, "when Addie cannot force life into an ideal inner vision, she concludes that being a wife and mother are merely another aspect of the death of which her father warned." For Addie Bundren, as her father predicted, life is just the getting ready to be dead a long time, and she has lain dying in a hollow marriage and a self-made lonely life long before her actual illness and death that precipitates that action of the novel.

There is not a novel by Faulkner or Dickens that does not explore in some way the significance of love and marriage for the individual and for society; the two authors repeatedly raise the fundamental question of how men and women can form permanent relationships that augment rather than destroy their potential for personal achievement. By creating unique characters like Lena Grove or Dora Copperfield that also typify familiar problems and modes of action and by revealing the limits of structures like myth or traditional romance that posit ideal versions of courtship and marriage, Dickens and Faulkner bring the reader closer to the truth.
Even in their outlandishness, characters like Rosa Dartle or Temple Drake or Joanna Burden give us more real-life energy and pathos than characters like Agnes Wickfield or Lena Grove who more closely approach idealized femininity. And such truth in characterization is accompanied by equally important fictional or narrative truth: romantic progressions like David Copperfield's or Byron Bunch's are neither simple nor easily triumphant - there are no "party-supper-table" kinds of endings to unions as vital and tragic and lifelike as the Chuzzlewits', Copperfields', or Bundrens'. Men and women with poorly developed self-concepts and expectations of others are ill-equipped to form true partnerships in sexual and domestic relationships, and it is on the success of such partnerships that the lives and happiness of more than one generation depend. How the children fare is the subject of the next chapter.
NOTES


3 Basch, p. 53.


9 Butt and Tillotson, pp. 132–33.

10 Page, p. 149.


12 Leavis, p. 59.


14 Page, p. 114.

15 Page, pp. 116–22.
Chapter 3: Children as Victims

"It always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life, when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity—two of the best qualities that Heaven gives them—and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments."
Master Humphrey
(The Old Curiosity Shop, Chapter 1)

In the previous chapter, it has been demonstrated that Dickens and Faulkner view marriage and the home as the sources of much human unhappiness. While both are committed artistically and personally to some ideal of harmonious love and happy domesticity, many of their novels are stories of marriages that fail to approach this ideal, for a variety of reasons. Men marry women expecting them to fill unlikely or impossible roles: obedient servant, superb housekeeper, "doll in a doll's house," or spiritual inspirer and saint. Spoiled child-women enter marriage from mercenary or sentimental motives, oblivious of their responsibility to cooperate with and enhance the lives of their husbands and children. The results of such unions, of course, are homes filled with frustration, distrust, sexual problems, and misery. And the unfortunate corollary to these marriages, in the novels as well as in real life, is that unhappiness does not stop with husband and wife but extends to more innocent victims, the children. Whether the child is viewed as the pure and
undeserving inheritor of other generations' problems (like Little Nell) or as a carrier from birth of his own load of sin and guilt (like Jason Compson), there is still a direct line of influence from his parents' attitudes and preconceptions, the way they view him and the world, and the way they teach him to perceive and treat others. Dickens and Faulkner are particularly sympathetic to the problems of the child in an unhappy or problem-ridden home, and at least three major novels center around children victimized by parents, circumstance, or both: *Dombey and Son*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *The Sound and the Fury*.

Central to the construction of Dickens' and Faulkner's novels is their sense of how past events influence, often harmfully, present ones, and of how familial structures and situations mirror and direct societal ones. In their more somber novels, chaos and destruction are brought about through these two interrelated themes: in clinging to past lifeless traditions, codes, and expectations, characters dehumanize the people closest to them and ignore present values and problems, thus leading to a society that is in turn stifling, callous, and impersonal. *Dombey and Son* and *The Sound and the Fury* are novels that trace the fall of two houses built upon the false traditions, the rigid expectations, and the selfishness of their members. In both, the burdens of the collapse fall
most heavily on the children, and it is their stories that are of central
importance.

Both Dombey and Son and The Sound and the Fury are ostensibly mas-
culine novels—stories of relations between fathers and sons and broth-
ers. Dombey and Son reflects its preoccupations in the title and in the
supreme importance of continuing the line of Paul Dombey's that is stressed
in the very first scene. Three brothers are the narrators of The Sound
and the Fury and Faulkner, too, establishes his concern with genealogy
in his appendix to the novel where he traces several generations of the
Comps Sons. In fact, though, both novels are the stories of women: moth-
ers and daughters, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands. Less than
a third of the way through Dombey and Son, the story of father and son
ends in little Paul's death, and a grieving Miss Tox first voices the
sentiment that becomes a major motif in the story: "Dear me, dear me!
To think that Dombey and Son should be a daughter after all!" (Chapter 16)
Faulkner, in several interviews, stressed the importance of regarding
The Sound and the Fury as Caddy's story:

To me, she was the beautiful one, she was my
heart's darling. That's what I wrote the book
about and I used the tools which seemed to me
the proper tools to try to tell it, to try to
draw the picture of Caddy.¹

It's the tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her
daughter.²

Why, then, did Dickens and Faulkner create such a disparity between
thematic intention and structural design in the two novels? Why focus
on the lives of women under the guise of telling stories about men's
thoughts and men's worlds? First, possibly, because such a structure reflects the topsy-turvy nature of the world of the two novels, where men's values and ambitions are both undergirded and undercut by the women at the center of their personal lives. Second, because such a structure allows the authors to expose the perverting effect on the family of the very social environment that the men represent and attempt to uphold. Both Paul Dombey and Jason Compson, for example, are made villains by their adherence to a materialism that is a virtue in a mercantile society. Such inversion of societal virtue and personal vice is followed by inversions and upheavals within the family also. Dombey and Son and The Sound and the Fury as well as The Old Curiosity Shop, which shares features of the other two, are stories of the perversion and inversion of healthy family relationships and the warping effect of such relationships upon the child, who in turn carries his twisted roles and attitudes into society at large: childish parents, motherly daughters, materialistic mothers, and burdened, overly-mature children. The web of influence is complex indeed, but its various strands can be untangled through examination of the roles of the women central to each story and of recurring narrative structures and motifs that illustrate the darkening social vision of both artists.

In her interpretation of Faulkner's view of women, Sally Page emphasizes motherhood as the last viable ideal in Faulkner's universe:

The role of motherhood fosters communication and self-transcendence, for childbearing unites the woman with the ultimate purpose of nature and enables her to defy her own isolation and to create relation through the establishment of
the family. The ideal of self-sacrifice on which effective motherhood is based provides mankind with an ethic that can bring moral order to the chaos of existence. Further, the mother is quite literally the only means by which man can achieve his limited immor
tality - the survival of the human race.3

A very similar statement is made by Jenni Calder in her analysis of
the family in Dickens:

The image of care is crucial in Dickens' portrayal of women. All the women he wants us to admire look after others, par
ticularly men.4

Interestingly, though, the real mothers in these novels fall painfully short of fulfilling the ideal, and even contribute to the decay and destruction of the family rather than to its preservation.

Mrs. Compson in her whining describes her own role in The Sound and the Fury: "I'll be gone soon. I know I'm just a burden to you." (page 276) And she is a burden to each member of the family. In her lack of sympathy and understanding for Benjy, she deprives him of Caddy's healthy influence and upsets his carefully ordered universe with her alternate mourning over him and attempting to discipline him. She burdens her husband with the support of her shiftless brother Maury, and aggravates the problems with her false claims of having married beneath herself.

Mrs. Compson is also responsible, at least partly, for Caddy's flight to the arms of Dalton Ames, her increasing promiscuity, and her final escape from home in an early, forced marriage. She discourages Caddy's unselfish mothering impulses, especially with Benjy:
-72-

Bring him here, Mother said. He's too big for you to carry. You must stop trying. You'll injure your back. All of our women have prided themselves on their carriage. Do you want to look like a washerwoman.

And she neurotically overreacts to Caddy's budding sexuality:

like the time when she happened to see one of them kissing Caddy and all next day she went around the house in a black dress and veil and even Father couldn't get her to say a word except crying and saying her little daughter was dead.

In both examples, as in all she does, Mrs. Compson is concerned only with appearances; like Benjy, so long as the surface order of things is preserved, she is content.

In her exaggerated concern with appearances, Mrs. Compson has a counterpart in Mrs. Skewton, the mother of Edith Dombey. Both mothers push the daughters into loveless marriages for selfish reasons: Mrs. Skewton to secure Dombey's wealth, Mrs. Compson to cover Caddy's unwed pregnancy. Both marriages dissolve, and the daughters are left tragic, damned, and fallen women, cut off forever from the only valuable things in their lives - Caddy from her daughter Quentin, Edith from her step-daughter Florence. In both stories, Dickens and Faulkner show a penetrating understanding of the basic self-concern and self-aggrandizement of each mother when she stoops to become her daughter's surrogate in the game of courtship. The scenes are strikingly similar, and painfully true; beaux have been found for both Caddy and Edith at resort areas, and when the girls studiously ignore or discourage their suitors (or, in
Edith's case, her suitor's spokesman), the mothers engage in the meaningless flattery and embarrassing coquetry of courting.

Here Mrs. Skewton rested her elbow on the little table at her side, dangled her fan to and fro, and lazily admired her hand while speaking... "Edith," simpered Mrs. Skewton, "who is the perfect pearl of my life, is said to resemble me. I believe we are alike." "There is one man in the world who will never admit that anyone resembles you, ma'am," said the Major... Cleopatra made as if she would brain the flatterer with her fan, but relenting, smiled upon him and proceeded.

(Dombey and Son, Chapter 26)

... are you going to treat my baby girl that way Herbert but I know you won't Herbert has spoiled us all to death... Ah Herbert Candace do you hear that... You needn't be jealous though it's just an old woman he's flattering a grown married daughter I can't believe it.

Nonsense you look like a girl you are lots younger than Candace colour in your cheeks like a girl...

(The Sound and the Fury, pp. 116-17)

The point is that Mrs. Compson is not "lots younger" than Caddy, just as Mrs. Skewton is not "like Edith," but as long as they act those parts and refuse the responsibilities of their motherhood, they force their daughters into unnatural competition with them.

Dickens chooses to make his statement about mothers selling and betraying daughters even more pronounced by creating the parallel lower-class figures of Alice and her mother Good Mrs. Brown, who literally sells her child (between the lines, of course) into prostitution. But he makes it clear that he finds the root of the problem not in social necessity, but in the selfishness of a human heart: "Were this miserable mother, and this miserable daughter, only the reduction to their lowest grade, of certain social vices sometimes prevailing higher up?" (Chapter 34)
Dickens and Faulkner agree that the failure of the mother results in the death or destruction of the child. Little Paul Dombey is doomed from the start because he literally lacks the nourishing care of a mother. His own mother fails him by not "making an effort" to live (Chapter 1), the motherly nurse Polly Toodle is wrenched from him as abruptly as his own mother, and Paul is left in the hands of such poor mother substitutes as masculine, dusty, bookish Miss Blimber and shrivelled, symbolically dry Mrs. Pipchin ("all her waters of gladness and milk of human kindness had been pumped out dry" – Chapter 8). Paul's early withering in such atmospheres is very understandable.

Quentin Compson's death, too, is partially caused by the lack of a mother's love and care. Even in his final days of suicidal obsession with his sister's loss of virginity, Quentin can trace the ruin of the family past Caddy back to his mother: "if I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother" (page 213). Quentin's obsession with Caddy is primarily an attempt to keep for himself the only care and motherly love he has known, that of his sister. Quentin also realizes the extent to which he and his siblings are limited and trapped by forces beyond their control. He tells Caddy, "there's a curse upon us it's not our fault." (page 196) Cleanth Brooks agrees, and connects Quentin's insights in a way that Quentin cannot.

The curse upon Quentin and the rest of the Compsons is the presence of their hypochondriac, whining mother... The basic cause of the breakup of the Compson family... is the cold and self-centered mother who is sensitive about the social status of her own family, the Bascombs, who feels the birth of an idiot son as a kind of personal
affront, who spoils and corrupts her favorite son, and who withholds any real love and affection from her other children and her husband.5

Returning to Page's assertion that the mother provides both actual continuity and growth of the family and immortality for man through preservation of the human species, we can trace a consistent pattern of sterility and death from mothers to children in these novels. In the Compson family, Caddy vanishes, Quentin commits suicide, Benjy is gelded and institutionalized, Jason remains a bachelor, and Quentin II disappears into a probable life of prostitution. The whole world of the Dombeyseems childless: little Paul dies, Edith becomes an abandoned and fallen childless woman, Alice Brown dies of fever, Harriet Carker remains a spinster to care for her brother, and the Chicks, Miss Tox, and Major Bagstock produce no offspring. Florence does have children and redeems the despair of the novel, but they are Gays rather than Dombeyse, and thus are closer to the world of the Toodles than to that of the Dombeyse. The Trent family in The Old Curiosity Shop is also doomed, for after the death of Little Nell and her grandfather, the only ones left are the grandfather's bachelor brother and Nell's brother Frederick, who is not heard of again; Little Nell cannot survive to produce children as her mother did.

Both authors use the outward and visible signs of the families' dwellings to symbolize the decay within. Little Nell and her grandfather are at home in a shop filled with antiques and old memorabilia, then are completely homeless for most of the novel, finally living in the ruins of an ancient home near a graveyard. The Dombey house, too, is
a mausoleum - cold and dreary with only a few rooms open during Florence's and Paul's childhood, then equally cold and forbidding in its stately elegance as Edith Dombey's establishment. Dickens' refrain "and the rats fly from it" (Chapter 59) when the home is emptied as the financial house of Dombey and Son falls, adds a final sense of contagion and decay. The Compson mansion is much like Dombey's - originally stately and lovely but now closed-up, darkened, and devoid of warmth and humanity. With the selling of Benjy's pasture, even accessible nature becomes limited to the area behind the iron gate and Benjy's "graveyard" with its few narcissus flowers. The children of the families that live in these houses are sadly misplaced - little Nell surrounded by grotesques and antiques, Florence Dombey banished to a gloomy upstairs room, the Compson children deprived of the branch and the pasture, their only remaining link with the innocence and happiness of childhood. Finally, of course, they are driven out altogether: the Compsons scattered to places as diverse as the Jackson asylum and a Nazi retreat, little Nell in the grave, and Florence Dombey fleeing her father's house to seek a permanent refuge in the Wooden Midshipman and the world of Walter Gay.

Caddy's daughter Quentin provides a final note on the deterministic world of these novels. Just as little Paul Dombey is destined to die because his father has great expectations for him as an adult only and refuses to recognize and nurture him as a child, so Quentin is molded by the distorting expectations of Jason and Mrs. Compson. In a bitter quarrel about her truancy from school and her promiscuous dating, Quentin tells Jason, "Whatever I do, it's your fault. If I'm bad, it's because I had
to be. You made me." (page 324) Neither Quentin nor Faulkner is trying to deny or excuse the fact that Quentin is indeed a bad girl; in the words of Cleanth Brooks: "The child is nearly everything that Jason bitterly accuses her of being: she is a cheap little wanton." But Quentin's choices of roles have been severely limited. Jason, who has despotic disciplinary and financial control over the child, regards her as an outlet for revenge upon his sister Caddy and even as an extension of Caddy, a young helpless version of his sister that he can taunt, warp, and despise. Jason's dominating will, though cruel rather than simply proud and selfish, works on Quentin much the way Dombey's works on his son. Both children fall victims to the adult's destructive designs by their very fulfillment of their elders' expectations. Dombey cares to see Paul only as an adult, to turn "six into sixteen" instantly, and Paul in a pitiful way becomes a very old man as a very young child, sitting in a tiny armchair discussing death and money and lying beside the seashore unable to play. The first of Jason's thoughts that we read is "once a bitch, always a bitch" (page 223) followed later by "Like I say you can't do anything with a woman like that, if she's got it in her. If it's in her blood, you can't do anything with her," (page 290) and both pronouncements he aims distinctly at Quentin. So Quentin can be nothing but a bitch to Jason, for simply by being Caddy's child she's got it "in her blood," and with no other significant opinions of her voiced by the adults in her world, Quentin lives up to and exceeds Jason's expectations of her.

It is significant that while both Dickens and Faulkner see in the
child the world's chances of hope, improvement, and rejuvenation, three important novels center around the hopelessness of an individual child's life without the necessary component of motherly love and care. Little Nell, both Quentins, Caddy, and Paul Dombey are either motherless or cut off from mothering influences; only Florence Dombey emerges triumphant, and she has been strengthened when she too could have crumbled despairing by the sincere if somewhat peculiar love of Edith and the tenacious loyalty of Susan Nipper. Comments about these children are remarkably similar, almost interchangeable. "Ah, poor houseless, wandering, motherless child!" Nell's grandfather says of her (The Old Curiosity Shop, Chapter 44) and the words could be a summing up of the runaway Quentin. Her uncle Quentin could have sympathized deeply with Florence Dombey's feeling that "not an orphan in the wide world can be so deserted as the child who is outcast from a living parent's love." (Dombey and Son, Chapter 24)

Joseph Gold writes of The Old Curiosity Shop that it embodies the Dickensian awareness that only profound changes in individual consciousness can change the social state of affairs, an awareness that necessarily emphasizes the importance of children and interpersonal relationships. Gold goes on to describe the novel as a sort of experiment,

the experiment of placing a human embodiment of innocence in the midst of a fallen world and watching its systematic destruction. The innocence cannot survive but it is also incorruptible. The juxtaposition produces a moral commentary on the nature of that corruption which cannot recognize and value the innocence it destroys.7
Faulkner shared this same awareness, and while the structures of Dickensian and Faulknerian "fallen worlds" deserve more analysis, there is a fairly simple continuum of innocence destroyed from Little Nell to Quentin II. As Little Nell is almost solely an embodiment of virtue, rather than a child of flesh and blood, so her death is almost automatic, ethereal, and painless: there are no pangs of hunger or disturbing diseases, though the child dies of want and misuse - Little Nell simply departs from the callous human world. Paul Dombey, too, is allowed an early death - the absolute preservation of human innocence - though in the quasi-realistic world of Dombey materialism, the sense of the child as real, as literally undernourished, unhappy, and physically wasting away is much stronger than when Nell dies. For Faulknerian children, however, death is not an easy relief granted from above, a sad but comforting release from the ugly realities of life; only Quentin dies, and by his own hand, an act of preserving romantic innocence that is distinctly neurotic rather than transcendant. And Quentin II is corrupted - Faulkner's "moral commentary" on Jason's destructive influence does little to ameliorate the grimness of her fate: "And so vanished; whatever occupation overtook her would have arrived in no chromium Mercedes: whatever snapshot would have contained no general of staff." (page 426)

We are left, finally, with only the living innocence of Benjy, the idiot, child of God in the eyes of Dilsey, an interesting but hopeless variation of the idea that started with Dickens' Little Nell, of innocence that is absolutely incorruptible and at the same time absolutely doomed.

Structurally, both Dickens and Faulkner use elements of the fairy
tale as appropriate vehicles to convey the dehumanization of these worlds, the absolutism of innocence versus adult experience, and the child's perception of his relationship to the problematic world around him. By so doing, they establish the fundamentality of the stories' themes and relationships, and also direct the reader's sympathy toward the child-as-victim or the child-as-hero by drawing the reader closer to the child's way of viewing the situation.

Michael Kotsiz, in a helpful book entitled Dickens and the Fairy Tale, defines several basic elements that recur in Dickens' treatment of fairy tales: villains that are clearly defined, objectified, almost grotesque - Carker, Quilp, and Fagin, for example; cruel mothers or step-mothers that use and tyrannize their children - Mrs. Clennam and Good Mrs. Brown; and young hero rescuers like Walter Gay, Kit, and Dick Swiveller that face adversaries of far more power and who win happy resolutions only with supernatural help. Faulkner, too, employs these devices in The Sound and the Fury, and we are aware of how conscious both authors are of the importance of seeing the fairy-tale dimensions of the novels through the rhetorical clues that they provide us. In Faulkner, it is the prevalent sense of a "curse" on the Compson household that Quentin directly relates to Caddy and that Luster obliquely refers to when he dates the Compsons' troubles from when they changed Maury's name to Benjamin. Dickens tells us in the first pages of The Old Curiosity Shop that Little Nell "seemed to exist in a kind of allegory" (Chapter 1) and that there was a spell upon the empty mansion where Florence Dombey stayed alone - "The spell upon it was more wasting than the spell that
used to set enchanted houses sleeping once upon a time." (Chapter 23)

Villains and cruel stepmothers are part of a dehumanized universe. Dehumanization is both a cause and a result of the destruction and corruption in the novels: by treating people as objects rather than persons adults fail to see problems and to provide love, and when their world begins to collapse, they bitterly tend more than ever to reify those around them as an escape from responsibility and involvement. Jason Compson and Quilp are ogres because they regard everyone else only in relation to their selfish ends: Caddy's failed marriage means only no bank job for Jason, Nell's flight with her grandfather means to Quilp only a lost possibility for revenge. The two become especially odious because they will stoop even to torment children - Jason burns circus tickets rather than give them to Luster, and Quilp takes vicious sexual delight in terrorizing Nell with promises to marry her. Fathers and grandfathers, too, become tyrants when they fail to see the world unselfishly - Paul Dombey's and Nell's grandfathers cause their children great suffering through what seems to them efforts to further and improve their children's fortunes. The two men make a fundamental mistake in seeking first to give their children the gifts of money and position rather than the gifts of love and personal care. And both find out too late that without care the children perish and that then money is of no use to bring them back.

Cruel mothers also participate in this failure to nurture their children. More often than actually tormenting their children, they victimize them through neglect and attention to their own selfish ends.
Mrs. Skewton, Good Mrs. Brown, and Mrs. Compson are all portrayed as whining, hypochondriac burdens on the tender natures of their children, and because they conceal scheming selfishness under their sickly exteriors, their children quickly learn to recognize their hypocrisy and to become in turn callous, neurotic, and generally suspicious of the motives of everyone. Edith Dombey, Alice Brown, and Caddy all grow to be women who view themselves as objects to be bartered in a commercial world, who reject demonstrations of care and affection, and who die, outcast, outside the circles of family and society. These children are the exiles, the castaways, condemned as in many fairy tales to wander the face of the earth alone and without the sustenance of community.

There is also a fairy-tale sense in the novels of the absolute distance between the world of the child and adult understanding, of the child alone in situations that he cannot order or control. Faulkner's inspiring image for The Sound and the Fury was a group of children, one in a pear tree, observing but not comprehending their grandmother's funeral. This sense of seeing but not understanding as adults do is especially heightened in Benjy; for him the golfers calling "caddy" has a distinct significance, but not the same one that the golfers apply to it. Little Nell knows nothing of her grandfather's gambling debts, but feels the impact of their blow to her home and peace of mind. Florence Dombey is powerless to order action in her enchanted house, unable to open communication with her aloof father, and little Paul Dombey is at the mercy of even Doctor Blimber's clock that unceasingly questions him "how, is, my, lit, tle, friend?" (Chapter 11)
In such a world where adult reasonings and solutions are unavailable, the child frequently turns inward, becoming the victim of his own fears and guilts, blaming himself for adult problems. Little Nell broods on her grandfather's depression, has nightmares of his death, and strives to serve him better, even by becoming a beggar for him. Florence Dombey places no blame on her father for his indifference toward her and instead studies ("the study of a loving heart") ways to make her father love her more. (Chapter 24) Caddy Compson blames her father's drinking upon her promiscuity, and also uses her lost life as a justification for giving her daughter to Jason to raise.

The worlds of *Dombey and Son*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *The Sound and the Fury*, with their falling houses, compulsive gambling, treachery, and hatred seem almost invulnerable to any fairy-tale rescue and rebirth by a child hero. Adult problems are rooted in adult pasts, society mirrors and condones the very causes of corruption, and the child has no voice and no power in a world where he is largely isolated and ignored.

Rejuvenation, it seems, comes from the renewing power of innocence, but Dickens and Faulkner carefully point out the repeated threats to that innocence. Little Nell does save her grandfather from the total degradation of gambling with stolen money, but their last repose is temporary and only a literal step away from the graveyard. Nell wins best through the agency of memory - the loving memory of Kit and Barbara as they establish a family that is "a propagation of goodness and benevolence," (Chapter 73) and memory in Dickens' more vague assurance that "There is nothing...innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten."
(Chapter 54) Florence Dombey does finally win the love of her father, but more through his sudden conversion brought about by great misfortune and total isolation than by the success of her patient study of how to secure his affection. And Florence is powerless to win back into useful life the ruined Edith, for the problems of sex, passion, pride, and reputation are beyond the salvation a simple loving heart can offer. Walter Gay relives only part of the Dick Whittington story, a favorite prediction his uncle makes for Walter's life; he marries the master's daughter, but must rebuild the fallen empire on his own. In Faulkner's world, the power of innocence is weaker still—Quentin's roommate Shreve taunts him that "Young Lochinvar rode out of the west a little too soon, didn't he?" (page 115) and Quentin realizes that he is powerless to rescue his sister even through the desperate lie of incest and desire for safe refuge in hell. Each of the novels ends with the sense of the world continuing corrupt, chaotic, and unchanged: outside the grave, the seashore retreat, and the ordered trip of a carriage around a monument thrive the worlds mimicked by Jarley's waxworks and the violence of real-life Punch shows, the relentless railroad and impersonal industrialism, petty greed and small town backwardness.

The message of hope in these dark novels, like the message of despair, lies in the children. If Dickens and Faulkner create mothers who fail to live up to Page's criteria of the ideal of unselfish motherhood that "provides mankind with an ethic that can bring moral order to the chaos of existence," they also provide substitutes in motherly children who give freely their love and care to those around them. Florence Dom-
bey, Little Nell, and Caddy Compson all serve as substitute mothers, tend-
ing and nursing the men in their worlds. Symbolically and literally, they
carry and guide others through the world on their tender shoulders — con-
sider the image of Florence Dombey singing to Little Paul as she carries
him upstairs in her arms, the picture of Caddy stooping to carry and com-
fort the idiot brother too heavy for her arms, and Little Nell firmly
clasping the arm of her grandfather to lead him away from the threaten-
ing crowd at the Punch show.

From her earliest years, Florence is a substitute mother to Paul.
Her brother relies on her for companionship, for help with his lessons,
for affection in a world where he is seldom treated as a mere lovable
young boy. Paul expresses a keen awareness of his reliance on Florence;
at the beach he tells her "If you were in India, Floy, I should — what is
it Mama did? I forget...Died. If you were in India, I should die, Floy."
(Chapter 8) When Paul is dying, it is Florence who nurses him, sitting
patiently at his bedside until the end. Even in her most casual rela-
tionships, Florence is motherly and domestic — she looks after absent-
minded Toots, gives her allowance as a parting gift to Walter Gay, and
prepares meals during her stay at Captain Cuttle's, a significant domes-
tic ritual of care and nurturing in Dickens' novels. Florence is at
her best, of course, in her unselfish capacity for forgiveness — the
grace of her love is finally Dombey's salvation, though he has rejected
it before: she rescues him from death by despair and once again serves
as nurse, using her love to restore him to a life of loving and caring.

Little Nell, too, is motherly: in her laughing tolerance of Kit's
antics, her concern for her grandfather, her consolation of the bereaved
schoolmaster. When we first meet Nell, she is paradoxically a guiding force in the midst of being lost herself; Master Humphrey says of her "We trudged away together; the little creature accommodating her pace to mine, and rather seeming to lead and take care of me than I to be protecting her." (Chapter 1) It is she who resolves on flight, and she who cares for her grandfather in his ill, childish state, which Dickens speaks of as a cruel reversal of roles, "a hollow mockery...of the laughing light and life of childhood." (Chapter 12) Nell is the center of rationality, discipline, and responsibility in the novel – her grandfather is blinded to her suffering and a "mere child" (Chapter 29) in his compulsion to gamble, and the adults Nell deals with in the book are largely aimless, forlorn, selfish, or malicious. Nell only allows herself to admit weariness and sink into the repose of death after she has "saved" (Chapter 43) her grandfather and assured herself that he is safe and permanently well-cared-for.

Caddy Compson sacrifices herself only after securing (or so she hopes) the well-being of those she cares for. She has been the actual mother of her brothers since childhood – comforting and communicating with Benjy, caring for Quentin, disciplining Jason. From girlhood, she has been the real authority her brothers looked to, with the sanction of her father – he gives her permission on the day of Damuddy's funeral to "Let them mind me tonight." (page 28) She is both solicitous and patronizing to her sickly mother: "Hush mother! Caddy said. 'You go upstairs and lay down, so you can be sick.'" (page 78) Part of Quentin's memory of his last conversation with Caddy before her marriage is a
litany of her question "Will you look after Benjy and Father?" (page 143) The last two direct views of Caddy are images of her caring but unable to help — running in her long wedding veil "like shining wind" (page 47) to comfort the bellowing Benjy and relinquishing her daughter Quentin to Jason because she has nothing to offer her and "'nothing at stake,' she says, 'Nuh-nuh-nothing.'" (page 260)

To burden a child with adult roles, though, exacts a great price. As Master Humphrey says, young initiation into the ways of life "checks their confidence and simplicity...and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments." (The Old Curiosity Shop, Chapter 1) F. R. Leavis speaks of "the life-fostering wonder of childhood" and how so many of Dickens' children are deprived of it. When Edith Dombey is most bitter toward her mother, her accusation is "You gave birth to a woman" (Dombey and Son, Chapter 27). She feels most cheated of any spontaneous joy in life and her accomplishments, a joy that she tries desperately to preserve for Florence. Like Paul Dombey, who tells Doctor Blimber "I had rather be a child" (Dombey and Son, Chapter 11), Florence, Nell, and Caddy have little choice in the adult burdens they shoulder — faced with the need others have of their care, their denial of self is sincere, unthinking, and almost a matter of course. Accordingly, the children are stultified, subdued, and lacking in the hopeful liveliness of childhood — Nell has terrible nightmares, Florence shrinks from those who know of her father's neglect and seek to help her, and Caddy's concern is always with maintaining family tranquility rather than providing for her own happiness. Their
love is hopeful and noble, but never exultant or triumphant.

Dickens and Faulkner seem to agree that in such a battle the immoral world is destined to win: that children, no matter how good, are still children, and not strong enough to impose goodness and order on a chaotic world. Neither can they provide the necessary component of hopefulness for mankind that real mothers do — the continuation and through it the progress of the race. The world of these novels gives back little of the care and sustenance that the children give it. In a gloss upon Faulkner's comment that *The Sound and the Fury* is Caddy's story, John Longley says that "Caddy's tragedy is that she will never find anyone commensurate with her own capacity to love." It is the tragedy of all three. Nell's grandfather refuses to see until too late that his love for Nell and hope for her future are really a part of his compulsive design that takes little notice of her hopes, and she dies trying to open his eyes to the real fortune they possess in one another's companionship. Florence wins the love of her father, but it is a love given in weakness rather than in strength, and she must retire to a private seashore world in order for her father and his love to survive; the commercial world, the major realm of *Dombey and Son*, remains unconquered by love and unchanged. And Caddy is lost, too: she flees the strangling, neurotic love demands of her family, but finds no compensating love in the outside world, and so must relinquish all ties. She ends "cold, damned, serene," not wanting to be saved because she "hasn't anything anymore worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose." (page 420) Lost children, lost love, diminished hope for the future — these
are the somber predictions of Dickens and Faulkner for a world of people trapped in their own selfish enchantments, that can neither recognize nor return the love of children, their most innocent and important inhabitants.

Dickens and Faulkner, then, view the position of children, especially girls, in the world of their novels as a particularly difficult and painful one. To begin with, circumstance is against them: the world is a man's world of business and money - trading ships called the Son and Heir and pastures sold to send sons to college. Girls are goods in a materialistic world, polished with accomplishments like so many shiny wares to be bought and sold in a marriage contract. Their sphere of influence is circumscribed; they are of central importance to the home, yet powerless to fight against outside forces that change or destroy it.

Children are also used and abused by those closest to them and most influential, their parents. Mothers like Caroline Compson and Cleopatra Skewton see their children only as they relate to themselves: they demand attention, barter their children to improve their own social position, and lament loudly when their children recognize their hypocrisies and turn against them. Fathers are often either weak or tyrannical: both the cynical defeatist Mr. Compson and the aloof determined Dombey destroy
their children by failing to aid them or to see their problems from any perspective but their own.

The result of such treatment shows the truth of the saying "As the twig is bent, so inclines the tree." The children of these novels are forced or warped into paths prepared by their parents' shortcomings. They wither and die (Nell, Paul Dombey, Quentin), are lost through pride or passion (Quentin II, Caddy, Edith Dombey), or survive only in isolation from the world (Florence Dombey). In fact, the shape of the entire world of these novels is determined by the nature of the past, the particular "curses" that lie upon each family through the shortcomings of the elders. Structurally, Dickens and Faulkner find parallels to such environments in the dark, irrational, preordained enchantment of the fairy tale; visually, they reproduce the sense of paralysis and destruction in decaying, collapsing houses.

In these dark visions, Dickens and Faulkner are making strong statements about a belief they share - the absolute importance of the individual will and its power for good or evil. The will, they seem to be saying, is molded by environment and influence, but is ultimately stronger than and apart from both. Thus we see the central girl child characters rising above perversion and destruction to love and nurture those around them, to fill the motherly roles left empty by actual mothers. But the will alone is unable to triumph over obstacles of pride and hatred, and cannot survive indefinitely where they are dominant; each individual battle is finally a losing one. There is, however, an element of hope in this tragic vision: if, Dickens and Faulkner seem to
suggest, each individual acts to the utmost his part for good, he pre-
disposes the future world and future individuals to be better, stronger,
and capable of moving a little further towards progress. Caddy is lost,
Nell perseveres for good in loving memory alone, and only Florence
weathers the storms to gather her own family together, but for their
efforts we remember them and with Faulkner call them our "heart's dar-
lings...the beautiful ones."
NOTES


3 Page, p.46.


9 Page, p.46.


PART III: THE LARGER FRONT - VICTIMIZATION
AND SURVIVAL IN TIME AND THE WORLD

Chapter 4: Self-Willed Victims: Miss Havisham
and Miss Rosa Coldfield

"There are...some occurrences which stop us
dead as though by some impalpable interven-
tion, like a sheet of glass through which
we watch all subsequent events transpire as
though in a soundless vacuum, and fade, van-
ish; are gone, leaving us immobile, impotent,
helpless; fixed, until we can die. That was
I."

Rosa Coldfield
Absalom, Absalom! (Chapter 5)

Chapter 3 explored the unfortunate position of children, particu-
larly girls, in worlds where families are miserable, parents are either
selfish or cruel and use their children for their own ends, and society
is largely indifferent to their fate. Twisted and "cursed" by problems
not of their own making, these young victims have little of the romantic
capacity of innocence for triumphing in an evil world and must struggle
to assert, albeit minimally, their power for good. Both Dickens and
Faulkner study in characters like Florence and Edith Dombey, Caddy and
Quentin Compson, how the individual will is shaped by circumstance and
past events, and how it ultimately comes to shape itself for good or
evil. They seem to conclude that each individual is defined by elements
outside himself, and that no matter how inherently good and giving
characters like Florence and Caddy are, they are limited in the amount of positive change they can effect in the outer world. Triumph, at best, becomes the simple survival of positive values and wholesome characters in a world that is materialistic, callous, and corrupt. Children inherit no easy situations or solutions - they may die like Little Neil and thus triumph only in the memory of loved ones, or they may endure like Florence Dombey and her children, but isolated from the urban world and its conflicts.

This dialectic between the will and reality, the fluctuation between rejection and acceptance of meanings and values determined by society, the attempt of each individual to define his own reality are subjects that are returned to, but from a different perspective, by Faulkner and Dickens in Absalom, Absalom! and Great Expectations, two novels widely acknowledged as masterpieces by modern critical audiences. Many of the structures are the same as in the earlier novels: the same fairy-tale and mythic dimensions that have informed the worlds of the Compsons and the Dombey's are basic to Sutpen's Hundred and Satis House, and again stories that center around male protagonists are overshadowed and frequently dominated by the figures of women: the eerie, tormented figures, for instance, of Rosa Coldfield and Miss Havisham.

Their power is due, at least in part, to the working roles they play in the unfolding stories: like the novelists and the protagonist/narrators Pip and Quentin, Miss Havisham and Rosa Coldfield are telling their own stories, defining their own concepts of meaning and reality. Here are no childish, passive victims to be acted upon: unlike the
characters in Chapter 3, these greyed, hysterical spinsters seize the reader as they do the other characters through their participation in the central act of the two novels: the narration itself, the telling of the story, the defining of the past, and the making of truth.

That Dickens and Faulkner interweave three key elements of each novel – the old woman as participant and storyteller, the young male protagonist as listener and actor, and the story itself that emerges as myth or fairytale or history to act upon both teller and listener – into very similar patterns is hardly coincidental. And the masterful achievement of the two novels is the result of this very interweaving. Speaking of David Copperfield, Monroe Engel notes "the recession of the central character from the novel,"¹ the way in which David as interpreter of his own life and other narrative action is somewhat overwhelmed by the vigor and multiplicity of the actions he witnesses. There is no such awkward recession in Great Expectations or Absalom, Absalom!. Miss Havisham and Rosa Coldfield loom large, but behind the central figures of Pip, Quentin, and Sutpen, shadowing and coloring the main tales. And, just as the figures within each work reflect and illuminate one another, the purposes and techniques of the two novels viewed together enrich the comprehension of each – involving the reader in an extended "overpassing" that Faulkner made central to communication in Absalom, Absalom!, the "happy marriage of speaking and listening" (Chapter 8) and, not incidentally, understanding.

The same surface impressions and images outline both Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham. They are terrifying old women: Quentin first notices
"the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity while
the worn haggard face watched above the faint triangle of lace at wrists
and throat" (Chapter 1), while Pip sees Miss Havisham as "a figure...
shrunk to skin and bone...some ghostly waxwork...a skeleton [that] seemed
to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me." (Chapter 8) Their natu-
ral element seems to be the coffin-like rooms where they have immolated
themselves; they shun natural light with heavily shaded windows and dim
candlelight. Yet the two figures so appropriately identified as hovering
near the tomb and living a sort of death-in-life existence, are also odd-
ly associated throughout their stories with bridal imagery and trappings -
a grotesque usurping of the symbols of life's gayest celebration. Miss
Havisham, of course, is actually arrayed in a bridal gown, or rather mockery of one.

But I saw that everything within my view
which ought to be white, had been white
long ago, and had lost its lustre, and
was faded and yellow. I saw that the
bride within the bridal dress had with-
ered like the dress, and like the flow-
er, and had no brightness left but the
brightness of her sunken eyes.
(Chapter 8)

Miss Rosa is more obliquely associated with bridal trappings, apart from
the incongruously frivolous lace of her attire, but a central image of
the novel is her careful laboring over a bridal trousseau for Judith,
garments that she sews from stolen goods without Judith's knowledge,
and that, like Miss Havisham's, mark an unconsummated union. The gar-
ments, moreover, were vicariously hers (as Charles Bon was to her imagi-
nation her vicarious lover) - "stitches on a garment which she would
never wear and never remove for a man whom she was not even to see alive." (Chapter 3)

Both women are in fact victimized in bridal circumstances by men who affiance them only as part of selfish designs. Miss Havisham is the tool of her lover, the arch-villain Compeyson, in a scheme to defraud her of wealth; with the help of her half-brother who also is used and betrayed, Compeyson robs and deserts her on their wedding day. The betrayal becomes the central event and focus of her life. Rosa, too, is betrayed by her arch-villain, Thomas Sutpen. She abases herself to accept his proposal of marriage after a lifetime of fearing and disliking him (Miss Havisham, too, speaks of "real love" as abasement and "self-humiliation"—Chapter 29), to be further outraged by his condition that they try first and produce a son before marriage vows are taken. Like Miss Havisham, Rosa spends the rest of her life in deliberate, furious recollection of this outrage.

These elements—the darkened house, the bridal trappings, the death-in-life existences—relate to a single significant motif in the two novels: how the characters relate to and manipulate time. The manipulation of time, moreover, is a critical action of the will, and Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham are both used to demonstrate, to the protagonists and to the reader, extreme versions of the imposition of individual will on time and thus on reality.

The two women literally remove themselves from time and deny the claims of the present. Olga Vickery speaks of Miss Rosa as "forever watching other people's lives unfold while hers remains unchanged."
(emphasis mine) Why, though? And how, in a world that changes cata-
clysically, permanently reshaping the lives of others? Miss Rosa is an
observer rather than an actor because she chooses to be one, and her
"outrage" at Thomas Sutpen provides the catalyst and the justification
for stopping time forty-three years in the past. Miss Havisham even more
dramatically removes her world from the temporal one, even stopping the
clocks at the fateful hour of twenty minutes before nine:

I felt as if the stopping of the clocks had stopped Time in that mysterious place, and
while I and everything else outside it grew older, it stood still. (Chapter 17)

The benefits of stopping time are twofold: both women are protected from
further hurt or outrage, while also becoming impervious to the fear that
will torment Quentin Compson in The Sound and the Fury - that time and
change will heal the wound, lessen the grief and thus the importance of
the sin against them. But in preserving themselves as permanent victims
of hurt and betrayal, Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham further victimize
themselves, for they become perpetual prisoners of the past, doomed to
repeat the role of victim endlessly in order to preserve the event. Two
echoes of Nietzsche, they become prisoners of their own wills - unable
really to stop time, powerless really to repeat and change the past, and
excluded from the present and the future.

John Irwin speaks of the problem of dealing with the past in Absalom,
Absalom! in this way: "Since the will operates in the temporal world and
since time moves only in one direction, the will can never really get at
the past." The alternative, he goes on to say, is to take a sort of re-
venge against time, and this is the purpose of Miss Havisham as well as
Miss Rosa. Their revenge works in two directions: they re-create the past to fit their interpretation by repeating it from their private (and very biased) perspectives to listeners they hope will accept their version as history, as fact; and their stories are designed to be lessons and challenges to their listeners vicariously to revenge them, to learn from the past and repeat it in an acceptable form. Thus Miss Rosa involves Quentin in the actual seeking out of Henry Sutpen as well as the listening to her story, and Miss Havisham raises Estella not only to understand heartbreak but to break the hearts of others. The two women choose their listeners carefully, for they must be made both to comprehend and be swayed to believe the past as it is presented to them and to act accordingly. And the old women are as inflexible in their purpose as they are hysterical in their eloquence.

"Why should I call you mad," returned Estella, "I, of all people? Does any one live, who knows what set purposes you have, half as well as I do? Does any one live, who knows what a steady memory you have, half as well as I do? I who have sat...learning your lessons and looking up into your face, when your face was strange and frightened me!...I am what you have made me." (Chapter 38)

"...you can write this and submit it to the magazines. Perhaps you will even remember kindly then the old woman who made you spend a whole afternoon sitting indoors and listening while she talked about people and events you were fortunate enough to escape yourself when you wanted to be out among friends of your own age."

"Yesum," Quentin said. Only she don't mean that, he thought. It's because she wants it told...He had yet in his pocket the note...with the neat faded cramped script...he did not recognize so revealing a character - cold, implacable, and even ruthless. (Chapter 1)
Yet it is this very inflexibility, this determination that first causes their listeners to suspect that there are warps and flaws in the versions of the past presented them. Pip is conscious from boyhood of a strangeness in Miss Havisham in more than her eccentric habits, of "the intensity of a mind mortally hurt and diseased." (Chapter 38) Shreve McCaslin, who never sees Miss Rosa, also voices a sense of disease when he hears her story from Quentin; hating, he says, "is like drink or drugs and she had used it so long that she did not dare risk cutting off the supply." (Chapter 9) Mr. Compson's description of Miss Rosa's condition eloquently describes both women -

the death of hope and love, the death of pride and principle, and then the death of everything save the old outraged and aghast unbelieving which has lasted...

(Chapter 5)

Not only do Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa impose their wills on time by freezing it at a single point, they also impose their inclinations on their listeners by trying to mold or define the two young men to their conceptions of suitability. Interestingly, their choices of "raw material" are quite similar; Pip and Quentin resemble one another in several important ways. They are both young, untried by the outer world, and thus relatively innocent, and they are about to embark on new ventures. Pip's apprenticeship to Joe is a hangover from the past, and Miss Havisham is actually preparing him for the larger world of London, while Quentin is about to encounter the equally complex and knowledgeable world of Harvard. Both Pip and Quentin are wrestling with a denial of their heritage - questioning family values, established truths, their own
positions in the scheme of things. Attendant upon such denial is a heavy cargo of guilt: they are ashamed of their rejection of accepted values, and the burden is only increased by their exposure to the old women's demands. This ongoing process of separating actual self from expected self is aggravated for both Pip and Quentin by the problematic nature of their love relationships. Both boys love an unattainable object—Estella at best is sisterly towards Pip, while Caddy is actually Quentin's sister. To win such love would carry unbearable consequences; fulfillment in a one-sided or incestuous relationship would be miserable and damming. And because Pip and Quentin realize the nature of their dilemma, they carry with them additional burdens of guilt—shame that they haven't chosen more acceptable objects of love, and knowledge of the misery that would come with attainment of such goals. In short, they are confused, undefined personalities ripe to be molded by the old women to fit their purposes.

Yet one must not lose sight of the central theme of the two novels: the growth of Pip and Quentin, their development and self-definition, the way they learn to distinguish truth, to see the world more clearly and more fully. Both Dickens and Faulkner introduce this motif of individual growth in the same way: as they listen and are influenced by the storytellers, both boys are actually hearing themselves, already beginning to sort out personal truth from what is simply presented as truth. Pip, of course, begins far afield; like Miss Havisham and her refusal to admit outside influences, Pip is determined to construct Miss Havisham's designs to fit his own "great expectations"—his belief
that he is her beneficiary and is destined to win and wed Estella. His
interpretation is not entirely fabricated: Miss Havisham tacitly encour-
ages him in his false belief, and the reader too is expected to be snared
by the same circumstantial evidence and inconclusive hints. Pip's
enlightenment is imposed from outside himself, for with the appearance
of Magwitch as true benefactor, Pip must completely reverse and re-
structure his image of himself and his now indefensible justifications
for his behavior.

Quentin begins in similar fashion, for as he listens to Miss Rosa's
tale from the earliest pages, he is restructuring her words into forms
meaningful to him. Quentin's enlightenment, though, is a process of
accretion rather than reversal. As the story of Sutpen is repeated,
different tellers fill gaps of what is unknown, or (like Pip's progress)
add new facts that substantially alter the validity of old ones. One
distinction, however, is crucial: Quentin continually approaches the
truth but only through intuitive, emotional perceptions. There is no
point at which the "real" story is told finally and factually, while
Pip's basic mystery is actually unraveled - he does in fact discover
the identity of his benefactor. But the processes of apprehending
the self and one's relationship to the world (past and present) are
unending.

An interesting explanation of why Pip "solves" his mystery when
Quentin cannot is indirectly provided by Milton Millhauser's analysis
of the three endings of Great Expectations. Millhauser contends that,
except for Victorian conventions of the need for an ending and a tying
up of loose ends, Pip's story would properly end "in medias res" when Joe and Biddy marry and he is left homeless with his future uncertain. Such an ending would be much closer to a modern view of the importance of process rather than resolution, and both Pip and Quentin would conclude by having rejected the extreme security of the crystallized life exemplified by Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa without having achieved the similar (and equally untrue) security of fixed positions with reference to the future.

Fixed positions or roles are dangerous because they encourage fixed personalities as well. And it is this self-willed creation of stasis that makes Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa most of all victims of themselves. The acts of betrayal at the times of their betrothals are only the beginning of these women's victimizations. Just as they fix time to suit their purposes, Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa fix themselves in one position — the betrayed victim — in acts of deliberate choice: Miss Havisham when she lays waste to Satis House and Miss Rosa when she returns to town only to become a recluse and scavenger. Hillis Miller, in examining the figure of Miss Havisham, notes an important parallel to Faulkner:

Miss Havisham...wants, rather, to crystallize her grief and bereavement into an eternal moment of shock and sorrow, like those of Faulkner's characters who remained immobilized with their backs to the future, facing some terrible event in the past which has determined the meaning of their lives. 5

Yet on the same page, apparently without realizing the contradiction, he makes clear a point that applies to Miss Rosa as well, and to Quentin
and Pip indirectly: that it is not the event, but the self, that determines the meaning of one's life. Miss Havisham, Miller says, preserves her rigid penance because she "wants to make certain that her betrayal will be the whole meaning of her life."6 So, no matter how terrible and victimizing the event, there must be deliberate, personal choice involved in deciding life's meanings and thus responsibility for that choice. It is the self, not villains like Sutpen or Compeyson or earth-shattering changes like the Civil War, that bears the responsibility for freezing the lives and characters of Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham, rendering them perpetual victims of their own hurts and hatreds.

Neither Dickens nor Faulkner makes it clear why Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham have such pathological responses to the misfortunes in their lives; the authors' careful craftsmanship, however, lays substantial foundations to make such behavior plausible. We know from the beginning of Herbert's story of Miss Havisham's betrayal that she had always been "a spoilt child," "very proud," and "too haughty...to be advised by anyone." (Chapter 22) Rosa's background, too, is telling, as is her opinion of herself: a "warped chrysalis" who had no childhood but only "barren youth," who hated her father and all men and saw "right" in doing so, and who saw herself as a "whistled dog" when she accepted Sutpen's proposal. (Chapter 5) Yet it is not their substance as accurate psychological types but their positions as potent moral examples for the protagonists that make Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham significant. Pip and Quentin see in them the deathly results of freezing time by placing too much emphasis on the past; they learn from these extreme,
diseased personalities the danger of ascribing too narrow and permanent
a meaning for the events they experience.

Most importantly and neatly, though, since it returns us to the
centrality of the bridal images, the two old women demonstrate the
dialectic of love: that it is through self-denial and sacrificial love
that the true self exists, and that the obsessive will that centers
around self cannot love, and therefore cannot really live. Miss Hav-
isham and Miss Rosa in their fury and hysteria embody the very essence
of this selfishness that cannot let go of self even in loving; their
rhetoric is telling - small wonder that they affianced themselves to
"cursed" men and were finally betrayed.

And then one evening I became engaged
to marry him. It took me just three months.
(Do you mind that I don't say he, but I?)
Yes, I, just three months, who for twenty
years had looked on him (when I did - had
to too - look) as an ogre, some beast out
of a tale to frighten children with; who
had seen his own get upon my dead sister's
body already begin to destroy one another,
yet who must come to him like a whistled
dog at that first opportunity, that noon
when he who had been seeing me for twenty
years should first raise his head and
pause and look at me.

(Absalom, Absalom!, Chapter 5)

"I'll tell you," said she, in the same
hurried passionate whisper, "what real love
is. It is blind devotion, unquestioning
self-humiliation, trust and belief against
yourself and against the whole world, giv-
ing up your whole heart and soul to the
smiter - as I did!"

(Great Expectations, Chapter 29)
Though Miss Havisham is far closer to traditional feelings of love as willing self-sacrifice, there is a consistent and dangerous tone of slavelike submission in the statements of both women. Miss Rosa's physical, sexual emphasis differs from Miss Havisham's emotional one, but both statements reflect the underlying attitude that a man-woman relationship is one of callous master to beast or "smiter" to cringing slave.

It is, perhaps, the difference between Victorian and modern perspectives that accounts for the crucial difference in responses of Pip and Quentin to love's contradictions. Both are broadened by their relationships to the old women. Pip, as he comes to understand who he is, also learns to understand and to forgive Miss Havisham; in fact, he makes clear that it is through understanding that forgiveness can take place.

He knows that

in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more; that, in seclusion, she had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased, as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker; I knew equally well. And [how] could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was, in her profound unfitness for this earth on which she was placed, in the vanity of sorrow which had become a master mania... (Chapter 49)

And, as he steers away from the distorted paths of Miss Havisham, Pip turns to the example of Magwitch, as he frequently has before—Magwitch who, even at the end, "never justified himself by a hint tending that way, or tried to bend the past out of its eternal shape." (Chapter 56)
It is a concept of honesty regarding both self and past that we recognize Pip the narrator to have conscientiously applied to the telling of his own story.

Quentin, too, recognizes the tragic consequences of "reversing the appointed order of the Maker" that Miss Rosa exemplifies, but he cannot act upon what he learns. Quentin, who loves only self or sister, is denied escape and relief through love from "the eternal shape of the past" that entrances him instead of helping him to see more clearly. Unlike Pip who ends looking to the future and seeing "no shadows of parting" from the love he has found, Quentin ends on a note of denial, of negation, and of concern with the past rather than the future ("I don't hate it! I don't hate it!"). We know from *The Sound and the Fury* that half a year hence Quentin succumbs to his obsession with personal misery and commits suicide. For Quentin is unable to arrive at the moment of affirmation; like Pip, he learns awareness and can unravel the flaws in the story he hears, but he cannot rework his own story as he and Shreve do the story of Sutpen, and as Pip does the Estella-Havisham-Magwitch story. Quentin cannot escape the destructive pattern of his past and the past of the South; and, powerless to carve a new design for living and escape the old designs, Quentin fails to move forward, to participate in the continuing process of forming the meaning and pattern of his life.
A central tension, then, in *Great Expectations* and *Absalom, Absalom!* is between the destructive danger of stasis and the affirmative power of process, and Dickens and Faulkner structurally reinforce affirmation by subjecting the stories themselves to process: they are retold by different narrators, reworked in different rhetorics, and reshaped as one teller's version informs another's. This helps account for the rich variety of techniques that makes the two novels such virtuoso performances. Dramatically the stories move quickly, for they are actual mysteries that Quentin and Pip set out to solve: who is Estella, who is Pip's real benefactor, who is hidden at Sutpen's Hundred, what is the real story of Henry and Charles Bon, how do seemingly disparate characters relate to one another and to Pip and Quentin? When the focus is on the novels as mysteries, then, factual stories are foremost: the fact of Magwitch as Estella's father, the fact of Henry Sutpen dying in the upstairs bedroom, and so forth.

This quest for factual solutions becomes more obliquely a quest for truth, and such quest imagery leads us into the fairy-tale dimensions of these novels. Pip as a boy sees his life in terms of a fairy-tale quest:
...it could not fail to be her intention to bring us together. She reserved it for me to restore the desolate house, admit the sunshine into the dark rooms, set the clocks a-going and the cold hearth ablazing, tear down the cobwebs, destroy the vermin - in short, do all the shining deeds of the young Knight of romance, and marry the Princess.
(Chapter 29)

Pip's ecstatic rhetoric is supported by the actuality of the gloomy, enchanted Satis house; like the house of Dombey and Son and The Sound and the Fury, the decayed mansion is under an enchanting spell, a sort of curse - but that of a real woman's obstinacy rather than a supernatural one. Sutpen's Hundred, too, is an enchanted and cursed place, hiding the living ghost of Henry Sutpen, guarded by the gnomelike Clytie, fallen and decayed through the curse of Sutpen's design as well as the curse of war. Charles Bon, like Pip, is a potential knight to free the cursed home by marrying the daughter; like Oedipus, though, he cannot fulfill the requirements of the outside rescuer because he is in fact one of the cursed, and thus he becomes a catalyst of downfall rather than a savior.

Fairy tales, of course, are related to myth, and mythmaking is the activity of the two old women. The fairy-tale curses on the villains assume mythic proportions in the hands of Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham. Sutpen in Rosa's mind is so evil that he threatens cosmic order, and the gods must destroy the entire Confederate nation to rid the earth of Sutpen's curse. Miss Havisham dedicates her whole life to a scenario that will "finish the curse" on her betrayer with her death; she sees herself in terms of sacrifice, an object to replace the decayed wed-
ding cake on the bridal table and to be eternally consumed by death as she has feasted on sorrow and revenge. Their curses on the villains are central unifying forces of the novels, so powerful in fact that they absorb the cursers as well as the cursed in hatred and destruction. Neither woman is interested in rational analysis, for the power of their stories (like the power of their curses) comes from intuitive feeling and unbridled emotion. Walter Brylowski speaks of "mythical consciousness" as a type of perception that many Faulknerian characters partake of, whether as deliberately as Mr. Compson's references to Greek myth or as unconsciously as Ike McCaslin's reverence for nature. Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham, however, differ from others in that their consciousness is exclusively mythical - their perception of reality is as circumscribed as their perception of time. Both are devoted to demonizing, to converting event into symbol, to elevating personal tragedy into the realm of myth. Such action is yet another form of self-aggrandizement, and willing the self to be larger than normal human scale carries a high price of distortion and isolation.

In literature, however, this conversion and elevation of event into symbol is poetry-making, and it is this contradiction that makes Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa so fascinating. For mythmaking is only destructive in their extreme and central application of it to their actual lives, and in their exhortation to Pip and Quentin to participate in the pattern of revenge and retribution. Poetry and myth are also, we must remember, the tools of the artist: Dickens and Faulkner are writing, it seems, a caution to the artist as well as to the living person - that one should
not fall into the trap of Miss Rosa or Miss Havisham in exalting the actual or the trivial into grandeur or tragedy or myth while ignoring the more important demands of truth, especially the central truth that all human experience changes and is therefore finally unknowable. *Great Expectations* and *Absalom, Absalom!* then are about the growth of art as well as the growth of self, and that is why the figures of the storyteller and the listener are so appropriate, dramatically and psychologically as well as symbolically. Pip and Miss Havisham, Pip and Herbert or Jagger or Magwitch, Quentin and Miss Rosa, and Quentin and Shreve or Mr. Compson or Henry Sutpen are all participants in a process that is ongoing and involves novelist and reader as well: the act of making meaning — of the past, of art, of the world and of oneself. Miss Rosa Coldfield and Miss Havisham endure, for us as well as for their fictional listeners, as powerful figures: examples of unnecessary self-torment, warnings to love first and then define the self, and storytellers that convey movingly in their persons as well as their tales the waste and tragedy of their narrowed lives.
NOTES


6Miller, p.256.

Chapter 5: The Fuller Picture: Novels with Worlds of Victims

"So what you need is to learn how to trust in God without depending on Him."
Chick Mallison in The Mansion (Chapter 13)

In four previous chapters, women have been seen as victims in a series of particular situations: as children relating to their parents and a world of adults, as grown women involved in the conflicts of courtship and marriage, and as self-tormentors, victims of their own folly and unyielding wills. We have also seen how Dickens and Faulkner reinforce these thematic developments with structural devices: child victims live in a world of fairy tales gone awry, perverse romances and miserable marriages belie the happy endings of traditional romance, and self-tormented women like Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa try to force their narrowed perceptions of life and truth into the language and imposing reality of myth. In their most comprehensive novels, however, Dickens and Faulkner move toward fictional worlds that are inclusive rather than particular. In their efforts to render a fuller portrait of life and reality in writing, the novelists incorporate and interweave their earlier themes and structures, and the result is an art that is immensely complex, varied, difficult, rich, and finally, perhaps, truer than previous forms. Novels like Bleak House, Little Dorrit, and the Snopes Trilogy (The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion) are not single stories or plots and subplots,
but are ambitious renderings of whole communities and societies—as Faulkner's titles openly suggest. And, because the novels are great, no single focus like the feminine victim is adequate to do more than serve as a beginning for discussion, to throw a beam of illumination that shows up a variety of motifs and concerns to be examined and harmonized. In these works, everything I have previously noted is repeated and expanded: male/female tension in the novels; the increasing emergence of the feminine protagonist; the nature of victimization in its relation to the self and will, to the past, and to society; the value of survival and endurance in a chaotic world; and Dickens' and Faulkner's continuing fascination with storytelling, the method by which characters define themselves and others and bring order out of chaos.

The self is central to all of these motifs, but because of the dramatic nature of these novels, we come to understand the self in terms of its interaction with others. Further, it is through tension and conflict that self-knowledge develops, that the individual will matures and adapts itself to the conditions of life. For the woman, especially, much of this tension is found in marriage, where her interaction with a single other individual determines a large portion of her identity—to herself, to the family, and to society. As in earlier novels, these five are largely, though not exclusively, concerned with the marriage relationship and, also as before, the marriages are problematic.

Olga Vickery speaks of The Hemlet as "successive tales of barter and stories of love," though she fails to detail their interdependence, a motif that is also found in Dickens. From Mink Snopes' opening mono-
logue in *The Mansion* where he envisions even church as a barter system between the preacher and female parishioners with sex given in return for home-fried chicken, to senile Mrs. Smallweed in *Bleak House* who turns every comment into a monetary recitation, characters are continually confusing love and trade, perverting and twisting the meaning of "giving" one's self to another. Eula Varner and Lady Dedlock are central examples of the destructiveness of this confusion of values. Both are women of great beauty and sexual attractiveness who give themselves initially (though unwisely) in acts of love. Both conceive, and when marriage is impossible with their love partners, the two women allow themselves to be trapped in marriages that are rationally beneficial but loveless and barren. Walter Brylowski, in tracing the uses of myth in Faulkner, notes the recurring analogy of the doomed marriage of the earth-mother, the myth of Hades and Persephone. Eula's marriage to Flem is obviously doomed, for he is impotent and also emotionally barren: for all that we ever know about Flem Snopes, his motives in marrying Eula were strictly financial and calculated to secure his influence over her father. Sir Leicester Dedlock is hardly such a villain as Flem. Dickens tells us initially that Sir Leicester "married for love" (Chapter 2) and then develops him into a figure of considerable dignity and compassion; nonetheless, Sir Leicester's marriage is to a woman who does not return his love, and their relationship becomes a trade-off of wealth and position for beauty and fashion. Significantly, no children come of these marriages, so there is neither hope for the future nor shared concern between husband and wife, and this is a particularly heavy blow for the women,
for both are depicted as loving mothers who care deeply for their illegitimate daughters. It is hardly coincidental, then, that both Eula and Lady Dedlock commit suicide: faced with empty marriages and hopeless futures, fearful of any disgrace they may bring to their daughters, and aware that they are victimized by situations that they themselves helped to create, these driven women exert, albeit destructively, great force of will to end their existence and thus their enslavement.

It is interesting that Dickens and Faulkner not only trace the major dimensions of such a pattern of failed love and marriage, but that they use minor motifs to reinforce their points in much the same ways. Both the narrator in Bleak House and Gavin Stevens as commentator on Eula's life remark the "bored" quality of the two women's lives: "My lady Dedlock says she has been 'bored to death'" (Bleak House, Chapter 2) and Eula died because "She was bored. She loved, had a capacity to love, for love, to give and accept love. Only she tried twice and failed twice to find somebody..." (The Town, Chapter 24). The reader knows, though, that the mask of boredom only hides the driven desperation of the two women – that death provides surcease, not from boredom, but from despair.

Other confusions of values and self-deceptions result in bad matches, and women are as often the agents of their own misery as they are victims of male aggression or deceit. And some unhappiness is not really the product of male-female conflict: pitiful characters like the brickmaker's wives in Bleak House or Mrs. Armstid in The Hamlet are the victims of poverty more than their husbands' deliberate malice. They are beaten and abused by men who are also desperate and despairing, who see no possible
relief in this world, and who lash out against wives that are suffering reminders of their inability to succeed and survive in society. Geoffrey Thurley in *The Dickens Myth* reminds us of an important shift in focus that occurs in the Victorian novel:

> In hardly any of the great English novels does romance provide the core of the narrative. What takes its place is the mechanism of the social climb: the novel reflects the need of man in a new situation for some form of certitude and self-definition.  

"The mechanism of the social climb," however, must also include chronicles of failure, and there can be little wonder that figures like Henry Armstid or the brickmakers who have achieved none of this crucial "certitude and self-definition" also fail to establish successful interpersonal relationships, or that their personal and social failure becomes their wives', whose identities are inextricably linked to theirs.

Neither does romance go hand in hand with the successful social climb. Eula Varner and Lady Dedlock are again strong examples: both women achieve some measure of social success, but neither finds personal satisfaction. Fanny Dorrit's life, too, shows how romance can be usurped and absorbed by the social climb. Structurally, Fanny's story follows closely the traditional outlines of romance: the poor girl is made suddenly wealthy, she is now able to marry the rich young man whose previous interest in her could only be casual, they marry, and she has bested the disapproving mother-in-law who has always ruled the actions of her son. But what a travesty Fanny's romance truly is: she is frustrated, querulous, and
insecure in both wealth and poverty; Edmund Sparkler is a simpleton
suitor whose wealth she does not need and whose social behavior provides
additional embarrassment rather than additional security; and she lit-
erally spites herself by grabbing a prize that even his mother recognizes
is worthless. Worse, Fanny displays a devastating awareness of the
terrible ends she is pursuing. Hers is another case of the extreme
will, a deliberate determination in principle to proceed on a course
bound to bring unhappiness. Fanny moves on her way with an "imperious,
self-willed step" and remarks on other, happier girls: "They are driven
by their lives and characters; I am driven by mine." (Little Dorrit,
Book 2, Chapter 14)

Another type of victimization implied by the connection of romance
with money, power, and social climbing is the master–servant relation-
ship. Fanny Dorrit, for instance, in trying to master Edmund Sparkler
and his mother and make them serve her whims, ends up as the slave of
her own worst passions and the victim of the social pretenses she en-
gineers. Avrom Fleishman, who explores in considerable detail the
master–servant relationship in Little Dorrit, notes the dialectic na-
ture of such relationships, where the master becomes dependent on the
services (actual or psychological) of his slave and the slave thus gains
a form of mastery over the master himself. In his portrayals of mar-
riage and courtship, Dickens resorts to the motif time and again, neg-
lecting neither the positive nor the negative implications of mutual
dependency. In the second most important marriage in Little Dorrit, Pet
Meagles wins Henry Gowan with his prominent family name and artistic
temperament only to end as the servant of his snobbery, prodigal spending, dilettantism and, worst, his patronizing attitude toward her socially inferior position. Caddy Jellyby and Prince Turveydrop in Bleak House offer care and shelter to Prince's useless, foppish father only to become bound to his whims and extravagances. Ada and Richard Carstone are a far more serious example: just as Richard becomes slave to the Chancery suit he intends to master, so Ada rather than being his salvation also becomes the servant of his obsession and the victim of his ruin. Richard's continual assertion that he pursues his course only for Ada's benefit illuminates his selfish blindness to his slavery to the causes, once again, of money, power, and social gain.

The Bagnets, however, show in Bleak House that love can survive in mutual dependency. Mr. Bagnet is ostensibly a domestic tyrant ("discipline must be maintained" — Chapter 34) but he is utterly reliant on his wife to form opinions, make judgments, and provide order in his life. There is no sting in the deceptiveness of their relationship, the reader somehow feels, because each is aware of the true position of the other — Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet know that they are both servant and master to their partner. Amy Dorrit and Arthur Glenam further fulfill the best parts of servitude and mastery in love; their marriage, Fleishman concludes, is a happy balance of equality and experience. Both have been rich and poor, both have renounced money, power, and the social climb after exposure to all three, both have been victimized by families who took advantage of their giving, serving natures. Amy and Arthur bridge the gap between the dialectic of mastery-dependency
and its Christian counterpart of humility and renunciation of worldly values. Their union is thus complete and self-sustaining: Amy both mothers Arthur and is his "child," and he both depends on and protects her. And, to return to Thurley, their "certitude and self-definition" in marriage comes neither from traditional romantic fulfillment nor from successful social climbing.

They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the forward and the vain, fretted and chafed, and made their usual up-roar. (Book 2, Chapter 34)

Faulkner even more than Dickens stresses the dialectic and conflictive nature of love. One might find it easy to disagree with Cleanth Brooks' assertion that The Hamlet is essentially an "elaborate counterpointing of love and honor" until he understood Faulkner's (and Brooks') extremely unconventional definitions of those concepts. There may be little love and honor in Dickensian relationships, but when they do exist, they are easily recognizable; Faulkner's dialectic makes the world of the Snopes trilogy seem utterly devoid of either unless the reader is willing to redefine extensively traditional values. At one point in The Hamlet, Faulkner tells us explicitly "That that's what it [sexual love] is: a man and a woman fighting each other." (Book 2, Chapter 1) Certainly the infatuation of the schoolteacher Labove for young Eula Varner carries the master-slave dependency of love to extreme, grotesque proportions: even as he recognizes his intellectual ascendancy and his physical ability to overpower her, Labove is terrified of his obsession with Eula, his slavery
to his desire for her.

...the man fleeing a holocaust runs not for a prize but to escape destruction...And he did not want her as a wife, he just wanted her one time as a man with a gangrened hand or foot thirsts after the axe-stroke which will leave him comparatively whole again. But he would have paid even this price to be free of his obsession...

(Book 2, Chapter 1)

The Houstons, surely the most loving couple in the novels, are for years the victims of loneliness, rootlessness, and frustration before they marry, because their individual pride and will to master the soul of the other are stronger than their impulses toward unity. Their early courtship is a silent battle: "a contest between them" that is not love "but implacable constancy and invincible repudiation" on his side, and on hers, "the will to alter and improve and remake." (The Hamlet, Book 3, Chapter 2) Although the battle is forsaken after twelve years, there is a lingering element of destruction even in the sincere happiness of their marriage, and it is the stallion bought by Houston as a last aggressive masculine gesture that kills the young wife and leaves Houston permanently inconsolable.

Through the course of the trilogy, we become distanced by years and repetition from these domestic conflicts: when we learn more about Eula and see her mature into a still-magnificent though troubled woman, when we review the life of Jack Houston in retrospect, conflict and tension become easier to gloss over or to explain. Yet Faulkner keeps powerfully before us through three novels the living results of unions without tension or struggle for mastery, and these are even bleaker and more
devastatingly hopeless than marriages like Eula's or the Houstons'.
Women who blindly serve and submit their wills absolutely to another's
are bovine and static like Ab Snopes' wife and daughters, or beaten and
gray ("a gray and blasted trunk, somehow intact and upright" - Book 4,
Chapter 1) like Mrs. Armstid, or starved for any sustenance in life like
Lump Snopes' mother, or bitter and vituperative yet terrified of their
husbands like Mink Snopes' long-suffering wife.

In fact, the more Faulkner examines and re-examines the nature of
love and marriage, the more he seems to despair of any belief in har-
mony and fulfillment. In later novels, like The Town and The Mansion,
Faulkner posits Gavin Stevens and Linda Snopes Kohl as the ideal couple,
yet undercuts the ideal from all directions. In order for Gavin's
proclamation that "we are the 2 in all the world who can love each
other without having to" to endure, Linda must be portrayed as not only
deaf and widowed, but as obsessed with the masculine drives of vengeance
and honor that invariably invalidate the true Faulknerian femininity of
motherhood, practicality, and inner contentment. Chick Mallison re-
nounces his budding courtship of Linda when he says of fatalist heroes
that Linda "would be our first female one." (The Mansion, Chapter 8)
Actually, Linda very much resembles Drusilla Sartoris (whom Chick was
too late to know), another heroic woman whose sexual attractiveness was
secondary to her desire for revenge. Gavin Stevens is correct in ob-
serving that "all women are doomed to anguish and to bear it" (The Town,
Chapter 23) but fails to recognize that the types of anguish and en-
durance can vary tremendously.
The courtship of Gavin Stevens and Linda Snopes Kohl is just one of Faulkner's interpretations of the structure of chivalric love - a literary structure that Dickens also explores and revises and parodies. Chivalric love for Gavin and Linda, as Cleanth Brooks so convincingly argues, is "Tristan-and-Isoldic," that is, a self-oriented love of pain, sacrifice, and death rather than a true mating desire.

The transcendent love [they] celebrated... could not be consummated in this world but only in the world to come... The courtly lover is really in love with death: the passion that possesses him is a dark passion. It is incapable of any real satisfaction in the flesh...

The elevated romanticism of Gavin and Linda is also diminished by the presence of another chivalric pair of lovers in the trilogy: the idiot Ike Snopes and Houston's cow. Ike's truly sincere and unselfish love for the heifer is frequently lauded by critics who grasp the obvious example of true love in an otherwise disturbing world, but who do so at the expense of much of the meaning of the tale: that courtly love, whether for a cow, a deaf woman, or an ideal vision, is simply not sufficient in a world that desperately needs rejuvenation through fulfilling, marital love between mature men and women.

Dickens is not so harsh as Faulkner, but his critical intentions are similar when he makes Caddy Jellyby's rescuer "Prince" Turveydrop a beleaguered dancing teacher, portrays John Chivery, the courtly hopeless lover of Little Dorrit, as a rather silly melancholic given to imagining sentimental epitaphs for himself, and cruelly but hilariously draws fat Flora Finching in the role of deserted maiden engineering
union with her true love at last. Esther Summerson's marriage to Allan
Woodcourt is a more careful working out of the potentials of chivalric
love in a modern setting. As a girl, even the modest Esther has con-
ceptualized herself as a princess of sorts; she remarks that she was
brought up "like some of the princesses in the fairy stories only I
was not charming - by my godmother." (Bleak House, Chapter 3) Later,
her redeeming realization that "I was as innocent of my birth as a queen
of hers" (Chapter 36) is couched in similar comparative terms. Esther,
too, is disfigured, though by disease rather than a reversible spell.
Her problem, then, is to find a suitor who will see through the surface
disfigurations of her illegitimacy and her scarred complexion to the
queenly virtues beneath them. Allan Woodcourt is such a figure (only
his mother cares about their Welsh pedigree), but the courtship is com-
plicated by the presence of Esther's guardian John Jarndyce as another
true suitor. There are no magic endings: Esther must choose between
rewarding loyalty or romance, and for all the sentimental gloss, John
Jarndyce is disappointed. Further, there is no transformation of Esther's
position as there was with Rose Maylie in Oliver Twist, and Allan
Woodcourt reaffirms Esther's beauty at the end of the novel in spite
of her scars, not because of any physical transformation. Even when he
supports romantic values, then, Dickens avoids reliance on too-idealistic
notions of love and its possibilities.

The place of children in these novels is much the same as that of
adults: in families where people are treated as objects or tools to gain
wealth or power, the children are doomed to suffering and exploitation.
Bleak House teems with neglected, exploited children. The whole Jellyby household suffers because of the mother's passion for philanthropy; the young Pardiggles are forced to become bitter apprentices to their mother's ferocious evangelicism; Jo the street-sweeper is bribed, used, and abandoned; the dead bailiff's children are mistreated because of bias against their father's profession; and on and on. It is a world of self-concerned adults who in their own blindness and insecurities provide no guidance for the young, or often, like the Pardiggles and Skimpole, school their children in their own narrow, irresponsible ways. The children themselves, whether good or bad, lack the spontaneity and joy of living that accompany childhood; to survive in a world where adults exploit or neglect children, they must act and think as adults.

The situation is the same in Faulkner's world. There are few children, and the reader only views them through their relevance to the adult world. As personalities, the children themselves seem insignificant and sketchily drawn: they serve adult action rather than expanding themselves. The result in both Dickens and Faulkner is a curious, and sometimes grotesque, sense of apathy, bitterness, and very adult hopelessness on the part of children. In describing Eula Varner as a child, Faulkner tells us there was "nowhere she wanted to go, nothing new or novel at the end of any progression." (The Hamlet, Book 2, Chapter 1) The two authors give us frightening pictures, remarkably similar, of the potential destructiveness of those who have never been children:

There has been only one child in the Smallweed family for several generations. Little old men and women there have been, but no
child, until Mr. Smallweed's grandmother, now living, became weak in her intellect, and fell (for the first time) into a child- 
ish state...The house of Smallweed...has discarded all amusements, discountenanced all storybooks, fairytales, fictions, and fables, and banished all levities whatsoever...the complete little men and women whom it has produced, have been observed to bear a likeness to old monkeys with something depressing on their minds.

( Bleak House, Chapter 21 )

Then four things got off [the train]. I mean, they were children...they didn't look like people. They looked like snakes. Or maybe that's too strong too. Anyway, they didn't look like children; if there was one thing in the world they didn't look like it was children, with kind of dark pasty faces and black hair...and perfectly black still eyes that nobody in Jefferson (Yoknapatawpha County either) ever afterward claimed they saw blink...one of them had a switch-knife with a six-inch blade.

( The Town, Chapter 24 )

Here is an extreme form of the same reversed world of parents and children in the earlier novels. Children are old, the old grotesquely childish, people are unrecognizable as such, and the whole human order has become bestial and savage. There can be little wonder that the future is hopeless, because what can these dehumanized child victims grow to become but the adult victimizers of others? Even the expectations of loving parents in a brutal world are so reversed that death may be their kindest wish for their children, as the brickmaker's wife explains:

...if he should be turned bad, 'spite of all I could do, and the time should come when I should sit by him in his sleep, hard and changed,
ain't it likely I should think of him
as he lies in my lap now, and wish he
had died as Jenny's child died!
(Bleak House, Chapter 22)

The tracing of influences is a complicated problem that seldom
provides truly useful answers. That Faulkner read Dickens is certain;
he frequently cited Dickens as one of his favorite authors. "What is
interesting about Dickens," Faulkner once said, "is not the way he takes
things, but those people he wrote about and what they did...I read him
some every year."* Among that yearly reading Bleak House must surely
have been a favorite and at least a casual influence, for he makes Mrs.
Rouncewell an inhabitant of Jefferson (there is also a Mrs. Habersham),
opens The Hamlet in a Chancery Clerk's office (a rather lofty word for
our civil court clerk), and gives us our second motherly Caddy and her
selfish mother. The girls' unusual shared given name piques the reader's
curiosity, and they are also similar in more important respects. Both
Caddy Jellyby and Caddy Compson resent their mothers' lack of concern
for their families' welfare, but acquiesce to their mothers' demands on
them: Caddy Compson allows herself to be courted and married at her
mother's wish, Caddy Jellyby spends long hours as little more than an
unpaid secretary and scribe for her philanthropic mother. In spite of
their unhappy existences, both girls try, within their limited powers,
to fulfill a motherly role toward their neglected siblings. In the Jellyby
household, though, the outside intervention of a benevolent force like
Esther Summerson is needed to set things aright, and for the Compsons
there is no rescue. Toward such mothers, both Dickens and Faulkner
direct their most biting accusations and criticism, for in both worlds the collapse of the family which is a mother's primary responsibility is linked to chaos and disorder in the larger world. At Caddy Jellyby's wedding, a celebration of family and domesticity, most of the guests are like Mrs. Jellyby: "devoted to public objects only," they feel that "such a mean mission as the domestic mission, was the very last thing to be endured among them." Predictably, their households are "filthy wildernesses," and they are also failures at their public missions, for "none cared at all for anybody's mission." (Bleak House, Chapter 30) Caddy Jellyby escapes, but not to such a bright and unclouded future as the reader might hope, for though she is a loving mother to her child, the baby is deaf and dumb.

Motherhood is a central dimension in the life of a Dickensian or Faulknerian woman. Structurally, the two authors rotate between two archetypal images of the mother: the nurturing earth mother and the Jungian Terrible Mother. The Terrible Mother is best personified in the figure of Mrs. Clennam in Little Dorrit, though Esther's godmother in Bleak House, Miss Havisham in Great Expectations, and Mrs. Compson in The Sound and the Fury are also good examples of the type: a fearful authoritative woman who deals in guilt and punishment rather than fondness and mercy. Mrs. Clennam's maternal authority (which is revealed to be false, for she is not Arthur's true mother) is given the additional sanction of her puritanical religious convictions. The pattern of guilt and punishment in which she raises her son and influences Amy Dorrit is born of her twisted vision of herself — brought about by her
own childhood repression - as the instrument of God's wrath:

Mine was no light youth of sinful gaiety
and pleasure. Mine were days of wholesome
repression, punishment, and fear...

I have done, said Mrs. Clennam, what it
was given to me to do. I have set my-
self against evil; not against good.
I have been an instrument of severity
against sin.

(Little Dorrit, Book 2,
Chapters 30-31)

What she has done, of course, is to set herself falsely in the position
of judge and master of the lives of others, and in her misguided self-
righteousness she further justifies her mission as objective because
she has punished herself as well by self-proclaimed seclusion and hys-
terical paralysis. It takes Little Dorrit, the Christian servant, to
reveal to Mrs. Clennam the true task of God's instruments, which is
humility and charity; but the old woman's will is too brittle to change,
and she dies after acknowledging the rightness of Little Dorrit's
message. In the Clennam family, Dickens has delineated clearly the
vicious cycle of the authoritarian personality, victimized and repressed
when young, then growing into a parent who is victimizer of his/her im-
pressionable children, a cycle that Arthur is fortunate enough to break
through the positive "mothering" guidance of Amy Dorrit.

The alternative pattern of mothering - exemplified by Esther Sum-
merson, Dilsey, Amy Dorrit, Florence Dombey, Caddy Compson and Jellyby,
and to some extent Eula Varner - follows the beneficent example of
archetypal Mother Nature. In an article on Dickens and nature, Robert
Patten says that nature's power for Charles Dickens is in providing "a
model for renewal that man can emulate," that

Dickens' abiding concern is...the
ways the mind takes, interprets,
and learns from the external world. 9

On a physical level, this is essentially the pattern of Faulknerian
motherhood: the woman who correctly identifies herself with the restora-
tive and reproductive processes of nature, internalizes and personalizes
her part in the cycle, and gives forth in love and charity, nurturing
the future of the human race. There is a very special blend of the
mythical and the Biblical in Dickens' and Faulkner's regard for the
mother: mixed with their reverence, though, is a sort of Dionysian awe
(related to the Terrible Mother) of her terrific powers for sustenance
or destruction.

And when human mothers fail them, Dickensian and Faulknerian char-
acters can turn for sustenance to nature; in this, both authors approach
a Wordsworthian sense of nature's constancy that "never fails the
heart that loves her." Eula Varner as wife and mother in Labov's
vision is like

...the fine land rich and fecund and
foul and eternal and impervious to him who
claimed title to it, oblivious, drawing to
itself tenfold the quantity of living seed
its owner's whole life could have secreted
and compounded, producing a thousandfold
the harvest he could ever hope to gather
and save.

(The Hamlet, Book 2, Chapter 1)

Arthur Clennam, listening to Little Dorrit's voice,

heard in it all that great Nature was doing,
heard in it all the soothing songs she sings
to man. At no Mother's knees but hers, had
he ever dwelt in his youth on hopeful promises, on playful fantasies, on the harvests of tenderness and humility that lie hidden in the early-fostered seeds of the imagination; on the oaks of retreat from blighting winds, that have the germs of their strong roots in nursery acorns.

(Little Dorrit, Book 2, Chapter 34)

Unfortunately, the benevolent influences of nature can only act through people interacting with other people, and in this, both Dickens and Faulkner move away from the more direct Wordsworthian interpretation of nature. F. R. Leavis could be speaking of Faulkner as well as Dickens when he says that "only in the individual is life 'there'...the individual is a center of responsibility towards something that is not himself."10 Far too often, though, characters deny that responsibility, deluding themselves that their individualness, their survival comes from a responsibility to self, not others. Such delusion damages rather than enhances the individual's capacity for survival, for it freezes the will and circumscribes one's sphere of action and development.

Joseph Gold expertly clarifies this paradox of self-ishness:

When a man [or woman] is blind and indifferent to every interest in the world, except what he mistakenly believes to be his own, he is said to be selfish. Yet ironically, tragically often enough, this very interest, his own, which he values most, works to his own destruction, or the destruction of his real self.11

Free will becomes impossible for such figures who condemn themselves to fixed patterns of perception and behavior and who cannot then escape their own self-made prisons.

As we have seen with Rosa Coldfield and Miss Havisham, both novelists
excel at the portrayal of this kind of character. In their later novels, they expand and perfect such characterization; *Little Dorrit*, for example, is a whole novel constructed around self-imposed imprisonments. The obvious example is the whole Dorrit family (excepting Amy) who are released from the actual Marshalsea debtor's prison into a world of wealth only to re-imprison themselves in perpetual suspicion and imagined slights. Fanny Dorrit's cry "Are we never to be permitted to forget?" (Book 2, Chapter 3) misses the point that the answer is no, so long as their memories keep their past stigma fresh. Arthur Clennam's mother, too, makes a prison out of memory, or the guilt that comes from memory, and reinforces the stern dictum "Do Not Forget" that is engraved on her watch with a hysterical paralysis that makes her a prisoner physically as well as psychologically. Flora Finching is another variant on the same theme: it is neither guilt nor shame that ties Flora to the past, but a desire to repeat its youthful, happy events, to re-create a romance that has died with people who have irrevocably aged and changed. Although Flora's too-youthful twitterings are far more amusing and less frightening than an obsession with the past like Mrs. Clennam's, they are no less destructive to Flora's development and to her possibilities for mature relationships with those around her.

That the events of the past to a large extent determine the nature of an individual's present is not denied by Dickens in *Little Dorrit*. As F. R. Leavis notes, the structures of both *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House* "follow the same principle of classical tragedy, all the action having taken place before the novel starts." The analogy, though, is
only partially correct: what separates Dickens' figures from tragic ones is that the emphasis is not simply on their discovery of the meaning of the past, but on what they make of it in the present, how they learn to survive, not in spite of, but with the past.

Some characters cannot survive. Unlike the adaptable Flora who can rejoice at Arthur's wedding, many characters have so completely ordered their lives around their obsessions with the past that to renounce them becomes impossible. Such figures are closest to classical tragedy (and highlight the Dickensian difference) for though they may reach awareness of their self-torment, they are unable to escape their locked-in perceptions and behaviors. Miss Wade is such a pathological type. Like Miss Havisham or Rosa Coldfield, it is not Miss Wade's past and her illegitimacy that are so fatally determining, but her inability to see how her obsession blackens her perception of everything and everyone around her. Joseph Gold gives Dickens credit for creating in Miss Wade a pre-Freudian textbook case of paranoia:

She is so locked into her system that all things conspire to substantiate her diseased and anguished loathing of everybody. It is a self-fulfilling perception of an alien world.13

Time and again Dickens and Faulkner remind us that self-awareness is not sufficient to break the bonds of mental imprisonment. Miss Wade is aware of her self-torment, to the point that she chronicles it (though with flawed perception) in the History of a Self-Tortmentor. In Bleak House, poor Miss Flite is among the most lucid of characters in a crazed world, and gives us an illuminating definition of her obsession as that of a moth drawn to a flame:
There's a cruel attraction in the place. You can't leave it. And you must expect...I was ill, and in misery; and heard, as I had often heard before, that this was all the work of Chancery. When I got better, I went to look at the Monster. And then I found out how it was, and I was drawn to stay there. (Chapter 35)

Knowledge without action is powerless. Faulkner's characters, from the early figures of Quentin Compson and Joanna Burden to Gavin Stevens and Linda Snopes Kohl, spend a preponderant amount of time examining and defining their obsessions, but for all their examination they remain constrained, as Hillis Miller notes, by "positions already committed and fixed, doomed to reenact the failures" of their pasts.

And those who are unaware of their obsessive behaviors are hopeless indeed: Maggy the perpetual ten-year-old, Mrs. General the mannequin of social forms, and Mr. F's senile, vituperative aunt in Little Dorrit, Skimpole and Volumnia Dedlock in Bleak House, Flem Snopes and the bovine Snopes women in Faulkner's trilogy.

It is small wonder, then, that in such a world Little Dorrit sees images of imprisonment everywhere:

It appeared on the whole, to Little Dorrit herself, that this same society in which they lived, greatly resembled a superior sort of Marshalsea. (Book 2, Chapter 7)

To the child of the Marshalsea, "all that she saw was new and wonderful, but it was not real," and prison was the only "lasting reality that had never changed in an unreal world." (Book 2, Chapter 3)

Society and its institutions, formed as they are by man and thus partaking of human flaws, compound and reinforce victimization and misery
and imprisonment in these novels. Dickens and Faulkner are most bitterly critical of the institutions designed to protect the dignity of man and to alleviate his sufferings: the courts and the law, the system of manners and social proprieties, and the free enterprise system all come under satirical scrutiny and indirect denunciation. The Court of Chancery is at the center of a whole world of wrongdoing in *Bleak House*: not a life is unaffected by its proceedings, from nobility like the Dedlocks and young professional aspirants like Richard Carstone to the lowest street urchin in the slums that await ownership litigation. Further, it is the lives of women, who have no means of direct participation in the legal world, that are the most shattered and brutalized. The list is endless: Ada Carstone whose husband's life decays around inheritance expectations, Lady Dedlock who is vanquished by the crafty lawyer Tulkinghorn, and the poor Miss Flite whose life is a portrait of the whole vicious cycle:

> First our father...was drawn to a debtor's prison. There he died. Then our brother was drawn - swiftly - to drunkenness. And rags. And death. Then my sister was drawn. Hush! Never ask to what! Then I was ill, and in misery... *(Bleak House, Chapter 35)*

For none is there a judgment in his favor; no reparation is made for his misery, and justice becomes a technicality that has little to do with right or mercy. Interestingly, Faulkner in dealing with the law echoes Dickens very closely. *The Hamlet*, like *Bleak House*, opens with a reference to the Chancery Clerk's office and the faded records of land ownership that will be central to Flem Snopes' social climb and his marriage to Eula Varner. The novel also culminates in trials and the dispensing
of "justice" that provides only further frustration for the litigants. Mrs. Armstid and Mrs. Tull, both already losers in the episode of the spotted ponies, are trapped by the letter of the law, which is an outcome relied upon by Flem Snopes who would surely suffer if the spirit of the law was applied. Rather than succeeding in their paltry claims for relief from the damage to them and their husbands, the women are confused and harassed by "the prattle of licensed children" (Book 4, Chapter 1), all form and no substance. With John Jarndyce, Mrs. Armstid and Mrs. Tull could surely affirm "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!" (Bleak House, Chapter 1)

The world of social forms, so brilliantly juxtaposed with the world of the court in Bleak House, also victimizes where it is supposed to civilize and enlighten. In Little Dorrit, it perverts education in the hands of a Mrs. General to "Papa, prunes and prisms" (Book 2, Chapter 5), forming surfaces with no substance, obliterating individuality by making opinions and thought taboo. People become "Bosoms" for the display of jewels, and a fine head of hair and not what's beneath make a patriarch; society dictates that clothes and appearance do not just make a man, they are the man. In villainous hands like Rigaud's, then, the code of gentlemanly behavior becomes a tool for crime and treachery, and impostors like Merdle can soar to social heights unexamined and unmolested.

Faulkner's story of the Snopes' encroachment in Yoknapatawpha County is in many ways comparable to Merdle's in Little Dorrit. Both Merdle and Flem Snopes are unknown quantities: no one can penetrate the surfaces of these hollow men, just as no one can explain how they accumulate
wealth and power. Both treat their wives as necessary accoutrements of wealth, unimportant as persons; both are obliging but emotionless step-fathers of children not their own. Flem's wealth, of course, is real, unlike Merdle's, but like Merdle he is undone by overcalculating the extent of his power. Both finally die violently, Merdle by his own hand and Flem shot by a betrayed kinsman, and are unmourned by the women they have used instead of loved.

Even in their most positive dimensions, social forms in these novels restrict self-development and distort sharing and giving actions. The philanthropists in *Bleak House* are so farsighted that they neglect the crying needs for charity close to them, the Meagles in *Little Dorrit* destructively patronize the orphan Tattycoram in their efforts to humor and soften her, and Gavin Stevens is so caught up in his own anxieties over the limits of his roles as mentor and courtly lover that he only adds to the troubles of Eula and Linda Snopes.

Finally, the very foundation of these two societies — the capitalist free enterprise system — is attacked and ridiculed for the way it damages the individual. Faulkner criticizes with humor and violence: the usually rational and respectable Ratliff is exposed as greedy when Flem Snopes tricks him into treasure hunting at the Old Frenchman place, a "free and voluntary" auction of spotted horses defrauds Mrs. Armstid of desperately needed money, and Jack Houston is murdered over a one-dollar pound fee he insists on charging Mink Snopes for a heifer's keep. Dickens' tools are satire and exhortation: he compares the petty vanities of Mr. Dorrit's insistence that charity be disguised as "tribute" with the grosser
sham of Flora's father denying responsibility for rent-gouging. He exposes the greed and selfishness that Harold Skimpole masks as delightful fiscal innocence, and shows how the more dangerous masks of philanthropy and "progress" allow the prosperous to hide from their part in a system that creates and perpetuates places like Tom All Alone's. He delineates the inescapable connection of the prosperous and the poor in the chronicle of the widespread ruin attendant on foolish speculation in "card-houses" like Merdle's, and in passages like these:

Much mighty speechmaking there has been, both in and out of Parliament, concerning Tom, and much wrathful disputation how Tom shall be got right...In the midst of which dust and noise, there is but one thing perfectly clear, to wit, that Tom only may and can, or shall and will, be reclaimed according to somebody's theory but nobody's practice. And in the hopeful meantime, Tom goes to perdition head foremost in his old determined spirit. (Bleak House, Chapter 46)

But the victim is also the devastating victimizer of all:

But he has his revenge...There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere...There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. (Bleak House, Chapter 46)

What hope is there, then, in a world that is diseased, riddled with greed and selfishness, chaotic, and despairing? Not much. Dickens ends Great Expectations in a ruined garden, and Little Dorrit in streets
still dominated by "the arrogant and the froward and the vain." Faulkner places an epitaph for his whole community in the mouth of Ratliff at the end of The Mansion:

"There aren't any morals," Stevens said. "People just do the best they can."
"The pore sons of bitches," Ratliff said. (Chapter 18)

And how can the individual, especially a woman, hope to prevail against a damming past, a loveless family, and societal institutions that can be neither changed nor eliminated? The answer comes, as it does in the final passages of The Mansion, on the heels of despair: by simply living and dying, by giving and loving as much as possible and by yielding to what cannot be changed. In Faulkner's words, by "enduring." Hillis Miller, in one of his most profound commentaries on the nature of Dickens' art, speaks of the importance of the will. "The will, for Dickens," he says, "must always act in accordance with the nature of things as they already are." Inflexible wills create a frozen, inhuman permanence of perspectives and values; living in totally passive expectation, on the other hand, results in fatal chaos. "The human will must accept the fact that its action must be continuous and perpetual. The world must be held together from moment to moment." This ordering action of the will occurs through yielding to (and living within) time and tradition.15

Miller's words are equally applicable to Faulkner. The crucial difference between the philosophies of the two authors comes in their definition of "the nature of things." For Faulkner, literal nature is the center — the land itself that is passed from generation to generation in unending cycles of planting and harvest. His stance is predominantly
backward-looking: characters tied to generations-long loyalty to the land are also tied to past traditions and perspectives. Action, too, is cyclical, for the result of present action is usually rooted in some past event. For Dickens, though, the "nature of things" is the nature of men; human conflicts and impulses are his constant, for the face of the Victorian world was continually changing and the personal and political past was continually subject to revision and distortion, and so his man-directed vision is also a present-oriented one.

Acknowledging this fundamental difference, the fact that Dickens and Faulkner display the capacities of acceptance and endurance in women as well as men is worth considerable attention. Female characters consistently participate in the same processes of self-realization that male characters do, and frequently with more success than better-known male protagonists. Quentin Compson, after all, is never able to escape his suicidal obsession; Joe Christmas uncovers the patterns of his life only to discover its dead end; David Copperfield is left dependent on the saving influence of Agnes; and Pip's acquisition of self-knowledge brings with it great diminishment of power and opportunity. Perhaps it is because of their frequent victimization that women fare better in learning the lessons of endurance; perhaps their lack of training toward masculine goals of change and power equips them better to understand human limitations; or perhaps, as Faulkner often seems to contend, there is an innate nurturing spirit in a woman that prefigures her role as orderer and harmonizer.

The life of Little Dorrit is perhaps the best example of success in
a darkened, diminished world. Like Dilsey in *The Sound and the Fury* and Esther Summerson in *Bleak House*, Little Dorrit achieves self-realization through denial of self, self-mastery through the service of others, freedom through devotion to duty. Amy Dorrit, child of the Marshalsea, is the only character of the novel who can move comfortably and lucidly through both prison and palace, for she realizes that it is the self and not the situation that makes life imprisoning. Unlike the Gowans, the Merdles, the Dorrits themselves, and other social pretenders, Amy constructs no protective self-delusions that will later entrap her. Being sure of herself, she is able to accept fortune and misfortune equally, to love and serve others without demanding love and service in return, and (in the words of Faulkner's Chick Mallison) to "trust in God without depending on Him." In the worlds of these novels, such a course is indeed the wisest one. In *The Dickens Myth*, Geoffrey Thurley begins his discussion of the will by stating that *Bleak House* argues that human existence is most like a protracted waiting for a legacy that bequeaths us nothing" and concludes that in *Little Dorrit* as well "the will must learn to live and love in a world that promises nothing."

And it is by expecting nothing that Little Dorrit succeeds. Eula Varner, in spite of mythical beauty, fails when she expects love in return for the love she offers; Esther Summerson fails so long as she views love as a means for atoning for real or imagined sins; Linda Snopes Kohl fails by expecting love to be too powerful, too magnificent, too all-encompassing. Only Dilsey approaches the achievement of Little Dorrit — Dilsey the Negro servant, as poor and unimportant and outcast from the
system of the social climb as the child born in debtor's prison. They
neither barter nor scheme nor judge; they simply serve and love and sur-
vive, and are sustained by strong yet simple religious faith in Christian
forgiveness and salvation.

In the midst of the voices and the hands
Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey
sat bolt upright beside, crying rigidly and
quietly in the annealment and the blood of
the remembered Lamb.

(The Sound and the Fury, page 371)

"O, Mrs. Glennam, Mrs. Glennam," said
Little Dorrit, "angry feelings and unforgiving
deeds are no comfort and no guide to you and
me. My life has been passed in this poor
prison, and my teaching has been very defec-
tive; but let me implore you to remember lat-
er and better days. Be guided only by the
healer of the sick, the raiser of the dead,
the friend of all who were afflicted and
forlorn, the patient Master who shed tears
of compassion for our infirmities. We can-
not but be right if we put all the rest a-
way, and do everything in remembrance of
Him."

(Book 2, Chapter 31)

There is great power (and surely some hope) in such reaffirmation of life's
positive values by those at the bottom of a darkened world.

A final achievement structurally reinforces the powers of affirma-
tion and survival that women are given in these novels, and that is
their increased participation as storytellers, the orderers of narrative
action and definers of meaning and truth. In such participation there
is great difference between early and late Dickens and Faulkner. Caddy
Compson does not even appear directly in The Sound and the Fury, and
Little Nell is scarcely more than a symbolic innocent for action to take
place around in The Old Curiosity Shop. But even though Linda Snopes
Kohl is largely defined by the men in her life (as is her mother Eula) she speaks up significantly and frequently about her own thoughts and deeds, even in her quacking deaf voice. And by the time of Bleak House, Esther Summerson is a full-fledged narrator, telling as much of the story (and not just her own) as the traditional third-person narrator. Little Dorrit returns to full third-person narration, but the emphasis on dialogue that Dickens stresses in Bleak House (and that has always been important for Faulkner) continues through Little Dorrit and into Great Expectations. The results of increased storytelling by women are two-fold: by having to come to grips with the way women think and to supply them with appropriate perception and vocabulary, Dickens and Faulkner are better able to illuminate and authenticate their female characters; and by having to order their lives and feelings so that they can communicate and explain them to others, the characters themselves reach higher levels of self-awareness and interaction with others. Dickens and Faulkner are not advocating in narration, however, a sure way of reaching truth and harmony; there are still the dangerous propensities for deception and distortion that flaw the myth-making of Miss Rosa and Miss Havisham. Ratliff, Faulkner's ultimate storyteller, himself acknowledges, "I don't even insist or argue that it happened that way."
(The Mansion, Chapter 6) The reader and the actor (and perhaps the novelists too) are increasingly faced in Dickens' and Faulkner's work with the possibility that nothing "happened that way," that there is no order or truth that is not purely personal and thus limited and factitious. But conscientious communication, that "happy marriage of
speaking and listening," is a way of making some sense of a senseless existence, a link between people who must live together, and a self-defining and world-ordering key to understanding and thus escaping victimization. For the Caddys and Esthers and Eulas and Amys of these worlds, such an achievement is no small one.
NOTES


5 Fleishman, p.584.


7 Brooks, p.197.


12 Leavis, p.125.

13 Gold, p.223.


15 Miller, pp.218-19.

Conclusion: Inexhaustible Voices

[The writer] must teach himself that the base of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed — love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice... I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance.

William Faulkner, the Stockholm Address

...The relation of its finer threads to the whole pattern...is always before the eyes of the story weaver at his loom.

Charles Dickens, Postscript to Our Mutual Friend

Comparisons, unfortunately, tend to minimize important differences in their effort to illuminate similarities, and this study is no exception. There are distances between the careers of Dickens and Faulkner and disparities between their techniques and perceptions which should not be neglected.

The near century that separates the two careers creates several critical differences in perspective. Sexuality and sexual problems, for instance, were written about far more openly by the early twentieth century, and Faulkner could be much more explicit and forthright in his portrayal of feminine sexuality. The sexual frustration and tension
that Dickens could only present obliquely in a character like Rosa Dartle could be verbalized in revealing detail by the time Faulkner created Joanna Burden. Additionally, this increased openness and frankness forced Faulkner to recognize and explore another, threatening dimension of the female character that was largely unavailable to Dickens; in Dickens, female sexual aggression is largely self-directed, sublimated, or abated - no dark hidden power lurked beneath the surface of Dickens' virginal young women as it does in Faulkner's Temple Drake or Drusilla Sartoris. Such a difference in awareness makes the distinction between victim and potential victimizer less clearcut in Faulkner's women; more of Faulkner's characters are cast in ambiguous roles - Eula Varner, Narcissa Benbow, and Judith Sutpen, for example.

The distance between vantage points also affects the artists' treatment of society. Though both see and explore the same problems of callousness, exploitation, and selfishness, Dickens is leveling his criticism at a young, growing industrial society - an empire on the way up - while Faulkner is examining the ruins of an empire and deploring the attitudes and behaviors of the survivors and the rebuilders. In their novels, the difference in perspective is reflected primarily in subtleties of technique rather than more basic issues of theme: Faulkner is often more cynical, Dickens more sentimental; Faulkner more detached, Dickens more overtly concerned with his characters' behavior; Faulkner more defeatist ("the pore sons of bitches"), Dickens more tenaciously hopeful ([Arthur and Little Dorrit] "Went down into a modest life of usefulness and happiness.")
Ultimately, though, such differences dim beside the similarity of the tools that both authors use to describe and comment upon the human condition: humor, sometimes grotesque, to deflate the vanities and absurdities of behavior; dialogue in which characters explain (and often expose) themselves to other characters and the reader; suffering, both inflicted and endured; and survival, from the maimed, like Miss Havisham and Jason Compson, to the transcendent, like Amy Dorrit and Dilsey.

Further, what both novelists do, superbly and in similar ways, is see "the whole pattern" of human capabilities and render convincingly and movingly whole fictional worlds rather than sketch small slices of life and character. They blend the humorous and the horrible, make mythical greatness coexist with hilarious humbug, and capture the depth as well as the height of individual potential. The achievement of such full vision, though, requires as a precondition that both author and reader recognize and acknowledge that our world is basically a dark and despairing one. Monroe Engel, writing about Bleak House and Little Dorrit, says

There can be neither happiness nor grace, Dickens seems to be saying, except by a coming to terms with misery, that great reality lying behind genteel fiction.3

Joseph Gold, who has written brilliantly on both Faulkner and Dickens, echoes Engel's words:

Like many other writers, Faulkner's suggesting that evil does not ever disappear — it is merely temporarily out of sight — but one way or another it turns up again and plays some part in whatever shape the future takes.4
If we are to assert, then, that Dickens and Faulkner do more than laugh in the face of emptiness and absurdity — in a contemporary mode — and that their novels are more than entertaining or defiant gestures, we must find some rationale for "coming to terms with misery," some pattern for dealing with evil, some prognosis for change and improvement. Neither writer is simplistic enough to indicate that the nature of the world can be changed; in spite of some popular sentiment, Dickens was no evangelical social reformer nor was Faulkner a savior of the dying world of the rural South. Their programs, if they can be called such, focus on the individual and only indirectly — through the individual's progress — on changes in society. But it is precisely in the individual that the greatest possibility lies: he or she is the center from which all other life radiates. In narration, from one individual telling his version of a story, reinforced by another's story, contradicted by another's, does perspective and meaning and truth evolve. The family begins as a pair of individuals who must learn to coexist and multiply. Even the community (in Dickens' case the city) that is so important for Dickens and Faulkner as the repository of heritage, adversary of change, and commentator on progress is finally reducible if only theoretically to Sairey Gamps and V. K. Ratliffs and Tite Barnacles and even individual Snopeses. These infinite human variations with their infinite capacities for good or evil embody the redemptive hopes of Dickens and Faulkner. In worlds where rules are wrong and systems invalid, hope lies in the exceptions, and the most hopeful exception of all is the child that is yet untarnished by rules and unwarped by systems.
Thus we arrive, albeit indirectly, at the reason for the woman's importance in the novelists' eyes. The responsibility for the child is primarily the woman's: she is the mother, the nurturer, the spiritual guide like David Copperfield's Agnes, "pointing upward." Her effectiveness is far from assured, though, for she may be an unhappy wife, an exploited child, or a tormented, obsessed old woman. Without denying her limitations but also without abandoning all hope as futile, the inexhaustible voices of Dickens and Faulkner support her. They criticize, satirize, ridicule, and exhort, but they never surrender and fall silent, for they both believe and dramatize how man, each individual one of "the pore sons of bitches," is worth improving. Dark worlds, yes, but not dark visions.
NOTES


Baum, Catherine B. "'The Beautiful One': Caddy Compson as Heroine of The Sound and the Fury." Modern Fiction Studies, XIII (Spring 1967), 33-44.


Leavis, F. R. "Dostoyevsky or Dickens?" *Scrutiny*, II (June 1933), 91-3.


Peavy, Charles D. "'If I'd Just Had a Mother': Faulkner's Quentin Compson." Literature and Psychology, 23 (1973), 114-21.


